

Homemade Cinnamon Rolls from Scratch (in 2 hours or less!)

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By LeAnn R. Ralph

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If I've heard it once, I've heard it a dozen times: "Make homemade cinnamon rolls? From scratch? Are you crazy? That takes all day!"

Actually, it depends upon the recipe.

I have several recipes for homemade cinnamon rolls that do, indeed, take at least all afternoon, if not all day -- scald the milk and let it cool to room temperature (30 minutes); mix the dough and let it raise for an hour (1.5 hours); punch down the dough and let it raise for another hour (1 hour); shape into cinnamon rolls and let raise for another hour (1.5 hours); and then, finally, bake the cinnamon rolls (30 minutes) -- for a grand total of 5 hours from start to finish.

But it doesn't have to be that way. You really can make homemade cinnamon rolls from scratch in two hours or less.

Here's my recipe: 2 cups of warm water 1/2 cup sugar 4 teaspoons dry yeast (or two packages of dry yeast) 2 eggs 1 teaspoon salt 1/3 cup Canola oil (I use Canola, but you can use any kind of cooking oil) (you can also use shortening, if you prefer) 6 to 7 cups of flour

Dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Let sit for a minute or two. Add the sugar and salt. Mix. Add the cooking oil (or shortening), 2 eggs, 2 cups of flour and beat until smooth.

Stir in 3 more cups of flour. Begin kneading the dough, adding the final cup of flour. If the dough seems too sticky, knead in more flour, a quarter to a half cup at a time.

Let the dough "rest" for 15 to 20 minutes. (I leave it sitting on the counter and use the time to wash up the bowl and other utensils and to clean off the counter top.)

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Roll the dough into a rectangle that's 24 to 30 inches long by about 16 inches wide. Spread with soft butter and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Starting at the wide end, roll into a log.

Cut the cinnamon rolls into equal sized slices (approximately one inch wide each or slightly more) and place into two greased 9x13 pans. Put in a warm place to rise for 45 minutes.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes (or until the cinnamon rolls are golden brown).

Allow to cool for 5 minutes and then turn out of the pans.

This recipe makes two dozen cinnamon rolls. If you want REALLY BIG cinnamon rolls, cut into 12 equal pieces 2 inches wide.

Total amount of time needed from start to finish (including time to bake) is about 2 hours.

LeAnn R. Ralph is the author of the book, Christmas in Dairyland (True Stories from a Wisconsin Farm) (trade paperback) (August 2003). She is working on her next book, Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam, which will be available later in 2004. Read sample chapters and other Rural Route 2 stories at

Handmade Ornaments For The Christmas Tree

By Marianne Jackson

Get ready for Christmas, it will be here before you know it. Decorating the Christmas tree can be either an exciting, fun task or it can become expensive and can seem like more trouble than its worth. If you begin early enough you may just find that homemade ornaments are inexpensive and a lovely way to spend time with the family. The only limitation being your imagination and by doing a little bit of research, the internet has some great ideas, you can begin a new family tradition. Every holiday you can add to your new homemade ornaments collection.

You can cut costs amazingly by using last years Christmas wrap. Everyone always has some of last years rolls hidden away and you did buy them in the first place because you thought that they were very attractive. Make simple patterns on your rolls of paper and fold them into different shapes, such as stars, moons or fan shape. Next, glue on an attractive ribbon so that your ornaments can be attached to the Christmas tree. With a little bit of research, you may even want to try your hand at a bit of origami; it really isn't as hard as you may think. Also think about your old Christmas cards your family and friends sent, nice aren't they? You may want to consider cutting them into different shapes and use a hole punch to add some pretty ribbon to attach them to your tree, you can even use them to make frames. If you use your imagination you will be able to come up with all sorts of ideas.

Of course the edible kinds of decorations and ornaments are always a lot of fun for big and little

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children alike. There is the traditional popcorn stringing or you might want to consider using cranberries or nuts. Gingerbread cookies cut into different shapes are a fun idea as well. There are many recipes out there mixing flour, water, cinnamon and cornstarch that you can find to use with cookie cutters that make some very nice ornaments. Another kind of ornament can be made from tin. You can find supplies at a craft or hardware stores. You will need tin snips, and a hole punch for metal to make the holes, and then you just need the tin sheets or rolls. Some caution should be used with this craft due to the sharp edges of the tin. You can find clear plastic or glass ornaments at a craft store that you can paint with any design that you wish on the outside. Some of them you may want to pour some paint inside of the ornament and swirl it around for a beautiful unique design. You can also fill them up with different objects using the old imagination, such as bright snippets of ribbon, or little tiny glittered pine cones.

Beads and bead kits can be used to make some spectacular decorations or you can simply string them. You can also find many different ideas and kits at the craft store, spend an hour or so walking around and you will come up with some very great , original ideas. Whatever kind of homemade decorations you and your family can come up with will bring you together to make some lasting memories and quality, family time. And an awesome looking Christmas tree too.

Marianne Jackson is a staff writer at

and is an occasional contributor

to several other websites, including

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