

Extra Crusty Buns (Birote Style) – *Pan extra crujiente (estilo birote)*

Ingredients

Pre-fermented starter (pata, poolish, mother dough)

2 cups	flour
1 ¼ tsp	quick rise instant yeast
1 ½ cups	lukewarm water
1 tsp	sugar; optional (recommended for cold weather)

Dough

4 cups	flour
3 ¼ tsp	quick rise instant yeast
1 ½ cups	lukewarm water (or more, as needed)
1 tsp	salt
1 batch	pre-fermented starter (above)

To spray

1 cup	water
1 tsp	salt; optional



To prepare the pre-fermented starter (Active time about half an hour, plus 6-8 hr resting time): If using sugar, dissolve in half a cup of lukewarm water. Sprinkle yeast over and gently mix. Add this mix and the rest of the lukewarm water to the flour, and incorporate with hands or a spatula. Continue mixing until the dough may be formed into a ball, and it is coming off the bottom of the bowl; it will still be quite sticky. Cover dough with a clean kitchen towel, and place in a warm spot, away from drafts. **Let rest for at least 6 hours.** Punch the dough with a spatula or knife; it will deflate like a balloon. Form into a ball again. Cover with towel and set aside.

To prepare the dough (About 2.5 hours plus baking time): Prepare two baking sheets by covering with parchment paper; reserve. Mix half a cup of lukewarm water with one tablespoon from the flour; sprinkle yeast over water/flour mix and gently stir. In a large bowl, mix the rest of the flour with the salt, then pour yeast mixture in; add the pre-fermented starter, then incorporate everything together. Continue mixing, adding lukewarm water gradually, until a ball may be formed. Transfer ball to a working surface sprinkled with flour. Knead dough with both hands, pulling and folding, until it becomes elastic and does not stick to the working surface or hands, approximately ten minutes. Divide into twelve portions, about 4 oz (120 g) each; roll each portion into a ball, place in a bowl and keep covered with a kitchen towel. Working with one ball at a time, use hands to press and flatten ball gradually, pinching and folding to form an elongated shape. The final shape should be a tapered cylinder, about seven inches long by one inch in diameter at the thickest cross-section. Place on prepared baking sheet, seam facing down; continue with each dough ball, placing six cylinders per sheet. Cover trays with kitchen towels and let rest in a warm spot until the cylinders rise and look puffy.

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Score each bun along the centre with a very sharp knife. In the photo below, it may be appreciated that the buns have developed a skin, and the knife did not make a clean line. Spray the buns before placing in preheated oven. Bake in trays for 15 minutes. Increase temperature to 400°F (200°C), and switch top tray to bottom, and bottom to top, rotating trays so the front side faces the back, for another 15 minutes of baking. After that, check every five minutes, baking until the buns are crispy and golden brown. Transfer to a cooling rack.