Pumpkin Spice Pull-Apart Bread

1/2 cup milk

3/4 cup pumpkin puree

1/4 cup white sugar

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon salt

2 1/4 teaspoons (1 envelope) active dry yeast

2 1/2 cups bread flour

Filling Ingredients:

1 cup granulated sugar

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon fresh ground nutmeg

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Butter Rum Glaze Ingredients:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/8 cup brown sugar

1 tablespoon plus 1 1/2 teaspoons milk

1/2 cup powdered sugar

1/4 teaspoon rum (the original recipe called for extract, which I found too strong)

Directions:

Make the pull-apart bread dough: Grease and flour a loaf pan and set aside. In a saucepan over medium-high heat, brown the 2 tablespoons of butter. Let it bubble and foam and when you see it start to brown, stir it so that it browns evenly. When it’s the color of dark honey, remove it from the heat and pour it into a large heat-safe mixer bowl to cool. In the same saucepan over medium-low heat, warm the milk until it bubbles. Remove it from the heat and pour it into the bowl with the butter. Let these cool until they’re about 100-110 degrees F (use a candy thermometer to check). Set the saucepan aside for another use later. I use the same one throughout the entire recipe; why do more dishes?

Stir the sugar and yeast into the milk/butter mixture and let it sit for about 10 minutes to proof (it should foam; if it doesn’t, discard it yeast and try again with new yeast). Stir in pumpkin, salt, and 1 cup flour. If you haven’t already, fit your mixer with a dough hook. Add the rest of the flour 1/2 cup at a time, stirring between each addition. When the dough is combined, knead on low speed with a dough hook until smooth and elastic (about 4 minutes with a mixer).

Place the dough in a greased bowl and cover it with a damp cloth. Let it rise in a warm place for about an hour until it doubles in size (After it rises, you can put it in the fridge overnight to use it in the morning, but let it sit out for half an hour before rolling if you do.)

Make the filling: While the dough is rising, whisk the sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg together in a small bowl. Toward the end of the rising time, melt the 2 tablespoons of butter for the filling in the saucepan over medium-high heat and brown it as directed above. Put it in a small heat-safe bowl to cool for use later.

Shape and bake pull-apart bread: Knead a sprinkling of flour (about 1 tablespoon) into the dough, deflating it, and recover it. Let it sit to relax for 5 minutes. Flour a large work surface and turn your rested dough out onto it. Roll it out to a 20 inch long and 12 inch wide rectangle, lifting corners periodically to make sure it’s not sticking. If it seems to be snapping back, cover it with your damp towel and let it rest for 5 minutes before continuing (I had to do this twice during the process).

Spread the browned butter over the surface of the dough with a pastry brush and then sprinkle the sugar mixture over the top, patting it down to ensure it mostly sticks. Joy the Baker encourages you to use it all even though it seems like a ton, but I admit I got squeamish at the amount and only used most. It was fine despite my nerves. Go ahead and pile it on.

With the long edge of the rectangle toward you, cut it into 6 strips (do this by cutting the rectangle in half, then cutting each half into equal thirds. I used a pizza cutter). Stack these strips on top of one another and cut the resulting stack into 6 even portions (again, cut it in half, and then cut the halves into equal thirds). Place these portions one at a time into your greased loaf pan, pressing them up against each other to fit them all in. Cover the pan with your damp cloth and place it in a warm place for 30-45 minutes to double in size.

While dough rises, preheat oven to 350 degrees F (or 325 if you have a glass loaf dish instead of a metal pan). When it’s risen, place the loaf in the center of the oven and bake for 30-35 minutes until dark golden brown on top (if you take it out at light golden brown, it’s liable to be raw in the middle, so let it get good and dark). Cool for 20-30 minutes on a cooling rack in the loaf pan while you make the glaze.

Make the glaze: In your saucepan, bring the butter, milk, and brown sugar to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove it from heat, add the powdered sugar and rum, and whisk it to a smooth consistency.

Assemble and serve: Use a butter knife to loosen all sides of the bread from the loaf pan and gently turn it out onto a plate. Place another plate on top and flip it to turn it right side up. Drizzle glaze over top. Serve each piece slightly warm with a drizzle of glaze.