

Colonial Rolls (Madison Cakes)

President James Madison and Dolly Madison

These rolls have the characteristic golden brown, rounded, smooth top of a classic dinner roll; we like to bake them rather tightly spaced, in a 9 x 13-inch pan, so that they crowd each other and become pull-apart rolls, with unbrowned sides, as they're baking. For round rolls that are browned all over, place them in a larger pan, farther apart, so that they won't touch one another while they're baking.

2 eggs

1/3 cup (2 1/2 ounces) sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

6 tablespoons (3 ounces) butter

1 cup (7 1/4 ounces) unseasoned mashed potatoes, lightly packed*

2 1/2 teaspoons instant yeast

3/4 cup water (potato water, if possible)

4 1/4 cups (18 ounces) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour

*1 medium-to-large baking potato will yield 8 ounces of mashed potato.

Manual/Mixer Method: In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine all of the ingredients, and mix until the dough starts to leave the sides of the bowl. Transfer the dough to a lightly greased or floured surface, and knead it for 6 to 8 minutes, or until it's smooth and shiny. Or knead it in a mixer, using the dough hook. Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl or rising bucket, turn to coat, cover the container with plastic wrap, and let the dough rise till it's doubled in bulk, about 90 minutes.

Bread Machine Method: Place all the ingredients into the pan of your bread machine in the order recommended by the manufacturer (usually, liquids first, yeast last). Program the machine for dough or manual, and press Start. Check the dough about 10 minutes before the end of the final kneading cycle and adjust its consistency as necessary by adding additional water or flour to form a soft, smooth ball. Allow the machine to complete its cycle, then allow the dough to remain in the machine till it's doubled in bulk, perhaps an additional 30 minutes or so.

Shaping: To make stand-alone rolls, divide the dough into 16 equal pieces. If you want to make soft-sided, pull-apart rolls, divide the dough into 15 pieces. This isn't as challenging as it sounds: first, divide the dough into three equal pieces (about 375g, 14 ounces, each). Pinch off one piece, about the size of a racquetball or handball (75g, 2 3/4 ounces), off each of the three pieces, setting the pinched-off pieces aside; then simply divide what's left of the three pieces into four pieces each. Presto! Fifteen balls of dough. Gently roll the dough balls under your cupped fingers till they're nice and round.

Place the 16 dough balls onto a parchment-lined or lightly greased baking sheet or sheets, leaving about 2 inches between them. Or place the 15 dough balls into a lightly

greased 9 x 13-inch pan, spacing them evenly in five rolls of three balls each. Cover the pan(s) with a proof cover or lightly greased plastic wrap, and allow the rolls to rise for about 2 hours, till they're quite puffy; the rolls in the 9 x 13-inch pan should be touching (or almost touching) one another.

Baking: Bake the rolls in a preheated 350°F oven for 20 to 25 minutes, till they're golden brown. Remove them from the oven, carefully turn them out of the pan -- the pull-apart rolls will come out all in one piece -- and brush them with melted butter, if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature. *Yield: 15 or 16 rolls.*