

Mak (Poppy Seed)
from
Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food
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First you have to grow poppy. Many row, right up to front door and down to front gate. I bring mak, poppy seed, in lining of skirt to Canada. In Ukraina, we even have *Makovyj Spas*, summer holiday to celebrate poppy harvest. Here, they not want you brew nice cough syrup, make you sleep. I go talk to pharmacist about this. She try to sell me cough syrup, tell me I can't make from poppy seed.

I say, "What in this super duper cough syrup, so expensive?"

She say, "Come from poppy seed."

I get mad, say, "What I trying tell you? You some kind thief, tell me I can't grow my own poppy seed to make cough syrup." Next day, RCMP come talk to all Baba in neighbourhood.

But I too smart for them. I show them patch poppy from stupid weak Canadian seed, not kind make cough syrup. They smile and say, "Please," and "Thank you," like I crazy old woman, not know what they want. Soviet Union terrible, but at least when soldiers come, they not act polite, and I know they coming steal my thing.

Then this real handsome RCMP officer come back after work. He take me out and show me his big black horse. We laugh and drink horilka, then go for musical ride. He tell me he going to fix it so I never be bothered about poppy again. Ha! Baba always get her man.

Anyway, once poppy come out of ground with pointy leaf, every day you have to talk to them. I know you read book tell you tell big story to plant, play them music, and so on like New Age thing. I show you Old Age thing. Baba stand over baby poppy, point finger and say, "You! Bloom!" and she bloom. Make big red flower, so beautiful.

Once poppy bloom, pick whole bunch and hang from rope on ceiling until they dry. Then shake little seed into brown paper bag until you have whole cup. This not take so long as you think.

If you need syrup for bad cough and sleep, you come see Baba. Also if you want have baby with no big pain.

Makivnyk (Poppy Seed Roll)

Poppy seed is yet nother kind of symbol for fertility. By now you having idea: almost everything in Ukraina is some kind symbol for fertility. When we not doing it, we baking, singing or making poetry about it. Now we going to roll in it, which is what you been waiting for.

Even if you that poor, is always possible to make romance. And somehow, we always find enough food for our *dityny*, children.

This *makivnyk* is little bit more complicate than poppy seed cookie or cake. Very impressive on holiday table. Baba make for boyfriend as birthday cake, and he was relieve to not have some frou-frouing frosty icing thing. Roll have more attractive look to man. It look kind of like shock absorber.

Day before: Pour milk over mak. Cover bowl and put in fridge overnight. This sacred Ukrainian ritual. Or, scald mak with boiling water. Let sit for one hour, then strain. Then poppy seed will taste sweet, not bitter. **Let mak sit overnight to dry out. Then, grind mak.** You know of course that Baba use her mortar and pestle. Where you think Ukrainski legend of Baba Yaga come from? But people is weak, nowadays. Use your coffee grinder, finest setting on food processor or this crazy Nutribullet machine.

Test your dry yeast with sugar in warm water. If it don't bubble, throw out. Yes, this happen, even to Baba. Is fault of yeast for being past expiring date or being store in too warm place. Your fault, really, but Ukrainski psychologist say is healthier to blame somebody. Baba always do.

Lukewarm scald milk. This mean you boil but never till it burn. If it burn, you know what to do.

Sift flour. Put aside one half cup.

Mix milk, yeast mix and half cup flour into pasty mess. Baba know this don't look like promising start. **But next come mixing butter, sugar, egg and salt, and add to yeast mix.** Now we cooking with gas. Whatever that mean. Sound almost like you should take little walk outside.

You back already? Situation has even improved around here. **Mix in lemon zest, real vanilla and rest of flour.**

Here is, for you anyway, bad news. You going to knead this mix ten whole minute. Is not going to get tough elastic feel like bread dough, so don't keep nagging at it.

Lift ball of soft dough into biggest bowl you grease with maslo, butter.

