

# Sa Vialla's Panettone

Panettone is Italy's Christmas cake par excellence. Its origins are in Milan where at one time it was 'eaten' all year round and it enriches the Festive Season in every region of Italy - from north to south. No home is without a Panettone - it is taken and received as a gift and above all it is eaten! 'Dunked' in 'caffelatte' for breakfast, the last small slice 'sweetens' after-dinner - basically, any time of the day and every occasion is right to 'gulp' some down! Sa Vialla's Panettone is a little different from the traditional one, it is leavened, soft and full of flavour, enriched with raisins and orange zest although, amongst its ingredients you will not find butter but only extra virgin olive oil. The recipe is not difficult, but needs some of your time!

Recipe for 1 Panettone (750g)  
(one 22cm diam. cake tin)

Mother dough:

30g fruit (apple, grapes or apricots, depending on the season and availability)  
60g plain "strong" flour  
30ml slightly sparkling water

First dough mixture:

250g whole wheat flour  
75ml extra virgin olive oil  
50g brown sugar  
25g agave syrup  
25g mother dough  
3 egg yolks  
Pinch of salt

Second dough mixture:

60g whole wheat flour  
100ml extra virgin olive oil  
40g brown sugar  
50g agave syrup  
5 egg yolks  
125g raisins  
1½ organic oranges (only the grated zest)  
1.5g Malt Flour  
Small amount of vanilla pod seeds

Once it is taken out of the oven, though, the comparison between the time taken to make it and the time to 'eat' this soft, perfumed cake, will not be the same at all! Therefore, those of you who have numerous gluttons around the table, we advise doubling (or even tripling) the recipe's ingredients and directly make two (three) Panettones.



Mother dough:

Grate the apple (or mash the other fruit) and in a bowl mix together with the ingredients for the mother dough until it is uniform. Cover with cling film and leave to rest for approximately 48 hours at a temperature of 28°C in a relatively damp place. You can use your oven, leaving the light on and put a small bowl of water for a slow, but constant

evaporation; if it is a reasonably wet/damp day you can leave out the water. After 48 hours the dough should have tripled in size and you can now proceed to 'refresh' it by adding a drop of sparkling water. Leave it to rest for a further 4 hours at 28°C. Now 'squeeze' the dough, which is finally ready - we can start to prepare the Panettone.

Today, the mother dough or natural yeast, is used in the preparation of oven baked cakes that need to leaven over a long period of time. At one time, the 'mother dough' was the only form of yeast and was really considered a 'mother', the mother of all oven baked recipes. Housewives were almost in awe of this and guarded it; like a child's nursemaid, it was passed from family to family with additional touches made along the way to 'freshen it up'.

You may prepare more and keep a little of the 'magic' yeast for other recipes (even, only for a good loaf of bread), just keep it in the fridge in a closed glass jar and when you need to use it 'freshen it up' every time, as explained above (this is what our housewives used to do at one time).

First dough mixture:

Mix the mother dough, the flour and oil for approximately 15 minutes, gradually adding them a little at a time; add the egg yolks one at a time (previously kept at room temperature for half an hour), the sugar and agave syrup carefully and again, slowly, gradually. Continue until the mixture takes on a damp, but compact and elastic consistency - this will take around 25 minutes; leave it to leaven in the oven at 25°C (to assist the leavening you may put it in the oven - not turned on and with the door closed - with the oven light on, so that a 'leavening-room' is created) for 5 or 6 hours to the point that it will have tripled in size.

Second dough mixture:

To the 'first dough mixture' gradually add the oil and continue to knead; at this stage add the egg yolks, one by one, the agave syrup, the raisins (soaked in warm water for at least half an hour and then dried off), the grated orange zest, the malt, vanilla seeds and continue to knead the dough until it is smooth, soft and elastic (another 25, 30 minutes more or less); leave it to rise for a further 6 hours at 25°C.

Once leavened, shape your Panettone/s of approximately 750g each. Put the dough in the cake tin(s), lined with baking paper (the paper will be needed later to 'hang' the cake), leave it for about an hour to settle and score a cross on top. Put in the oven at 180°C for around 45 to 50 minutes. If it gets a little too brown, lower the heat - but do not open the oven!

Once the Panettone is cooked it should rest for a couple of hours, suspended upside down in order to dry out and maintain its typical 'puffed-up' shape: Take a saucepan (wider and larger than the Panettone) and prick the cake using either knitting needles or wooden skewers and 'hang' it upside down resting it on the saucepan. It will be ready when it has dried out.