

NOVEMBER

Baking School In-Depth: Hungarian Coffee Cake

The origin of Hungarian coffee cake is a true masterpiece called *aranygaluska*, which translates as “golden dumpling.” The recipe can be traced back to the 1880s in Hungarian literature. By the mid-20th century, it began popping up as Hungarian and Hungarian Jewish immigrant bakers and home cooks migrated and introduced it to the US. In 1972, a Betty Crocker cookbook shared the recipe, calling it Hungarian Coffee Cake. As its popularity spread, it became commonly confused with monkey bread, where the dough was dipped only in butter before being stacked into a pan and baked. The names soon became interchangeable, “monkey bread” being more common, but we are forever grateful to the Hungarian immigrants who showed us how enchanting and meaningful this nostalgic, festive bread truly is.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

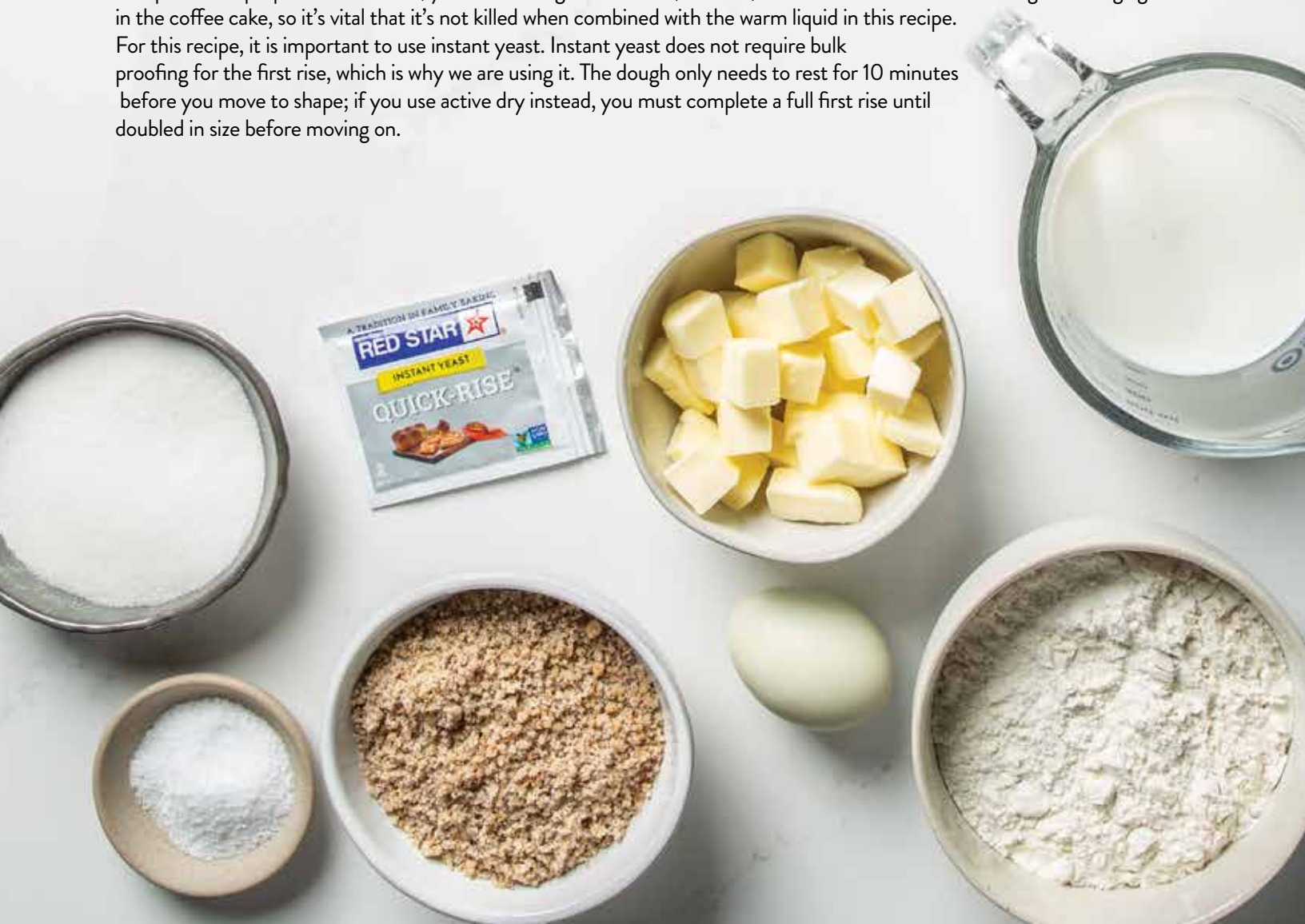
Excellent recipes require wonderful ingredients. Here's how our recipe's ingredients contribute to making the very best Hungarian Coffee Cake.

