

Ultra-Soft Pain au Lait: The Ultimate French Milk Bread Recipe

If there is one scent that defines a cozy morning in a French bakery, it's the aroma of



OVEN
350°F

TIME
10 min

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INGREDIENTS

500g Flour: Use bread flour for a better chew, or all-purpose for a softer bite.
10g Dried Yeast: Ensure it is fresh so your bread rises beautifully.
250ml Warm Milk: Whole milk provides the best fat content for softness.
1 Egg: Room temperature is best.
50g Softened Butter: High-quality unsalted butter is key.
80g Sugar: For that classic subtle sweetness.
1 tsp Salt: To balance the flavors.
1 Egg Yolk: Mixed with a splash of milk for the egg wash.
Optional: Shredded coconut or pearl sugar for decoration.

DIRECTIONS

1. **Activate the Yeast:** In a small bowl, combine your warm milk (not hot, or you'll kill the yeast!), sugar, and yeast. Let it sit for about 10 minutes. You're looking for a foamy, bubbly head to form on top. This ensures your yeast is alive and ready to work.
2. **Mix the Dough:** In a large mixing bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, add your yeast mixture, the egg, softened butter, and salt. Gradually incorporate the flour.
3. **By Hand:** Knead for 10-15 minutes until the dough is smooth and no longer sticks to your fingers.
4. **By Mixer:** Use the dough hook attachment on medium-low speed for about 8 minutes.
5. **The First Rise:** Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl. Cover it with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and leave it in a warm, draft-free spot for 1 hour. It should double in size.
6. **Shaping:** Gently punch down the dough to release the air. Divide it into equal portions (usually 10-12 pieces). Roll them into smooth balls or oblong "mini-loaf" shapes. Place them in a greased baking pan, leaving a little space between them.
7. **The Second Rise:** Cover the pan and let the rolls rest for another 30-40 minutes. They will expand and start to touch each other, creating those soft, pull-apart edges we love.
8. **Glaze and Bake:** Preheat your oven to 180°C (350°F). Brush the tops gently with your egg wash. Bake for 20-25 minutes until the tops are deep golden brown.
9. **Final Touches:** Once removed from the oven, you can brush them with a little melted butter and sprinkle with shredded coconut or sugar for a sweet finish.

SWAPS & NOTES

Sweetness: If you plan on using these strictly for savory sliders, you can reduce the sugar to 40g.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Temperature is Key: Make sure your milk is "lukewarm" (around 110°F).

If it's too hot, it kills the yeast; too cold, and it won't wake up.

Don't Rush the Rise: If your kitchen is cold, put the dough in the oven with only the oven light turned on.

Measure by Weight: For baking, using a scale for the flour (500g) is much more accurate than using cups, which can lead to dry bread.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/ultra-soft-pain-au-lait-the-ultimate-french-milk-bread-recipe/>