

At the coffee shop where I meet her, Taiwanese pastry chef and teacher Yvonne Chen 陳郁芬 orders a plain piece of buttered toast with strawberry jam and rips it apart the moment it arrives at the table. It's an accordion of light, feathery wisps of dough. She inspects the bread closely, takes a deep whiff, and nods in mild approval as she dips chunks of it into the glistening jam.

Baking blogs around the world often credit Yvonne with inventing *tāngzhōng* 湯種, the creamy gelatinized substance in Asian breads made by whisking together scalding water and flour at a 1:5 ratio and heating it up to 150°F (65°C) to form a thick slurry. When combined with the rest of the ingredients, the slurry basically gelatinizes part of the dough, which helps the final bread retain moisture. It's what gives Asian breads their signature cloudlike texture, though Yvonne stresses that the credit is misdirected and she didn't actually invent *tangzhong* at all. A similar technique has been used all over East Asia for generations, and it was the Japanese who first coined and codified this particular procedure for bread. Yvonne picked it up during culinary school in Taiwan, and her name became synonymous with it only when she wrote a popular cookbook in 2007 called *65 Degrees C*, a nod to the temperature at which *tangzhong* is made. "It's normally used just for toast, but I apply it to everything," she tells me.

**FOR THE TANGZHONG:**

1½ tablespoons (12 g) bread flour  
¼ cup (60 ml) whole milk

1½ tablespoons (20 g) unsalted butter, softened and cut into ½-inch (1-cm) pieces

Canola or soybean oil

**FOR THE BREAD:**

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (90 ml) whole milk  
1 teaspoon active dry yeast  
2 cups (250 g) bread flour  
1 large egg (50 ml)  
2 tablespoons white sugar  
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

**FOR THE EGG WASH:**

1 large egg  
1 tablespoon whole milk

**FOR THE TOPPINGS:**

½ cup (115 g) Kewpie mayonnaise (see Note)  
1¼ cup (80 g) pork floss (store-bought or homemade; page 364)

**MAKE THE TANGZHONG:** In a small saucepan, combine the bread flour and milk, and stir until the flour is completely dissolved. Bring to a simmer over low heat and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture is glue-like, about 3 minutes. Immediately remove from the heat, transfer to a container, and let it cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours or overnight ("It must be cold," advises Yvonne).

# Pork Floss Milk Bread

肉鬆麵包

Ròu Sōng Miàn Bāo

肉酥麩

Bah Soo Pháng

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:**

stand mixer with dough hook attachment (optional)

**NOTE:**

If you don't have access to Kewpie mayonnaise, mix ½ cup regular mayonnaise with 1½ tablespoons white sugar for a quick version.

Yvonne's original recipe uses milk powder and water, but I've substituted whole milk here instead.

(RECIPE CONTINUES)



**MAKE THE BREAD:** In a small saucepan set over low heat, heat the milk until tiny bubbles begin to break on the surface and it starts to steam. Turn off the heat and wait until the milk is cool but still lukewarm and

comfortable to the touch, about 105°F (40°C). Sprinkle the active dry yeast over the milk, stir to dissolve, and let it sit until frothy, about 5 minutes.

MADE IN TAIWAN

In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the bread flour, egg, sugar, salt, the refrigerated tangzhong, and the yeast-milk mixture. Mix until it forms a shaggy dough. Add the butter one piece at a time and knead the dough with your hands until it forms a solid dough, about 5 minutes. (Alternatively, churn in a stand mixer with the dough hook attachment on low speed until it forms a smooth ball, about 3 minutes.) The dough should be soft and quite sticky.

Lightly grease the inside of a bowl with oil. Lift the dough out of the mixing bowl, shape it into a ball and place it in the oiled bowl. Cover it with plastic wrap and let it rest until it has doubled in size, 1 to 2 hours at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator.

Punch the air out of the dough and scoop it out onto a lightly oiled surface. Using a bench scraper, divide the dough into 6 even pieces, about 78 g each. Gently knead each piece until it forms a very smooth ball. Cover the balls with plastic wrap and let rest at room temperature for 10 minutes.

With a rolling pin, flatten a dough ball into an oval, about 6 inches (15 cm) long. Starting from the top tip of the oval, tightly roll up the dough toward you into a log. Pinch the sides and seams together and fluff it up gently (“It should look like an olive,” says Yvonne). Repeat with the rest of the dough balls. Place the logs on a baking sheet seam side down, leaving a couple of fingers’ worth of space between each of them. Don’t worry if the tops aren’t completely smooth; they’ll smooth themselves out when baked. Cover and let rest at room temperature until they have puffed up and are soft to the touch, 30 to 40 minutes. If you poke them gently, they should spring back up again slowly.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).



**APPLY THE EGG WASH:** In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and milk. Brush the egg wash on the tops and sides of the buns with a pastry brush.

Bake the buns until the tops are golden brown, about 15 minutes. Take the buns out of the pan and place them on a wire rack to cool down completely to room temperature.

**FOR THE TOPPINGS:** With a sharp knife, make a vertical incision into the buns (like it’s a hot dog bun), but don’t cut all the way through and don’t cut to the edge. Spread some Kewpie mayonnaise inside, then cover up the incision by spreading more mayonnaise on top. Layer an even mat of pork floss on top of the mayonnaise. Repeat with the remaining buns. To store, put the buns in an airtight container and store at room temperature. The bread should be eaten within 2 days.