

KEYS TO SUCCESSFULLY EXECUTING BRIOCHE

- A crucial aspect of baking brioche is setting the crust quickly to prevent it from ripping, but not so quickly that it hinders expansion and produces a low-volume loaf. This is why we recommend starting the bake in a home oven at a higher temperature and then dropping to a lower temperature.
- Combi ovens and convection ovens are best for baking these types of doughs because the fan that circulates the hot air throughout the oven helps set the crust quickly and reduces the chance of any ripping or tearing happening on the surface of the bread. With deck ovens, it is more challenging because the heat that radiates from the oven's ceiling is often too much for the crust, causing it to set too quickly, thus hindering expansion.
- The baking times we suggest on page 221 are guidelines only; ovens vary from model to model. To ensure a proper bake, use a thermometer to check for doneness. The internal temperature should be 90–93°C/195–200°F.
- If baking in a home oven, place your baking rack just below the center of the oven. This way, when the pan is placed on the rack, the loaf will be in the center of the oven, where the temperature is optimal. Use an oven thermometer to ensure the oven is at the right temperature (see page 3-324).
- Prepare your loaf baking pan with a light layer of oil and parchment paper, or oil and a layer of flour. Apply only oil if using a nonstick loaf pan.
- For loaves of any size, use your hands, a rolling pin (recommended), or a dough sheeter to preshape the dough into a rectangle just a bit shorter than the length of the pan. If needed, lightly flour the dough and the worktable.
- You may need to adjust the yield of this recipe depending on the size of the pan you are using so that you don't have leftover dough (see page 212). If you do have leftover dough, you can use it to make our Combination Monkey Bread (see page 3-173).
- Perform the windowpane test (see page 3-89) to check for gluten development; the windowpane should hold for a few seconds before it tears. It may take more or less time to reach full gluten development during the final mix; perform a windowpane test halfway through to check for gluten development.
- The DDT after final mix should be about 28–29°C/82–85°F. This temperature is a little high for dough in general, but doughs that are mixed to high gluten development—especially brioche, which takes a long time to mix—generally get hot because of the friction from mixing. If the dough comes out cooler than this range, that isn't an issue—you will be cooling the dough in the refrigerator after bulk fermentation.
- If you are making only 1 kg of dough, you can start the machine mix using a paddle attachment to get a cohesive dough mass. Then switch to a hook attachment to mix your dough to full gluten development. Alternatively, you can make a 2 kg batch; brioche dough freezes wonderfully if you wrap it well, and it's simple to thaw it, shape it, proof it, and bake it later. You can also freeze the baked bread.
- The modified starch glaze helps prevent the surface of the brioche from drying out during proofing and baking. It is made with a pregelatinized starch, so it remains elastic longer than a glaze made with a raw starch. (A glaze made with raw starch would cook as soon as the surface of the dough reached 79–82°C/175–180°F, which can hinder expansion.) We also like modified starch because it doesn't need to be cooked in advance, and it does not retrograde like other starches do.
- The chilling time after bulk fermentation can vary; 2 h is our suggested time, but the dough must be firm enough to handle. Alternatively, the dough can be chilled for up to 24 h before dividing, or it can be frozen for up to a month.
- When chilling the dough after bulk fermentation, place it on a lightly oiled silicone mat or plastic tray. Parchment paper, even if it's silicone, will get wet, stick to the dough, and break up into pieces. Unlined aluminum sheet pans will stain the dough gray. Spray the silicone-mat-lined sheet pan or plastic tray with oil, and place the dough in the pan.
- Perform a fold in the prepared pan to create a smooth surface on the top and bottom of the dough, and flatten it to the size of the sheet pan so that you have an even rectangle. Cover the dough by placing plastic wrap directly on the surface. If you are freezing the dough, wrap it tightly with a couple layers of plastic wrap.
- When checking for doneness, take the temperature of a single loaf outside a home oven. An open door will cause the oven temperature to drop dramatically. This is especially important when you are baking multiple loaves. If one loaf is fully baked, they all should be, so there's no reason to take the temperature of each loaf.
- Unlike most breads, especially lean breads, brioche doesn't suffer much retrogradation (staling) from being kept in the refrigerator. This is due to the high fat content in the dough and the eggs, which provide a combination of proteins (albumin), fat, and emulsifiers (lecithin) that all delay staling.
- Although it's wrong to assume that brioche will never stale in the refrigerator, it does take longer for it to stale. Why does this matter? If you own a café, deli, or sandwich shop, you can premake sandwiches with brioche buns and keep them refrigerated for up to 12 h. The key is that you use buns and not slices from a loaf. The buns have a crust that protects the crumb from drying out as long as you don't slice the bun and expose the cut surface to the air.
- We don't score our brioche loaves; unlike lean doughs, they don't require this step. Scoring is an option, however, for decorative purposes.
- Use a flour that can develop a strong gluten network. Remember, you'll be adding a significant amount of fat to the dough, and that fat can interfere with a flour's ability to form gluten bonds.
- The temperature of the ingredients matters: for brioche, you should always start with cold milk and cold eggs because mixing will heat up the dough and can cause the butter to melt and separate from the dough if it gets too warm. Do not use cold butter, though, because butter must be at room temperature to mix in properly.
- Don't mix these doughs by hand—your hands are warm enough to melt the butter. Instead, use an electric mixer or, if you don't have one, try our recipe for No-Knead Brioche (see page 242).
- Pay close attention to the instructions regarding when and how to add ingredients. For example, we recommend adding eggs in several stages, waiting until the first addition is fully incorporated before adding the second. Otherwise, you'll have a sloshy mess, and the dough will likely not come together.
- Start adding butter when the dough is between low and medium gluten development (see page 3-89). If you add fat too soon, it's going to take a long time to mix because fat interferes with gluten development. On the other hand, if you add it too late (when the amount of gluten development is significant), it will be hard to incorporate the butter into the dough.
- When the dough calls for adding fat in increments, divide the fat into portions (usually three or four) and add one portion at a time, waiting until one is fully incorporated before adding the next. Remember, you're making an emulsion, much like mayonnaise or a vinaigrette. If you simply add oil to either of those in one big jug, it won't incorporate with the other ingredients. Likewise, when it comes to making bread, dumping in all the fat at once will result in a greasy loaf because the fat effectively melts out of the dough.
- Mix until you've reached full gluten development (see page 3-89).
- You won't be able to handle these doughs very well unless they're cold, so chill them before shaping.
- Many of these breads are pan loaves, which means it's important to weigh out the right amount of dough for your pan (see How Much Can You Fit in a Pan?, page 212).
- When baking brioche in dry heat, never inject steam. If desired, you can fully steam brioche as you would steamed buns (see page 5-237).



Levain Brioche (see page 240)



We recommend mixing brioche using a machine rather than your hands because it makes it much easier to incorporate all the butter before mixing to full gluten development.



Modernist Brioche (see page 222)