

Chocolate custard matcha buns

These are the perfect sweet treat for days when it's too hot to turn on the oven. The buns are scorched in a frying pan, so they get caramelised and crisp on the outside, then burst with molten chocolate goo when you tear into them. In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, stir together the warm milk, sugar and yeast. Leave for 5 minutes, or until frothy, then stir in the yoghurt, aquafaba and oil. Add the flour, salt and matcha and mix well.

Makes 8

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Prep time: 30 minutes (plus proving and setting time)

Cooking time: 30 minutes

½ cup (125 ml) lukewarm plant milk
4 tablespoons white sugar
1 packet (2½ teaspoons) active dried yeast
¼ cup (70 g) vegan yoghurt or coconut milk
¼ cup (60 ml) aquafaba (page 11)
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2½ cups (300 g) sifted plain flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1½ teaspoons matcha powder
white sesame seeds, for coating

Chocolate custard

scant 1¼ cups (300 ml) soy milk
1½ tablespoons custard powder
3 tablespoons white sugar
2 teaspoons cocoa powder
pinch of salt
½ teaspoon vanilla paste or
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest – optional

Now knead the dough, either by using the dough hook attachment of the stand mixer or by hand, tipping the dough out onto a well-floured countertop. It is ready when it's smooth and elastic – this should take 7–10 minutes of kneading. Shape it into a ball and put it back in the bowl, then cover with a clean tea towel and leave somewhere warm to rise until it has doubled in size, about an hour.

Meanwhile, make the chocolate custard. Put all the ingredients into a saucepan and mix together until no lumps remain. Set the pan over medium heat and bring to the boil, stirring constantly. Lower the heat and let it simmer for 10 minutes, still stirring constantly, so the custard thickens evenly and doesn't become lumpy. Pour the custard into a heatproof bowl and chill in the fridge for at least an hour, or until set.

Punch the risen dough down, to knock out some of the air, then tip out onto a floured countertop and divide into eight.

Use a rolling pin to roll out each ball into an oval about 13 cm x 7.5 cm. Take the custard from the fridge and dollop a generous tablespoonful in the middle, then fold the dough over the custard, pinching the edges together firmly to seal well. Pat down gently to flatten the buns and spread the filling. Once all the buns are filled, set them aside for 5–10 minutes, until lightly puffed. Coat both sides of the buns with sesame seeds, pressing them onto the surface.

To cook, heat a large non-stick frying pan (with a lid) over medium heat and fit 2–3 buns in the pan, leaving a bit of space in between for them to expand as they cook. Cover and cook for 5–6 minutes or until the bottoms of the buns are golden brown and crisp. Flip them over and cook for 5–6 minutes on the other side.

These buns are best served warm, so the custard oozes out when you take a bite!

— Aquafaba

This ingredient is perhaps the most elusive in the book. It is not a weird Asian ingredient at all, but something almost everyone will have sitting in their pantry at this very moment. Aquafaba means ‘bean water’, and it is the slightly viscous liquid that you find in a tin of chickpeas. It is an excellent egg substitute in baking, and I adore cooking with it. In fact, you can use the liquid from pretty much any type of bean, although I do suggest using a white bean so it doesn’t affect the colour of the final dish too much. Whenever I open a tin of beans, I drain the aquafaba into ice-cube trays and pop them in the freezer. If you make each cube with 1 or 2 tablespoons, you’ll know how much to take out and melt when you need to use some aquafaba in your baking.

Jackfruit and Blue Ginger: Asian favourites, made vegan by Sasha Gill (Murdoch Books, £18.99).