



As some might know, I have been on a quest to find proper butter for making pastries for quite some time. The issue in Canada is finding butter with a high enough fat content. North American butter is very different than European. The higher moisture content makes pastries a little flabbier, and flabby just won't do when it comes to croissants. I was recently at a little Polish deli and noticed they had butter. Fatty butter! If I am going to the trouble of making pastry, the results better be worth it, and I figured this butter might just be the ticket. I was very pleased with the results, much better than when I've used regular Canadian butter. It's a fun project, great for a chilly weekend.

PAIN AU CHOCOLAT / CROISSANTS

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. yeast
- ½ cup water
- Pinch of sugar or honey
- ½ cup milk
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1½ cups plus 2 tbsp. unsalted butter*, barely softened, plus 3 tbsp., melted and cooled
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- 4 cups flour
- 18 ½"-wide x 3"-long bittersweet chocolate bars
- 1 egg mixed with 1 tbsp. water, for egg wash



Preparation:

1. Stir together yeast, a pinch of sugar and ½ cup very warm water together in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in milk, sugar, 3 tbsp. melted butter and salt; add flour. Mix on medium speed until a stiff dough forms, about 5-7 minutes. Transfer to a work surface and form into a square; wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours.
2. Place remaining butter on a sheet of plastic wrap or parchment; cover with another sheet. Using a rolling pin, pound and shape butter into a 6", ½"-thick square; set aside. Using rolling pin, roll dough into an 16" square on a lightly floured work surface. Unwrap butter square, and place on dough so its corners line up with the middle point of each side of dough square; fold dough corners over butter so they meet in the center. Roll dough into a 12" x 9" rectangle, and then tri-fold dough like a letter. Roll the dough into a 12" x 9" rectangle and repeat folding. Wrap in plastic wrap; chill for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Repeat rolling and folding dough twice more; chill for 1-2 hour.
3. Roll dough into a 20" x 14" x ¼" thick sheet; halve lengthwise. Cut each half into about 9 triangles, about 3 ½"-wide at their base; cut a ½"-deep slit in the middle of each wide base. Place 1 chocolate bar parallel to the base near the cut; holding the tip of the opposite corner down, roll the base over the chocolate toward the tip until it forms a tight roll. Place croissant on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, tip side down, and brush with egg wash. Repeat with remaining triangles, bars, and egg wash. Let croissants sit until doubled in size, about 2 ½-3 hours. For regular croissant, simply omit the chocolate.

Preparation:

4. To make more traditional pain au chocolat, cut 3 ½" wide rectangles from each 7" strip. Place first chocolate piece at bottom of rectangle. Roll over once. Place second chocolate piece and roll over again. Place on parchment-lined sheet keeping seam at the bottom.

Note: At the point before you put on egg wash, you can freeze the croissants. Place on a baking sheet until frozen then put in a sturdy freezer bag. Take the croissants out of the freezer the night before and let proof overnight on a parchment-lined sheet. Cover with a tea towel. Once proofed, bake as below.

5. Heat oven to 380°. Working with one baking sheet at a time, brush croissants with more egg wash; bake until deep golden brown, about 20-24 minutes.

* In Canada, standard butter has a higher water content. Try finding butter with around 85% milk fat or higher. There are some places that carry "European-style" butter that might work. Or you might find French or other

European butters at some specialty shops. Bonne chance!

