

18TH-CENTURY BRIOCHE

Brioche dates back at least to the 17th century and probably earlier. This recipe, included in Ivan Day's book, comes from an 18th-century cookbook, *La cuisinière bourgeoise*. It calls for a sponge, or levain, made with flour, hot water, and ale yeast, that is left to rise. Then it's mixed with more flour, salt, butter, and eggs, but no sugar. The dough is allowed to rise, brushed with an **egg wash**, and then baked.

We were excited to bake the oldest brioche recipe we could find. The bread was tender, but we'd classify the overall results as just so-so. This brioche, like many early versions of this bread, was unsweetened, making it much different from today's brioche. It was baked free-form, in large loaves, which is also different from the brioche commonly made today in a mold. (Pans came onto the baking scene in the 18th century.) It looked something like an oversized hamburger bun. One aspect we found interesting was the egg wash, which served mostly aesthetic purposes, to make the crust shine. In addition to bakers, artists have had a long interest in the visual appeal of brioche, and it's pictured in many historical paintings (see page 94).



INGREDIENTS	WEIGHT	VOLUME	%
Stiff levain, mature see page 3-54	700 g	3⅞ cups	843.37
Butter, softened	125 g	⅔ cup	150.60
Bread flour	83 g	⅔ cup	100
Eggs	83 g	2 ea	100
Fine salt	12 g	1½ Tbsp	14.46

For salt and other notes, see pages 4-viii–4-xi

PROCEDURE

- ① Mix the ingredients in a spiral mixer's bowl on low speed for 2–3 minutes. Increase the speed to medium high, and mix until the dough reaches medium gluten development and does not stick to the sides of the bowl (see page 3-88).
- ② Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled, thick plastic tub or bowl, and cover with a lid or plastic wrap.
- ③ Bulk ferment for 3 hours, performing 2 folds, one each after the first and second hours (see page 3-129). Cover the dough between folds. Rest the dough 1 hour after the second fold.
- ④ Transfer the dough by gently turning the tub or bowl onto a well-floured work surface.
- ⑤ Divide the dough into two 500 g pieces (see page 3-136).
- ⑥ Preshape the dough into boules (see page 3-152).
- ⑦ Rest the dough 20 minutes.
- ⑧ Shape the dough into boules (see page 3-152).
- ⑨ Transfer the dough to a wooden board, the back of a sheet pan covered with a floured couche, or a lightly floured, linen-lined wicker basket.
- ⑩ Proof the dough, well covered, for 5–6 hours at 21°C/70°F. Perform the fingertip test (see page 3-223) to check for proof.
- ⑪ Transfer the dough onto a peel or loader.
- ⑫ Load the dough into the oven and bake as instructed for the small boule in the Brioche Baking Times and Temperatures table on page 4-221.
- ⑬ Remove the bread from the oven, and cool on a wire rack.
- ⑭ Consume within 1 day or freeze up to 2 months.

NET CONTENTS		
Ingredients	Weight	%
Flour	497 g	100
Water	360 g	72.50
Salt	12 g	2.40
Fat	109 g	21.98
Yield	1 kg	