Cover with cleanest cloth you got and go away till dough is double up or nothing. About forty minute.

Give it good punch till it say, “Oooof!” then leave it alone to rise again.

Make rolling so dough is one big rectangle sheet, about one quarter inch thick. Keep picture in your mind you going to need to roll this sucker around filling. Too thick, and it will be like when you trying to roll sleeping bag on camping trip. Too thin, and you will look like *I Love Lucy* episode.

Once you is sure you know what is going on, **beat up one egg white and brush this onto surface of dough.** Save yolk for your hangover. Quick make Bleeding Mary and throw in yolk. Swallow quick.

Makivnyk Filling:

Don't turn on oven yet. Makivnyk got one more rising to go.

Mix together ground mak with lemon or orange zest and liquid honey. Like always, Baba promoting that unique Ukrainian taste, buckwheat honey. And she have nother trick: **mix together fresh orange and lemon juice**, not one or the other. Between these two flavor, not even most sneak head gourmet person will be able to guess how your filling made.

Unless you cooking for Ukrainian cultural centre. Then all baba will surround you and fight how much of each you actual use, and in which province mak was harvest. But you will hear some good story about them being arrested in Canada for poppy, that is for sure!

Spread filling nice and even on dough. Roll roll roll like jelly roll.

Grease up baking sheet. Put makivnyk on this, and let rise again about half hour.

Turn oven to 350 degree F.

Make several slash with knife on top of roll in diagonal way. This is anger management exercise. Not really. It help steaming escape so makivnyk don't end up looking like blowfish. Or shock absorber, if you cooking for man.

Bake ten minute, then turn oven down to sloooooow, or 300 degree for fifty minute.

Beat up egg yolk and brush it on makivnyk ten minute before she finish baking. Take out of oven first. And this way Baba expect you to read whole recipe through first. Otherwise you ending up with egg on face.

One extra super special bonus: Baba promise you back in *Rohalyky* (Almond Crescent) recipe, *Chapter Twenty Three*, you can make *mak rohalyky*. Is true! Just stuff them with mak filling, like she just show you.

Ingredient List:

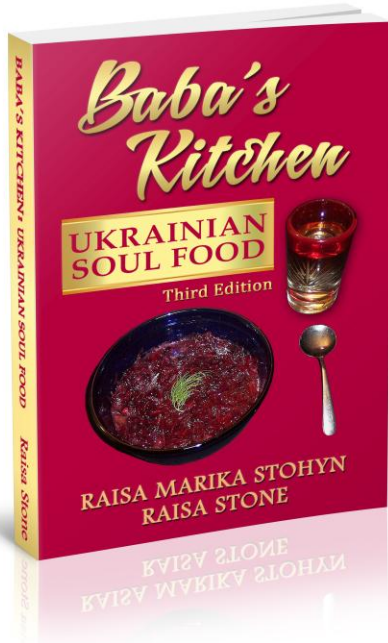
- Yeast, one package or one tablespoon
- White sugar, one teaspoon
- Warm water, one quarter cup
- Milk, one half cup
- Cake flour, three and one half cups
- Butter, one quarter cup plus extra to grease bowl
- White or brown sugar, one third cup
- Eggs, two medium
- Salt, one quarter teaspoon
- Vanilla, one half teaspoon
- Lemon zest, one teaspoon
- Flour, three cups

Filling

- Poppy seed, two and one half cups ground
- Lemon or orange zest, one tablespoon
- Fresh lemon juice, one tablespoon
- Fresh orange juice, one tablespoon
- Liquid honey, one half cup
- Egg white, one to brush on dough before filling
- Egg yolk, one to brush on makivnyk while baking

*This recipe is from **Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food: 200 traditional Ukrainian recipes**, and many outrageous stories from Stalinist survivors. **Entire Christmas chapter!** For purchase, visit:*

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Smachnoho i veselikh svyat!
Eat good food,
Happy Holidays &
Merry Christmas!

~Baba Raisa

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