

## New Jersey Crumb Buns

From America's Test Kitchen

Serves 12

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

*We found that we could pile the crumb topping high on this cake—just like they do in Jersey—by paying special attention to the types of flour and sugar we used in each layer. Using all-purpose flour in the cakey base made it satisfyingly chewy. Cake flour, which is finer and lower in protein than all-purpose flour, gave the topping its signature soft crumbs. Just the right mix of white and brown sugars ensured that the crumb buns had the optimal flavor and texture.*

### INGREDIENTS

#### CAKE

2 ¼ cups (11 1/4 ounces) all-purpose flour  
¾ cup milk  
¼ cup (1 3/4 ounces) granulated sugar  
1 large egg  
2 ¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast  
¾ teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces and softened

#### TOPPING

18 tablespoons (2 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter, melted  
¾ cup (5 1/4 ounces) granulated sugar  
¾ cup packed (5 1/4 ounces) brown sugar  
1 ½ teaspoons ground cinnamon  
½ teaspoon salt  
4 cups (16 ounces) cake flour

Confectioners' sugar

Note that we call for both all-purpose and cake flours in this recipe. Do not substitute all-purpose flour for the cake flour (or vice versa), or the cake will be airy and fluffy and the topping will be tough and dry. We developed this recipe using Pillsbury Softasilk bleached cake flour; the topping will be slightly drier if you substitute unbleached cake flour. You can use either light or dark brown sugar in the topping. Be sure to use instant or rapid-rise yeast in this recipe and not active dry yeast.

1. FOR THE CAKE: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 13 by 9-inch baking dish. In bowl of stand mixer fitted with dough hook, combine flour, milk, sugar, egg, yeast, and salt. Knead on low speed until dough comes together, about 2 minutes.

2. With mixer running, add butter 1 piece at a time, waiting until each piece is incorporated before adding next. Increase speed to medium-high and continue to knead until dough forms stretchy, web-like strands on sides of bowl, about 6 minutes longer (dough will be soft and sticky).

3. Using greased rubber spatula, transfer dough to prepared dish. Using your floured hands, press dough into even layer to edges of dish. Cover dish tightly with plastic wrap and let dough rise at room temperature until slightly puffy, about 1 hour.

4. FOR THE TOPPING: Ten minutes before dough has finished rising, whisk melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt together in bowl. Add flour and stir with rubber spatula or wooden spoon until mixture forms thick, cohesive dough; let sit for 10 minutes to allow flour to hydrate.

5. If dough has pulled away from sides of dish after rising, gently pat it back into place using your floured fingers. Break topping mixture into rough 1/2-inch pieces using your fingers and scatter in even layer over dough in dish. (Be sure to scatter all crumbs even though it may seem like too much.)

6. Bake until crumbs are golden brown, wooden skewer inserted in center of cake comes out clean, and cake portion registers about 215 degrees in center, about 35 minutes. Transfer dish to wire rack and let cake cool completely. Using spatula, transfer cake to cutting board; cut cake into 12 squares. Dust squares with confectioners' sugar and serve.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Once dough has been pressed into even layer in baking dish and dish has been wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, dough can be refrigerated for at least 4 hours (to ensure proper rising) or up to 24 hours. When ready to bake, let dough sit on counter for 10 minutes before proceeding with step 4. Increase baking time to 40 minutes.

### **AT A GLANCE CRUMB BUNS**

*Start preparing the topping 10 minutes before the dough is done proofing.*

*1. Add butter to yeasted dough 1 piece at a time, then beat until dough pulls in stretchy, web-like strands from sides of bowl.*

*2. Using your floured hands, press dough into even layer in greased baking dish. Cover and let rise for 1 hour.*

*3. To make topping, mix butter, granulated and brown sugars, cinnamon, salt, and cake flour. Let sit for 10 minutes.*

*4. Break crumb topping into rough 1/2-inch pieces and scatter in even layer over risen dough before baking.*

### **TWO FLOURS, THREE SUGARS**

*Trust us: It's worth pulling out multiple flours and sugars to make crumb buns. Each type makes a unique contribution, delivering just the right flavor and texture.*

*ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: With a moderate amount of protein (10 to 12 percent), all-purpose flour develops enough gluten to give the yeasted cake structure and just a bit of chew.*

*CAKE FLOUR: Using cake flour to make the crumb topping gives it a moist, tender, delicate texture. That's because cake flour is more finely milled than all-purpose flour, making it better able to absorb fat and liquid. Cake flour is also lower in protein (6 to 8 percent) than all-purpose flour and therefore has less ability to form toughening gluten. Finally, cake flour is typically bleached to remove a yellow cast that some consumers find unappealing. This bleaching process also alters the protein structure of the flour, which makes it even less able to form gluten.*

*GRANULATED SUGAR: Granulated sugar is made from either sugarcane or sugar beets. Using it in the cake base preserves the traditional white color and produces the proper slightly chewy texture.*

*BROWN SUGAR: Brown sugar, whether light or dark, is just white sugar with a little molasses added. The addition of molasses makes the sugar soft and adds subtle flavor notes of caramel and rum. Combined with an equal amount of white sugar in the topping, brown sugar helps produce the best-textured crumbs.*

*CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR: Confectioners' sugar is simply pulverized granulated sugar with cornstarch added to prevent clumping. A snowy dusting on top of the crumb buns is the traditional finishing touch.*