



Shokupan de Mie

This is either pain de mie done in the manner of shokupan, or shokupan with milk and butter, à la pain de mie. Pain de mie means “bread of crumb,” referring to the fact that its joys derive entirely from its plush, soft, and compact internal texture, making it the ideal choice for toast or sandwiches (it’s crust is soft too, especially when baked within an enclosed, pullman-style pan). Pain de mie is enriched with milk and butter.

OVERALL FORMULA

bread flour 90%
mochi flour 10%
sugar 10%
milk 66%
unsalted butter 13%
instant yeast 1%
salt 1.7%

YUDANE

75g **bread or mochi (glutinous rice) flour**
75g **sugar**
300g **milk, brought to a boil** or
270g boiling water plus
30g nonfat milk powder
added to dry ingredients

113g (8 tablespoons) **unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces, cold**

DOUGH

240g **milk** or 216g water plus
24g nonfat milk powder
added to dry ingredients
9g (2 teaspoons) **instant yeast**
670g **bread flour**
14g (2 1/2 teaspoons **fine**) **salt**

FINISH

1 tablespoon **melted butter** optional

Shokupan, aka Japanese Milk Bread, is a Japanese (or Chinese, depending upon whom you ask) version of pain de mie. It is sometimes, though not always, made using a cooked-starch paste or flour scald (a tangzhong or yudane), which ups its plush texture and extends its shelf life. Some shokupan recipes contain egg in addition to the milk and butter. (For a variation of this formula with egg, just reduce the milk in step 2 to 200g and add 1 large egg.)

A yudane is made by pouring boiling water over flour, while a tangzhong is made by heating a mixture of the two on the stovetop. Functionally the two are equivalent, and I prefer the former for its simplicity. But not all starches are made equal when it comes to scalding; some don’t gel quickly enough and require further heating, while others end up too lumpy or rubbery to incorporate into the final dough. I prefer mochi (glutinous rice) flour for my flour scalds, because it cooks immediately when combined with boiling liquids to form a thick but soft paste. White flour is the next best option, but it doesn’t always gel with boiling water and sometimes needs further cooking.

SERVINGS MAKES 1500G DOUGH, FOR TWO 750G PULLMAN LOAVES, OR TWO SMALLER PAN LOAVES AND A FEW BUNS

1 *YUDANE*: Place the flour and sugar in a medium bowl and whisk to combine. Whisking constantly, pour milk into bowl. If mixture does not thicken immediately, cover loosely and microwave in 30 second intervals, whisking after each one, until thickened and glossy. Add the butter and whisk until incorporated. Transfer the mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer, cover loosely, and allow to cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

2 *DOUGH*: Add the remaining milk and yeast to the yudane and whisk until uniform. Add the flour and mix on low speed until the dough just comes together and no dry flour remains, 2 to 5 minutes. Cover loosely and let sit for 30 minutes.

3 Add the salt and mix on low speed until thoroughly incorporated, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium, and mix until dough just starts to clear sides of bowl (it will remain webby, sticky, and attached to bottom of bowl), 10 to 12 minutes.

4 Remove the bowl from the stand mixer, cover loosely, and let sit at 75°F (24°C) until puffy and about 1 ½ times in volume, 60 to 120 minutes, folding the dough with lightly-moistened hands at 45 and 90 minutes.

5 Cover the dough tightly and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24. (If chilling for more than 2 hours, remove the dough from the fridge an hour or so before dividing and shaping to let it warm slightly.)

6 *LOAVES*: Coat two 9-inch by 4-inch by 4-inch pullman pans with nonstick oil and set aside. Transfer the dough to a lightly-floured counter and divide into 6 pieces of about 250g each. Shape each into a tight round. Cover loosely and let sit for 20 minutes.

7 Flour the countertop lightly and turn each ball of dough seam side up. Using a rolling pin, roll each ball into an 8-inch long oval. Fold the long sides of the oval into the center one at a time to form a 2 1/2 inch-wide strip. Holding the end of the strip in one hand and stretching gently as you go, roll it up like a snug carpet. Pinch the seams closed. Repeat with the remaining dough balls.

8 Place three logs each in the prepared pans, seam side down and with the spiraled ends of the logs facing the long side of the pan. Cover the pans loosely and allow to proof until tops of loaves are about 1/2 inch below lip of pans, 60 to 90 minutes. If using a pullman pan with a lid, coat bottom of lid with nonstick oil and slide lid closed.

9 *BAKE*: Set an oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 325°F (162°C).

10 Transfer loaves to the oven and bake until the exterior of loaves are deep golden brown and internal temperature is at least 195°F, 45 to 60 minutes. Carefully remove loaves from pans; if pale and soft on the sides and bottoms, set the loaves on a cooling rack set into a baking sheet and return to the oven for 5 minutes at a time until set and browned.

11 *FINISH*: If using, brush rounded tops of loaves with melted butter. Allow to cool fully before slicing, 2 to 3 hours.

- *If you have 8.5-inch by 4.5-inch fluted pans instead of*

pullmans, reduce the dough ball size to 200g (600g per loaf) and use the remaining 300g dough to make 3 burger buns as a baker's treat.

- The melted butter is only necessary when baking the loaves without a lid (or for buns), and only gets brushed on exposed tops of the loaves (after baking).