

BIG IDEAS



THE GASTRONAUT FILES

DIY Parker House Rolls

Tender, buttery and sweet, with a sprinkling of crunchy salt on top, chef Alex Guarnaschelli's rolls are delicious enough to start a bread-basket riot.

Parker House rolls are so good, says chef Alex Guarnaschelli, that they inspire something akin to anger. "It's hostility and unbridled passion—like, 'These rolls! Dammit!'" she says. "But if you're going to have a bread basket in 2014, it better be incredible." Guarnaschelli learned her baking method from pioneering American chef Larry Forgione; today, she serves the uncommonly delicious rolls—yeasty, sweet and buttery, with crunchy salt on top—at her New York City restaurant, Butter. She likes the rolls warm from the oven, or cooled, pulled apart and toasted, which creates a sensational contrast of soft and crispy. Turn the page for her recipe.

—SARAH DIGREGORIO

Parker House Rolls

Active 35 min; Total 2 hr 55 min; Makes 3 dozen rolls

These rolls are “deep Americana,” says Guarnaschelli. This recipe makes a big batch, but the unbaked rolls freeze well.

One ¼-oz. package active dry yeast	2 large eggs, lightly beaten
½ cup warm water	1 Tbsp. kosher salt
½ cup sugar	7½ to 8 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for shaping
2 sticks unsalted butter, melted and cooled (1 cup)	Flaky sea salt, for sprinkling
2 cups whole milk, at room temperature	

Step 1 Make the Dough

In a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, mix the yeast with the water and 1 teaspoon of the sugar. Let stand until foamy, 10 minutes. Beat in the remaining sugar, ¾ cup of the butter and the milk, eggs and kosher salt. At low speed, stir in the 7½ cups of flour until the dough comes together; add more flour by the tablespoon, if necessary. Mix at medium speed until the dough forms a loose ball around the hook, 3 minutes. Brush a large bowl with some of the melted butter. Transfer the dough to the bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let stand in a warm spot until doubled in bulk, 1½ hours.

Step 2 Form the Rolls

Preheat the oven to 375° and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Scrape the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and shape it into a 9-by-16-inch rectangle. Using a floured knife, cut the dough lengthwise into 3 strips, then cut each strip crosswise into 12 small strips. Working with 1 piece at a time, fold it unevenly so the top half slightly overlaps the bottom half. Tuck the overhang under and place the roll seam side down on a baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough, forming 2 rows of 9 rolls on each baking sheet. Each roll should just touch its neighbors, but leave about 4 inches between the rows.

Step 3 Bake the Rolls

Bake the rolls for about 18 minutes, until browned; rotate the baking sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking. Immediately brush the rolls with the remaining melted butter and sprinkle with sea salt. Transfer the rolls to a rack and let cool for 15 minutes before serving. To reheat, toast in a 350° oven for about 10 minutes.

MAKE AHEAD The fully formed unbaked rolls can be frozen for up to 1 month. Bake from frozen.

How to Shape the Rolls



1

Turn the risen dough out onto a lightly floured work surface.



2

Form a large rectangle, then cut the dough into strips.



3

Fold each strip unevenly so the top half slightly overlaps the bottom half.



4

Place the rolls snugly in 2 rows, 4 inches apart, on baking sheets.

How to Finish the Rolls



1

After baking, brush the rolls with melted butter and season with crunchy sea salt.



2

Let the rolls cool slightly on a wire rack before serving.



The rolls get a double dose of butter: in the dough and as a finishing glaze.