Bread & baking / Japan

Hokkaido Milk Bread

Impossibly soft and pillowy, each slice of Hokkaido milk bread tears apart in long, silky sheets like fabric — sweet with warm dairy and faintly vanilla, with a pale golden crust that stays tender for days. The tangzhong roux is the secret: a cooked flour paste that locks moisture into the crumb.

Time 240 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 % Bread flour (high protein, 13%)
- ☐ 30 % Whole milk (for tangzhong)
- ☐ 10 % Heavy cream
- ☐ 1.8 % Fine sea salt
- ☐ 10 % Large egg (room temperature)
- ☐ 6 % Bread flour (for tangzhong)
- ☐ 30 % Whole milk (for dough, warmed)
- ☐ 8 % White sugar
- ☐ 2 % Instant yeast
- ☐ 10 % Unsalted butter (softened)

Let's make it.

01 Whisk the bread flour (6%) into the milk (30%) in a small saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula, until the mixture thickens to a paste and reaches 65 C (149 F) — about 3–4 minutes. You will see it transform from cloudy liquid to a thick, smooth, glossy paste that pulls away from the pan sides. Remove from heat, cover surface with cling film to prevent a skin, and cool to room temperature.

02 In a stand mixer bowl, combine flour, warmed milk, cream, sugar, salt, yeast, egg, and the cooled tangzhong. Mix on low with the dough hook for 3 minutes until a shaggy dough forms and no dry flour remains.

03 Increase mixer to medium. Knead 5 minutes until the dough is smooth. Add softened butter a tablespoon at a time, waiting for each piece to fully incorporate before adding the next. After all butter is in, continue kneading on medium-high for 8–10 minutes until the dough is extremely smooth, elastic, and passes a clean windowpane — a small piece stretched paper-thin between your fingers should be translucent without tearing.

04 Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and let rise at 28 C (82 F) until doubled, about 1–1.5 hours. Enriched doughs rise slower than lean doughs — the fat and sugar both retard the yeast. Don't rush with excess heat, which can melt the butter and compromise the texture.

05 Divide dough into 3 equal portions. Roll each flat, fold in thirds like a letter, then roll up tightly into a log. Place the three logs side by side in a buttered 23x13 cm Pullman loaf tin (or standard loaf tin). Cover and final-proof until the dough crests 2 cm above the tin rim, about 45–60 minutes. Brush gently with egg wash (1 egg + 1 tbsp milk). Bake at 175 C (350 F) for 30–35 minutes until deeply golden and internal temperature reaches 93 C.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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