

Agave Squaw

Bread

What is agave squaw bread? For that matter what is squaw bread? In researching this recipe I have come to one conclusion. There is no one thing called squaw bread. The Navajo prepare a bread called Squaw Fry Bread. It is unclear as to whether this is a traditional recipe or if it is something that was made up to sell to tourist. Several bakeries in the west sell a raisin-rye bread in loaves and call it Traditional Squaw Bread. After some extensive research and review of many recipes, my conclusion is that while there may have been some ancient corn-based bread called squaw bread none of the modern incarnations are in the least bit a traditional recipe. Rye is at the heart of almost all squaw bread recipes and as such, the origin of this bread is most likely German. Now, don't be surprised. Germans are responsible for another decidedly American/Texan/Mexican dish, Chili. (What about the agave? I'm getting to it. Just be patient).



Throughout the 19th century Germans poured into America. They came to America with aspirations of grandeur. They got to America and found the same type of dirty, stinky cities they had left in Europe (remember the car and modern plumbing were yet to be invented). So the Germans followed John B. L. Soule and Horace Greeley's advice and they went west. But, they did not go empty handed. They took with them seeds to plant and recipes from their homeland. Along the way the Germans met and lived in the same areas as the Native Americans and when traditional German spices and ingredients could not be obtained they looked to the natives for substitute ingredients.

My heritage includes both German and American Indian. So in that same tradition of my ancestors, I have decided to take tradition and the new ingredients

around me and develop what I hope will be a memorable recipe even if it is not traditional. That is where the Agave comes into play. In Germany, a rye bread will often include honey as a sweetener. I like to imagine that Germans venturing deep into Mexican territory might have stumbled upon a local sweetener called Agave Nectar. For thousands of years this sweet nectar has been regarded as more valuable than honey and a gift from the gods. Agave is best known as the main ingredient in tequila. In fact the technical name for the blue agave plant is Agave tequilana.

The agave plant is a close cousin to the aloe vera plant. It takes about seven years for the plant to grow to maturity. At that seven year mark the plant is harvested and the central core called the pina is refined into a sweet syrup called agave nectar. It comes in several grades just like maple syrup. This recipe uses amber agave because the lighter colored versions of agave are flavor neutral. The amber and dark varieties are refined at slightly higher temperatures and therefore bring a hint of caramel flavor to the party. Agave is about 40% sweeter than sugar and when it is used in recipes this needs to be taken into consideration. If you decide to make this bread with honey you might need to increase the amount of honey and decrease the amount of water used in the recipe.

Onto the bread.

Enjoy.

Note: This recipe makes three loaves of bread.

from William J. Burnett

time Cook Time

yield Yield

category Category

cuisine Cuisine

ingredients

2 cups 80°F Filtered Water or Bottled Water (Tap water has chlorine that kills yeast.)

3/4 cups Scalded Milk
1/4 cup Amber Agave Nectar
1/3 cup Raisins
4 Tbls. Sugar
1 Tbls. Light Molasses
3 Tbls. Active Dry Yeast
3 cups Wheat Flour
2 cups Unbleached Bread Flour
2 cups Rye Flour
1/4 cup Cold Butter
2 Tsp Kosher Salt
2 Tsp Lemon Juice

directions

1. Place the raisins and 1 cup of water into a blender and blend until smooth.
 2. Bloom the yeast: combine 1 cup 80°F filtered water, raisin mixture, agave nectar, molasses, sugar, and yeast and allow the mixture to bloom for 5 - 10 minutes.
 3. Scald the milk and remove from the heat.
 4. While the milk is still hot, drop the cold butter into the milk and allow the butter to melt. This will cool the milk so that it may be added to the yeast without killing the yeast.
 5. Pour the salt, milk and butter mixture, and lemon juice into the yeast mixture.
 6. Combine all the flour in a large bowl and then begin to work in small batches and add the flour to the yeast mixture, using the paddle attachment for your stand mixture on low speed.
 7. After about two cups of flour has been added to the mixture you will have formed a sponge and it is time to switch to a kneading hook.
 8. Continue to work the remaining flour in slowly until all the flour has been used. (As with all breads the final amount of flour may need to be increased or decreased depending on humidity. If additional flour is needed you may use any or all of the types of flour for that purpose).
 9. Knead with a dough hook for 15 - 20 minutes.
 10. Cover the dough with a tea towel and allow it to rest for 30 minutes.
 11. Knead the dough an additional 15-20 minutes.
 12. Roll the dough into a tight ball and place in an oiled bowl.
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13. Cover the bowl and place it in a warm location for one hour and a half or until the dough has doubled in size.
14. Gently remove the dough from the bowl, divide it into three equal balls and place each ball into greased 9" x 5" standard bread pans. Cover the dough with a tea towel and set the dough in a warm place until it rises about 1" above the top of the bread pan.
15. While the dough is rising, pre-heat your oven to 350°F.
16. Bake the bread at 350°F for 18 - 30 minutes or until the internal temperature of the bread reaches 201°F.
17. Remove the bread in the pan to a cooling rack.
18. Allow the bread to rest for 10 minutes and then remove the bread from the pan.
19. Allow the bread to cool completely and then slice.

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