

RUSSIAN BLACK BREAD

(from Cooks.com)

1/2 c. granulated sugar
2 c. boiling water
1/4 c. vinegar
1/4 c. butter
1 1/2 oz. unsweetened chocolate, cut in 6 pieces
3 (1/4 oz.) pkgs. active dry yeast
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
1/2 c. warm water
3 c. medium or dark rye flour
1 c. whole bran cereal
1/2 c. wheat germ
1 Tbsp. instant coffee granules
1 Tbsp. salt
2 tsp. caraway seeds, crushed
1/2 tsp. fennel seeds, crushed
1 tsp. onion powder
4 to 4 1/2 c. all purpose or bread flour
1 tsp. dark molasses blended with a pinch of salt and one tablespoon water for glaze (I just dusted the bread with flour)

In a large, heavy saucepan, stir granulated sugar over medium high heat until melted. Continue to stir until sugar smokes and is almost black. Slowly and carefully stir in 2 cups boiling water. This will cause mixture to smoke and sugar to lump and harden. Continue cooking and stirring until sugar is completely dissolved. Stir in vinegar, butter and chocolate. Set aside to cool, stirring occasionally to dissolve chocolate.

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast and brown sugar in 1/2 cup water. Let stand until foamy, 5 to 10 minutes. Add the cooled sugar mixture, 1 cup rye flour, bran cereal, wheat germ, coffee granules, salt, caraway seeds, fennel seeds, onion powder and 2 to 2 1/2 cups all purpose or bread flour. Beat with electric mixture for 2 minutes or by hand for 200 vigorous strokes. Stir in remaining rye flour and enough remaining all purpose or bread flour to make a stiff dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. Clean and grease bowl; set aside.

Knead dough 10-12 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Place dough in greased bowl, turning to coat all sides. Cover with a slightly damp towel. Let rise in a warm place, free from drafts, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. Grease 2 medium baking sheets or 2 round cake pans; set aside.

Punch down risen dough; knead 2 minutes. Divide dough in half; cover and let rest 10 minutes. Shape into 2 round loaves. Place on prepared baking sheets. Cover with a dry towel. Let rise until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 375F. Slash tops of loaves as desired; brush with molasses glaze or flour. Bake 30-35 minutes, brush again with glaze if using. Bake 10 minutes longer or until bread sounds hollow when tapped on bottom. Remove from pans and cool on rack.

Makes 2 loaves.

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