



California Date and Sausage Swirl Rolls

Makes about 9 Servings

Chef's note: The spices here are optional! This is good without them too.

Ingredients

1 cup pitted California dates (preferably medjool), about 165g
+ 6 more pitted dates, finely chopped
1 pound bulk mild Italian sausage
1 teaspoon garam masala
1/4 teaspoon Kashmir chili powder (Optional. Substitute: sweet paprika or cayenne pepper)
1/4 teaspoon turmeric
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons Calvados (apple brandy)
2 tablespoons avocado oil
Handful minced cilantro
Zest of 1 lemon
Handful of pistachios, chopped

Dough:

1 1/4 cups whole milk, at room temperature
2 envelopes instant or rapid-rise yeast (4 1/2 teaspoons)
1 teaspoon date sugar, plus 2 tablespoons extra (substitute: white granulated sugar)
2 3/4 cups (390g) all purpose flour
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted + 2 tablespoons extra

Directions

- 1) Pop dates into a small bowl, cover with steaming hot water. Allow to soak as you cook the sausage.
- 2) Place bulk sausage into a medium heavy-bottomed stainless steel or cast iron skillet, but don't break up the meat. Set the skillet over medium heat and cook until bottom turns golden brown. Now break up the sausage using a potato masher or a wooden spoon. If using spices, sprinkle with garam masala, Kashmir chili powder, and turmeric. Season with a little salt and lots of freshly ground black pepper. Stir well and cook until meat is no longer pink and a little golden brown all over.
- 3) Stir in apple cider vinegar and brandy, scraping up any brown bits from bottom of the skillet. Cook until evaporated, then scrape onto a plate to cool.
- 4) Drop dates into a food processor, reserving water. Drizzle in oil and a few tablespoons of the hot water. Pulse a few times, then run machine until smooth paste forms, adding more hot water as necessary (don't let the mixture get too runny though; it should have the consistency of apple butter).
- 5) Add cooled sausage mixture to the food processor and pulse a few times until sausage is more finely processed and mixture has come together. Scrape out into a bowl and set aside.

Dough:

- 1) Bloom yeast: on stovetop or in microwave, heat 1/4 cup milk to 110 degrees. Pour into a bowl, stir in yeast and 1 teaspoon date sugar. Let sit for 5 minutes, until bubbly. Meanwhile grease a 9-inch cast iron skillet, then line bottom with parchment and grease that too.
- 2) Whisk flour, baking powder, salt and 2 tablespoons date sugar together in a large bowl.
- 3) Switch to a silicone spatula and stir in 2 tablespoons melted butter, the bubbly yeast mixture and remaining 1 cup milk. Stir until a shaggy dough forms. Flour your counter and turn dough out onto it, then knead for just a couple of minutes until the dough comes together. Don't over knead or you'll end up with a tough dough!
- 4) Roll dough out to a 12-inch by 9-inch rectangle, with long edge facing you. Measure out a 1/2-inch border along the long side of the rectangle — keep this part free of any filling! Spread date-sausage mixture evenly over the remaining surface of the dough. Sprinkle chopped dates, pistachios, cilantro and lemon zest over the sausage mixture, pressing it all in gently.
- 5) Loosen dough from the counter using a bench scraper, then roll the dough away from into a tight roll. Pinch seam to seal, then roll onto the seam to secure.
- 6) Cut into 8 equal pieces with unflavored dental floss. Place a bun in the center, then remaining buns in the skillet, with seams facing in. Brush the buns with remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. Cover with a domed lid, and set aside to proof for 30 minutes at room temperature. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 7) Bake buns until edges are well browned, 30 to 40 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes. Serve!