

irish soda bread, american style

Baker's Note: Irish butter is well worth the splurge.

4 cups flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
1/4 c butter
1 1/2 cup currants or raisins
1 1/3 cup buttermilk (+ 2-3 T, if at altitude)
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon baking soda

Grease a 2 quart round bowl (ovenproof), casserole or deep cake pan. OR Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper for a free-form loaf.

Preheat oven to 375F.

In food processor, or large mixing bowl, measure dry ingredients except baking soda and mix well. Cut in with blade attachment or with knives or pastry blender, the butter. In a large mixing cup, whisk together the buttermilk and eggs; add the currants and baking soda. Pour the liquid ingredients into the dry and mix well to form a very wet dough. (If using a food processor, add the liquid ingredients first and then stir in the currants by hand to avoid mincing the currants.)

Turn dough into the prepared baking bowl and bake for about an hour (or a bit more) until bread is very well-browned and firm in the center, approximately 45-55 minutes. A wooden skewer stuck in the middle of the bread should come out clean or nearly clean. You may have to test several times.

Alternately you can bake a free-form loaf: Remove the wet dough from the food processor very carefully, if using, with well-floured hands to a floured board or counter and knead briefly, adding a bit of flour as needed to get the dough to hold together well. Shape into a round or oval 10-12-inches in diameter and place on a parchment paper-lined baking tray. Bake about 45-55 minutes. The bread is more easily done through in the free-form version and is just as tasty.

Let this bread sit 15-20 minutes before cutting or it will crumble. Serve with lots of salty Irish butter, please. Cool completely before wrapping tightly in foil and storing in the refrigerator. Will keep 3-4 days. Excellent leftover just as it is, but even better for toast made under the broiler.

