

Yule Feast Parsley Bread (Recipe makes 2 large size loaves)

2 pkgs active dry yeast	6 T melted butter or oil
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ c warm water	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ t dried rosemary
6 T honey	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ t dried basil
7 to 8 c (or more) unbleached white flour	$\frac{2}{3}$ c finely chopped fresh parsley
6 small whole eggs plus one yolk	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ t cinnamon
$\frac{2}{3}$ c currants, softened in warm water	Several drops green food coloring – not necessary if using blender
1 $\frac{2}{3}$ T coarse salt	Butter for greasing pans

1. Sprinkle yeast on $\frac{1}{2}$ c of the warm water; stir in honey. Let sit for 5 minutes.
2. Add remaining water; beat in about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 cups of flour. Beat about 200 strokes. Cover with damp towel, put in warm place and allow this sponge to rise for 30 to 45 minutes, or until doubled. Stir down.
3. Beat five eggs plus yolk. Stir in currants. Beat in salt and melted butter or oil. Mix into dough.
4. * In a mortar crush the dried herbs and chopped parsley to a paste. Mix in cinnamon. Add to batter and beat well. Bread should be delicate green hue. If color from parsley isn't strong enough, add green food coloring—sparingly. Add remaining flour first with a spoon, then with hands, until dough comes away from sides of bowl.
5. Turn out into lightly floured board or marble and knead until smooth, shiny, and elastic, about 10-12 minutes, adding small amount of flour if necessary.
6. Place in buttered bowl; cover with damp towel. Let rise in warm place until doubled in bulk, about 50 minutes. Punch down; cover; let rise again until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes. (This rise, though unnecessary, gives bread a finer texture.)
7. Punch down. Turn out onto floured surface. Let rest for 5 minutes. Shape into 2 free-form curls or twists. Place on buttered cookie sheet. Cover lightly with damp towel and let rise in warm place to double, about 25 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Brush loaf or loaves with remaining whole egg, beaten. Bake for about 50 minutes, or until nicely browned and loaf sounds hollow when rapped on top and bottom. Cool on rack.

* This step is easily done using blender or food processor. Add eggs to this mixture, then add to dough.