

LUSSEKATT - Saint Lucia Buns



St. Lucia buns (Swedish *lussebulle* or *lussekatt*, Norwegian *lussekatt*), are rich, spiced yeast-leavened sweet buns that are flavoured with saffron and are baked into many traditional shapes, of which the simplest is a reversed S-shape. They are traditionally eaten during Advent, and especially on Saint Lucia's Day, December 13. In addition to Sweden, they are also prepared and eaten in much the same way in Finland, above all in Swedish-speaking areas and by Swedish-speaking Finns, as well as in Norway and Denmark.

St. Lucia buns may be made ahead of time, frozen, and quickly reheated in the microwave before serving.

Makes 20 buns

1 cup melted butter
1/2 tsp. saffron threads, finely crumbled (or 1 tsp. powdered saffron)
1 cup milk
3/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 pkg. dry active yeast (4 1/2 tsp.)
6 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 eggs, well-beaten, plus one egg white
Raisins or currants to decorate

Crumble saffron threads into melted butter. Let sit 30 minutes to an hour (this intensifies the saffron flavor).

Heat milk to a light boil, turning off heat when it reaches the scalding point (with small bubbles across the top). Stir in melted butter, sugar, and salt. Pour mixture into mixing bowl and allow to cool until "finger-warm" (still quite warm, but just cool enough to touch). Stir in yeast and let sit for 10 minutes.

Mix 3 1/2 cups flour into liquid. Stir in two well-beaten eggs.
Add enough of the remaining flour to form a soft dough (just until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. You don't want to add too much flour).
Transfer dough to a large greased bowl and turn to coat all sides.
Cover with a clean towel and allow to rise until doubled, about 1 hour.

Punch down risen dough. Lightly knead two or three times on a floured surface. Pinch off small handfuls of dough (about the size of a racquetball) and roll into "snakes." Shape snakes into "S"-shaped buns or other desired shapes. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet, cover with the towel again, and allow to rise until doubled (about an hour).

Decorate buns with raisins, brush with egg white, and bake in preheated 375° oven about 15 minutes, just until brown.