

Baba au Rhum

1/2 cup milk
 4 teaspoons active dry yeast (1/2-ounce)
 2 cups bread flour
 3 large eggs
 2 teaspoons sugar
 Pinch salt
 1 teaspoon orange zest
 1 teaspoon lemon zest
 1 unsalted stick butter, melted but not hot
 Rum Soaking Syrup, recipe follows
 1/4 cup dark rum
 Sweetened Whipped Cream, accompaniment
 Fresh berries, accompaniment

This cake is delicious served with rum poured over it, and whipped cream and berries served on the side. It is found in many Parisian bistros.



In a small saucepan, scald the milk over medium heat. Remove from the heat and cool to lukewarm (110 degrees F).

In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine the milk, yeast and 1/2 cup of the flour and let sit until foamy. Stir to form a sponge and let rise until doubled, about 20 minutes.

Beating with the paddle attachments, add the eggs 1 at a time, followed by the remaining 1 1/2 cups of bread flour, the sugar, salt, and zests. When a soft dough forms, slowly beat in the butter to make a smooth dough. Let rest for 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Butter and flour a large baba mold or 9-inch bundt cake pan.

Place the dough in the prepared pan, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm, draft-free place until it has nearly reached the top of the mold, about 40 minutes.

Place on a sheet pan and bake on the middle rack of the oven for 30 minutes, or until the top of the baba is golden brown and the sides have begun to pull away from the pan slightly.

Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Set the wire rack over a sheet pan. Using a toothpick or skewer, poke holes all over the top. Pour the warm syrup over the warm cake and let sit until the liquid is absorbed, about 5 minutes.

Turn the baba out onto the wire rack and let drain over the sheet pan for 30 minutes. Slowly drizzle the rum over the top in 2 additions.

Transfer to a cake platter or stand. Serve with the whipped cream and fruit.

Rum Soaking Syrup

3 3/4 cups water
 2 1/2 cups granulated sugar
 4 teaspoons lemon zest
 2 tablespoons orange zest
 1 vanilla bean, split in 1/2 lengthwise and seeds scraped
 10 tablespoons dark rum

In a medium saucepan, combine all of the ingredients except the rum. Bring to a boil and stir to dissolve the sugar. Remove from the heat and let stand for 30 minutes. Add the rum.

Strain through a fine mesh strainer and discard the solids. Cover to keep warm for soaking the baba.