UNSALTED BUTTER: Butter adds a decadence to the enriched dough, and browning the butter adds a subtle nuttiness that pairs beautifully with the pecans. The French call browned butter *beurre noisette*, or "hazelnut butter," which captures the unmistakable toasty aroma wafting from your stovetop. Using melted browned butter in the dough means the butter incorporates more smoothly and evenly, ensuring consistency in flavor and texture in every bite. Browned butter's deep, complex flavor adds the ultimate fall aroma to the glaze that graciously adorns the baked Hungarian Coffee Cake.

ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: All-purpose flour is made from a mix of hard and soft wheat and has a high-enough protein content (10% to 12%) to help your dough rise and hold its shape after baking.

GRANULATED SUGAR: Sugar acts as food for the yeast, which converts it to carbon dioxide and alcohol in the fermentation process. This helps make the dough tender, creating soft and fluffy morsels and adding a bit of sweetness without making the coffee cake overly sweet. Sugar also contributes to moisture retention while baking and the finished product's beautiful golden color.

RED STAR® QUICK-RISE™ INSTANT YEAST: A standard when it comes to baking with yeast, Red Star® is a tried-and-true favorite for a reason. Yeast is essential to many bread doughs, and this Hungarian Coffee Cake recipe is no exception. For proper fermentation, yeast needs sugar to feed on, warmth, and moisture. It acts as a leading leavening agent in the coffee cake, so it's vital that it's not killed when combined with the warm liquid in this recipe. For this recipe, it is important to use instant yeast. Instant yeast does not require bulk proofing for the first rise, which is why we are using it. The dough only needs to rest for 10 minutes before you move to shape; if you use active dry instead, you must complete a full first rise until doubled in size before moving on.



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WHOLE MILK: We use milk to add fat and flavor to our dough. Milk contains natural sugars that begin browning when heated between 212°F (100°C) and 350°F (180°C), which contributes to the cake's beautiful bronze color.

