



Irish soda bread



Ingredients:

- 4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 3/4 cups cold buttermilk or kefir
- 1 large egg, beaten (optional)
- 1 cup raisins or dried cranberries (optional)

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Grease a 10-inch cast iron skillet or baking sheet.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar (if using), salt, and baking soda.
3. Using a pastry cutter or your fingers, work the cold butter into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs.
4. Stir in raisins or dried cranberries (if using).
5. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, whisk together buttermilk and egg (if using). Pour the wet ingredients into the well and gently mix with a fork until a shaggy dough forms.
6. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead just a few times until it comes together. Avoid overworking the dough.
7. Shape the dough into a round loaf and place it on the prepared pan.
8. Use a sharp knife to score an X across the top of the loaf.
9. Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until a golden brown crust forms and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
10. Let the bread cool slightly before slicing and serving.