



## SWEET CHEESE BABKA

### DOUGH INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup warm water  
4 1/2 teaspoons yeast (or two packets)  
1 cup milk  
1 stick (4 oz) unsalted butter, softened  
1/2 cups sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
3 egg yolks [Lucie: I hate wasting eggs so I use 1 complete egg and the egg white of another for the dough, reserving the second egg yolk to use in the filling listed below. So, all together this recipe uses 3 complete eggs doing it my way]  
5 cups flour

### EGG WASH (applied just before second rising:

1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water

### FILLING INGREDIENTS

16 oz cream cheese, softened  
[Lucie: I've also substituted up to 8 oz with ricotta cheese at times]  
1 cup + 2 tablespoons white sugar  
[Lucie: I use up to 1 cup of sugar, usually a bit less]  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons flour  
1 egg yolk

### STREUSEL TOPPING INGREDIENTS

6 tablespoons flour [Lucie: I use 8 tablespoons flour]  
8 tablespoons white sugar  
1/2 stick (4 tablespoons) butter, cold and cubed

## DIRECTIONS

1. Add yeast to warm water and let sit until it begins to froth, about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, grease two 8-inch pans (see note). [Lucie: I use 3 loaf pans]
2. Make dough. Heat milk until quite warm to the touch (about 45-60 seconds in microwave). Place in a mixing bowl and add butter, stirring until melted. Stir in sugar, salt, egg yolks, and yeast mixture. Add the flour, stir until combined, and then knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Grease a large bowl, add the dough, turn once to coat, and cover with a towel or plastic wrap. Set aside in a warm place away from drafts to rise until doubled, about 2 hours. (Enriched doughs take a long time to rise. I often stick mine in the oven with the pilot light on to encourage growth.) [Lucie: My dough takes about 1 hour to rise. I cover the bowl with cheesecloth and place it in a draft-free place over a pot containing about 2 inches of hot water.]
3. Prepare filling. Beat the softened cream cheese until light and fluffy. With the mixer running, pour in the sugar and salt, then egg yolk and flour. Mix until combined.
4. Prepare topping. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together flour and sugar. Cut in the butter until it is in pea-sized pieces. (A pastry blender is useful tool here, but you can also use your fingers to rub the butter in, or the original method of knives.)
5. Assemble. Divide the dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, place one half of the dough and roll it into a rectangle roughly the size of a half sheet (13x18"). Spread half of the filling evenly on top, being sure to leave a 1" border all around. Fold the edges over on all sides to help keep the filling in. Then, begin to roll the dough, starting from the edge furthest from you and moving towards you. Pinch the seam to keep it together, and then twist the dough into a spiral, tuck the tail under, and place in prepared pan (see picture). Repeat with remaining dough/filling. [Lucie: Since I use three loaf pans, I divide the dough in thirds. I have a kitchen scale that is very helpful here to get equivalent weights for all three doughs.]
6. Second Rise. Brush both loaves with the egg wash, and sprinkle with crumb topping. Cover with plastic wrap [I cover with cheesecloth instead over a pot of hot water] and set aside in a warm place until the dough begins to rise above the rim of the pan, up to another hour. Preheat the oven half way in.
7. Bake the loaves. At 350 degrees for 45 minutes, or until they register 190 degrees. You can also test doneness by inserting a toothpick near the center (it should come out clean). Let the babka cool for 5 minutes on the counter, and then run a knife gently around to loosen the edges from the pan. Allow to cool completely before removing from pan. Enjoy! [Lucie: You know your ovens better than anyone. Don't take the suggested temperatures or the baking times as gospel. Err on the side of caution and check earlier than you'd think they might be done.]
8. Notes: The original recipe called for the babka to be baked in three loaf pans, in which case you divide the dough & filling into thirds, and also roll the dough the short way. The babka of our youth was always round, so we've each gravitated over the years towards baking these in round cake pans. When I'm home at my parents', I like to bake these in their fluted pans. I believe Sophie bakes hers in three 6-inch round loaves. In short, the size & shape is a little flexible!