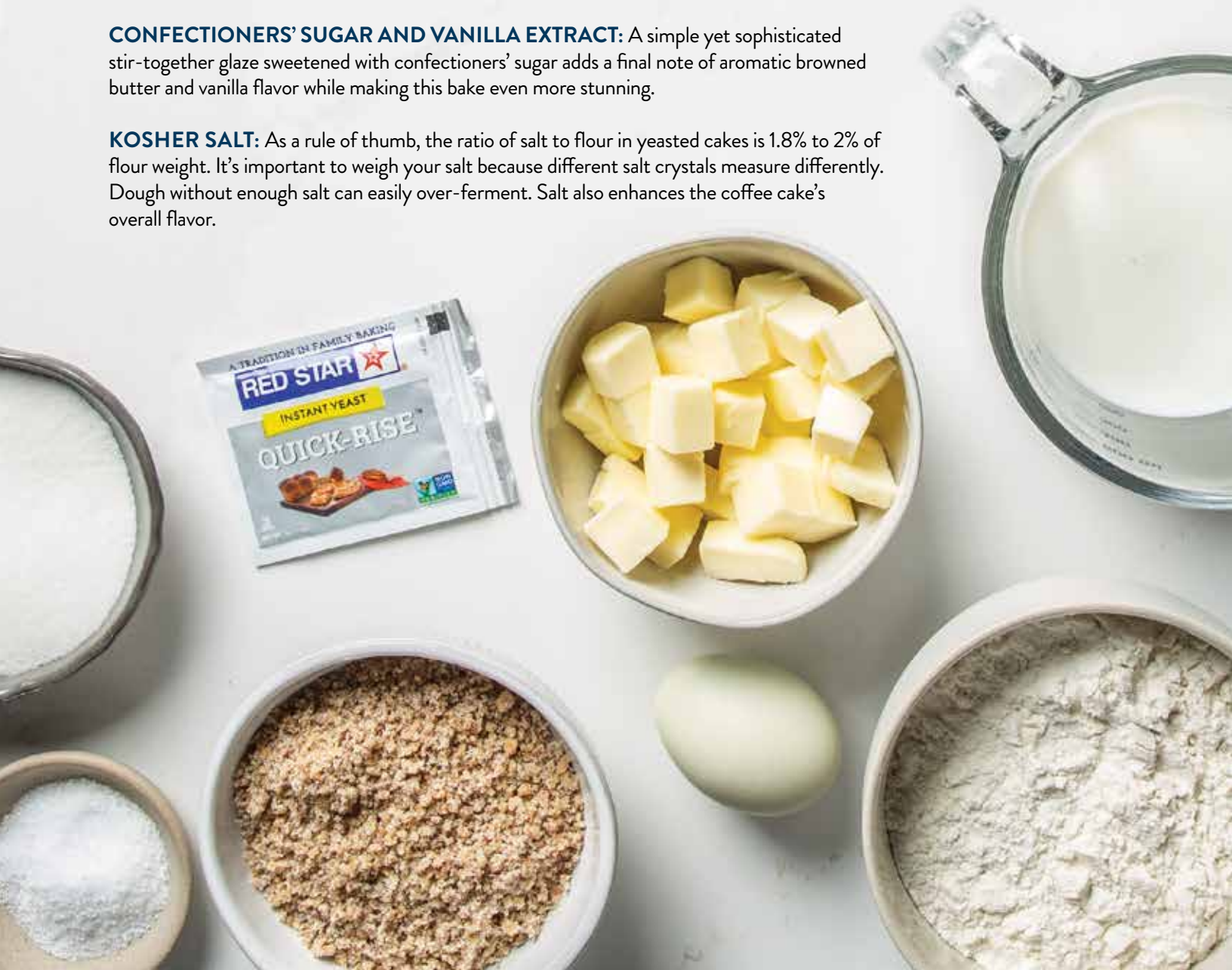
WATER: Moisture (partially in the form of water here) is needed to activate the yeast and hydrate the dough so the gluten can develop and build elasticity in the dough. Also, the water converts to steam, which helps prevent the exterior from browning too quickly while baking.

EGG: The addition of an egg in this dough not only adds richness but also helps with leavening, as the egg white helps create steam that puffs up your dough once it hits the warmth of the oven.

PECANS: With their pleasant crunch, distinctly sweet and buttery flavor, and lingering resinous aroma, pecans are a match made in heaven when paired with this Hungarian Coffee Cake's fluffy dough and nutty browned butter.

CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR AND VANILLA EXTRACT: A simple yet sophisticated stir-together glaze sweetened with confectioners' sugar adds a final note of aromatic browned butter and vanilla flavor while making this bake even more stunning.

