

Kuching Laksa bread – 4 Loaves

The laksa paste comes from Kuching, East Malaysian Borneo

Estimated total time 5-6 hours; “hands on” time 30 minutes

Step 1 – preparing the laksa paste

- Add 6 cups of water to a pot
- Add one 300gm package of laksa paste
- Simmer for 30 minutes
- Allow solution to cool to lukewarm (can speed cooling by adding some ice)
- Transfer solution into a 5 gallon plastic bucket. Do not strain. Solid material “dregs” add flavor and disappears in cooking

Step 2 – add 3 tablespoons yeast, one TBS at a time, to surface and stir in

Step 3 – add 1 ½ cups white sugar and stir in

Step 4 – add 2 cups dry milk powder and stir in

Wait 10 minutes

Step 5 – add 4 eggs. Separate yolk from white. Fold in beaten yolks, then stiffly beaten whites

Wait 30 minutes

Step 6 – add 2 cups Quaker oats

Step 7 – add 6 cups white flour, one cup at a time, stirring in small circles at surface of mixture

Step 8 – beat 100 times. Starting at edge of bowl, pull batter above surface and fold toward center, turning bucket one-quarter turn each time

Cover bucket with damp towel and set in warm place (85-100F; 30-38C).

Wait 60 minutes to let dough rise

From this point on, fold in rest of ingredients – do not stir

Step 9 – add 1/2 cup vegetable oil and 2-½ tablespoons salt to top of batter. Fold from edges to mix in, turning bucket in quarter turns.

Step 10 – add 6-8 cups of whole-wheat flour to surface of dough, one cup at a time. Fold wet mixture from sides of bowl on to top of dry ingredients, turning bucket quarter turns between folds. The dough is ready for kneading when it comes away from the sides of the bucket and can be turned onto the kneading surface (large breadboard or ceramic or plastic surface) in one lump. Scrape remaining scraps from bucket, rinse and oil bucket lightly.

Step 11 – Kneading the dough. Keep kneading surface floured to prevent dough from sticking. A flat plastic scraper is useful. Flour your hands. Pick up far half of dough and fold in half toward you. Push down and forward. Turn dough in quarter turns and repeat. Add flour to kneading surface and hands and sprinkle on top of dough as necessary (oiling hands may also help avoid sticking). This may take 2-3 cups more flour. You are finished when there is minimal sticking of the dough to the kneading surface and the ball is smooth and shiny

Step 12 – Roll dough towards its center from its edges, lift up and place into oiled bucket, smooth side down then turn over so that all surfaces are oiled preventing crust from forming

Cover with damp towel

Wait 60 minutes to let dough rise

Step 13 – punch down risen dough with fist 20 times

Cover with damp towel

Wait 45 minutes to let dough rise again

Step 14 – Preheat oven to 350F/175C

Step 15 – Turn dough onto large breadboard or ceramic or plastic surface. Shape into ball by folding dough to center all the way around. Turn smooth side up. Cut into four equal triangular sections.

Note – If you don't want to bake 4 loaves at this time, dough can be frozen and call be baked later after the dough reaches room temperature

Step 16 – knead, fold and turn each section six times. Then beginning at near edge roll up each section into log shape. Pinch seam together. Place dough smooth side down into oiled bread pan, then rotate smooth side up. Flatten dough with backs of fingers

Cover with moist towel

Wait 20 minutes to let rise

Step 17 – Cut top of loaf with serrated knife, ½ inch deep.

Step 18 – Paint top of loaf with an egg wash – one beaten egg with ¼ cup milk enough for all 4 loaves

Step 19 – bake at 350F/175C (reset electric oven to 325F/160C) for 45-60 minutes, adding more egg wash after 40 minutes. To see if done: top should be shiny golden brown and loaf resound with a deep hollow thump when tapped with finger.

Step 20 – remove from pans immediately.

When cool, bread can be kept in a sealed plastic bag in refrigerator or frozen.