

Onion Rolls

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Onion rolls are one of those cultural staples that have escaped into the mainstream. They likely originated in the Ashkenazi Jewish community of Eastern Europe hundreds of years ago and came to America with Jewish emigration in the late 1800s. They were made famous at Ratner's delicatessen on the lower East side of Manhattan in New York City. Interestingly, although the onion roll forms the basis of many sandwiches (notably among convenience and fast food, Arby's Beef 'n Cheddar) because Ratner's observed the Jewish dietary law of separating milk and meat products (milk and butter are in the dough) it was never stuffed with so many of the deli meats that now find themselves book ended in between soft, pillowy onion-y tinged goodness.

However, as many of the mass-produced breads found on supermarket shelves, these convenient imposters often contain unwanted ingredients and additives as well as falling totally flat in flavor. This recipe, which recommends using organic, fresh, and full flavored (and fat) ingredients does require a little bit of effort. But the reward is likely something so ethereal, so aspiring to what a simple roll can be, that it will leave you gob-smacked. However, be warned that like so much of what is behind the culinary medicine curtain, that once you have experienced the real thing there is no un-tasting it. There is simply no going back.



Ingredients:

- 10 g instant active yeast
- 325 mL (approximately 11 fluid ounces) warm full fat milk
- 1 whole egg
- 115 g (approximately 4 ounces) butter
- 300 g bread flour
- 200 g all-purpose (AP) flour
- 9 g (approximately 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.) salt
- 1 egg, beaten for egg wash

Filling and Topping:

- 50 g (approximately one medium onion or 1 cup) chopped onion

- 50 mL (approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) olive oil
- 5 g (approximately 2 tsp.) granulated onion
- 6 g (approximately 1 teaspoon) salt
- 12 g (approximately 1 Tbs) poppy seeds
- 3 g (approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons) caraway seeds

Directions:

In a large bowl or stand mixer, combine the yeast, bread flour, and all-purpose flour. Add the butter into small bits and mix or combine until the butter is thoroughly distributed. Without the addition of water or liquid, you do not need to worry about overworking the dough whilst incorporating the butter at this juncture. Once the butter is incorporated, add the egg and half the milk. Continue to add the milk in small increments until the dough comes together and pulls cleanly away from the side of the bowl. The dough should be soft but not wet. Allow the dough to rest for 20 minutes. After the dough has rested add the salt and fully knead for 5 to 10 minutes until the dough comes together and is shiny and elastic. Place in a covered and oiled container, making sure to lightly coat both sides of the dough, and allow to rise in a warm place until doubled in volume; approximately 1 to 2 hours.

While the dough is resting, prepare the filling and topping. Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and allow the onion to soften, approximately 3 to 5 minutes, do not allow the onions to brown. Remove from heat and add all the other ingredients, mix thoroughly, and set aside. If you like, you can increase the amount of topping and filling, although avoid adding too much filling to the dough as it will affect the second rise and final bake. You may also vary the contents and amounts of the individual components to suit your particular taste.

When the dough is ready, place it on a lightly floured work surface. Roll the dough out to a 48 x 60 cm rectangle. Take

one half of the topping and filling mixture and spread it lengthwise out over two thirds of the rectangle closest to you. Take the top third of the rectangle, it should have no filling, and fold it over the middle third. Fold this over again to the bottom third and seal the edges of the rectangle. You should now have a 16 x 60 cm rectangle. Cut the rectangle at 5 cm intervals along its length. You should now have twelve, 16 x 5 cm strips. Roll each strip towards you and tuck the open ends underneath so you have a small dough ball. Flatten each ball out to an approximately 8 cm (or whatever size you desire) disk. Place each disc on a parchment lined baking sheet. Cover and allow to rise in warm place for 20 to 30 minutes. Whilst the onion rolls undergo their final rise, preheat the oven to 400°F.

Lightly top each roll with the egg wash, and then sprinkle the remaining topping amongst the 12 rolls. Bake in the oven for 25 to 30 minutes, until golden brown on top. Remove and serve.



Yield: 12 (8 cm) onion rolls