KOSHER SALT: As a rule of thumb, the ratio of salt to flour in yeasted cakes is 1.8% to 2% of flour weight. It's important to weigh your salt because different salt crystals measure differently. Dough without enough salt can easily over-ferment. Salt also enhances the coffee cake's overall flavor.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

We recommend this set of tools for our technique



STAND MIXER: An excellent time- and strength-saver, stand mixers are fantastic at bringing the dough together without the effort of hand-mixing the dough. (Pictured: [KitchenAid® Artisan Stand Mixer, 5-Qt.](#))

SCALE: A scale is one of the most essential tools for a baker. Measuring ingredients by weight is more accurate and helps reliably produce perfectly baked goods. We also use a kitchen scale to ensure we have perfectly equal portions of dough before forming that will bake evenly. (Pictured: [Zwilling Digital Scale.](#))

THERMOMETER: We use an instant-read thermometer to ensure the correct temperature of browned butter, milk, and water when heating them to add to the yeast mixture for optimal rise and to guarantee the internal temperature of the coffee cake reaches 190°F (88°C). (Pictured: [OXO Thermocouple Thermometer.](#))

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



SPRINGFORM PAN: Designed to bake evenly, this beautiful, golden, commercial-quality springform pan is crafted of aluminized steel for exceptional durability with a leakproof design, making it perfect for our Hungarian Coffee Cake. (Pictured: [Williams Sonoma Goldtouch® Pro Nonstick Leakproof Springform Cake Pan.](#))

SAUCEPAN: You want a light-colored saucepan that will heat efficiently and evenly with precise temperature control and no hot spots when making the browned butter and for heating the butter, milk, and water in the first steps of making the dough for the coffee cake. (Pictured: [Williams Sonoma Signature Thermo-Clad™ Stainless-Steel Saucepan.](#))

SPATULA, BENCH SCRAPER, AND GLASS BOWLS: For all your mixing needs, you really can't beat the basics. A simple spatula is perfect for stirring the butter when browning, and the bench scraper helps you divide the dough evenly and efficiently clear your work surface. The glass bowls give you a 360-degree visual in every step of this recipe, from watching the dough rise to rolling the dough in pecans and sugar mixture. (Pictured: [Williams Sonoma Classic Wood Spatula](#), [Williams Sonoma Olivewood Bench Scraper](#), and [Glass Mixing Bowl 10-Piece Set.](#))



HUNGARIAN
COFFEE CAKE

HUNGARIAN COFFEE CAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

The Hungarian classic arangaluska inspires this sharable masterpiece. It's pillowy and rich; the puffed nuggets of baked dough pull effortlessly from the whole and fill your palate with nutty browned butter and pecans punctuated with the crackle of caramelized sugar. An elegant vanilla-kissed drizzle of browned butter glaze complements the cake beautifully. It's the perfect recipe to serve at your table this holiday season.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter
- $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups (344 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (67 grams) plus 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- 1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) Red Star® Quick-Rise™ Instant Yeast
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons (6.75 grams) kosher salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (80 grams) plus 1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 grams) whole milk, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (80 grams) water
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 1 cup (130 grams) very finely chopped pecans
- 1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon (1 gram) vanilla extract

1. Line a 9-inch springform pan with parchment paper.
2. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, about 10 minutes.

Pour into a heatproof bowl; in a small microwave-safe bowl, reserve 1 tablespoon (12 grams) browned butter for glaze.

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (188 grams) flour, 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar, yeast, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (4.5 grams) salt.

4. In a medium saucepan, heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 grams) browned butter, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80 grams) milk, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80 grams) water over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add hot butter mixture to flour mixture; using the paddle attachment, beat at medium speed until combined. Add egg, beating until combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add remaining $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups (156 grams) flour, beating just until a shaggy dough forms.

5. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at low speed until dough is soft and elastic, 6 to 7 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook. Cover and let stand in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) for 10 minutes. (Dough will puff slightly.)

6. In a medium bowl, stir together pecans, remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar, and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon (2.25 grams) salt.

7. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface. (Do not punch down.) Divide dough into 14 portions (about 45 grams each) and press each portion into a roughly round shape. (It does not need to be perfect.) Dip each in remaining browned butter, and roll in pecan mixture. Arrange evenly in prepared pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 30 to 40 minutes.

