



Recipe: Blue Cheese Pecan Bread

Makes 2 12-inch loaves

Buttermilk and blue cheese have a natural affinity – at least as far as flavor is concerned. When the blue cheese is combined with the buttermilk and pecans in this bread recipe, the boldness of the blue cheese becomes part of a larger complex flavor profile hinting at the tangy and slightly sour notes that this rich, moist-crumb, bread develops. The dusting of pepper on top gives it a real artisanal touch, and the slight peppery heat on the after-palate will keep you (and your guests) guessing.

Ingredients

4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
scant 1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon coarse salt
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces and chilled
4 to 6 ounces blue cheese, crumbled (about 1 cup)
1/2 cup pecans
1 large egg
1 1/2 cups buttermilk, plus additional for brushing
Freshly ground black pepper

Procedure

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Into the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade sift the flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Add the sugar and salt. Pulse about 10 to 15 times to combine. Add the pieces of butter and process until the mixture begins to look like oatmeal. Add the cheese and nuts, and process until the nuts are finely chopped and the mixture is well combined.

Add in the egg, and with the processor running add the buttermilk. The dough will come together quickly. Turn off the processor and switch to pulses. The dough will be wet and sticky. Continue pulsing and scraping the work bowl as needed until the dough comes together.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead gently to bring it together. Divide the dough in half and form into two slightly flattened 8 to 10 inch loaves. Place each loaf on a parchment-lined baking sheet and brush each with about 1 tablespoon of buttermilk. Grind the pepper generously over the top of the bread. For an artisanal touch, use a sharp knife and cut shallow slashes on the diagonal of the top of each loaf (these slashes will generally spread and disappear in the intense heat of the oven, but will provide a lovely contrast in coloring).

Bake for 10 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 375°F and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, more or until each loaf is deep golden brown and sounds hollow when thumped on the bottom. *Note:* if baking the loaves on different racks switch positions half way through the baking time. Cool on a wire rack.