8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

9. Evenly sprinkle any remaining pecan mixture onto dough.

10. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, discarding parchment.

11. Microwave reserved 1 tablespoon (12 grams) browned butter on high in 10-second intervals until melted. Add confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and remaining 1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 grams) milk, whisking until combined and desired consistency is reached. Spoon glaze into a pastry bag, and cut a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch opening in tip. Drizzle glaze onto warm rolls. Serve warm or at room temperature.



BROWNING THE BUTTER

This is an extra step that takes a few minutes, but don't skip it! Browned butter is worth its weight in liquid gold, as it adds a delightful depth of flavor to the coffee cake and the glaze.



1. Line a 9-inch springform pan with parchment paper.
2. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook until butter turns a medium-brown color and has a nutty aroma, about 10 minutes. Pour into a heatproof bowl; in a small microwave-safe bowl, reserve 1 tablespoon (12 grams) browned butter for glaze. Stirring constantly and scraping the bottom of the saucepan will help prevent the milk solids from burning before the rest of the butter has time to brown. As the butter browns, bubbles form on the top surface. When it is browned, there will be a layer of foam on the top; it's helpful to use a spoon to check to see if it is done. Also, take your time and don't rush the process—the toasted milk solids can go from a beautiful golden color to acrid and burnt in the blink of an eye. Make sure you scrape all the bits clinging to the bottom of the pan when transferring to a bowl. That's where all the flavor is!

PREPARING THE DOUGH

Let's prep and combine the wet and dry ingredients as we begin the dough-making process



1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (188 grams) flour, 2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar, yeast, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (4.5 grams) salt. One of the many fantastic aspects of Red Star® yeasts is they can be dry blended, which means you can mix the yeast directly with the dry ingredients or dissolved in liquids before mixing with the dry ingredients. This is called the rehydration method.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 grams) browned butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (80 grams) milk, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (80 grams) water over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add hot butter mixture to flour mixture; using the paddle attachment, beat at medium speed until combined. Add egg, beating until combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add remaining $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups (156 grams) flour, beating just until a shaggy dough forms. Adding the flour in two additions guarantees all the ingredients are evenly incorporated into the dough.

TIME TO KNEAD

Allowing the stand mixer to do the kneading is key to getting the perfect dough consistency



1. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at low speed until dough is soft and elastic, 6 to 7 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and dough hook. Cover and let stand in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) for 10 minutes. (Dough will puff slightly.) You aren't using the windowpane test like you would for traditionally kneaded doughs. You are looking for enough gluten structure that the dough is smooth and elastic enough not to tear when gently pinched and pulled.

TAKING SHAPE

It's time to shape, roll, and arrange the dough



1. In a medium bowl, stir together pecans, remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar, and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon (2.25 grams) salt.
2. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface. (Do not punch down.) Divide dough into 14 portions (about 45 grams each), and press each portion into a roughly shape. (It does not need to be perfect.) Dip each in remaining browned butter, and roll in pecan mixture. Arrange evenly in prepared pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 30 to 40 minutes. Rising times vary depending on the environment, but keep in mind that the amount the dough has risen—the volume—is more important than how long it takes to rise.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
4. Evenly sprinkle any remaining pecan mixture on top of dough.
5. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, discarding parchment.

MAKING THE GLAZE

This vanilla-kissed browned butter glaze is the coffee cake's final festive flourish



1. In a small microwave-safe bowl, heat reserved 1 tablespoon (12 grams) browned butter on high in 10-second intervals until melted. Add confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and remaining 1 to 2 tablespoons (15 to 30 grams) milk, whisking until combined and desired consistency is reached. Spoon glaze into a pastry bag, and cut a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch opening in tip. Drizzle glaze onto warm rolls. Serve warm or at room temperature.