



A SWISS TRADITION IN OUR FAMILY

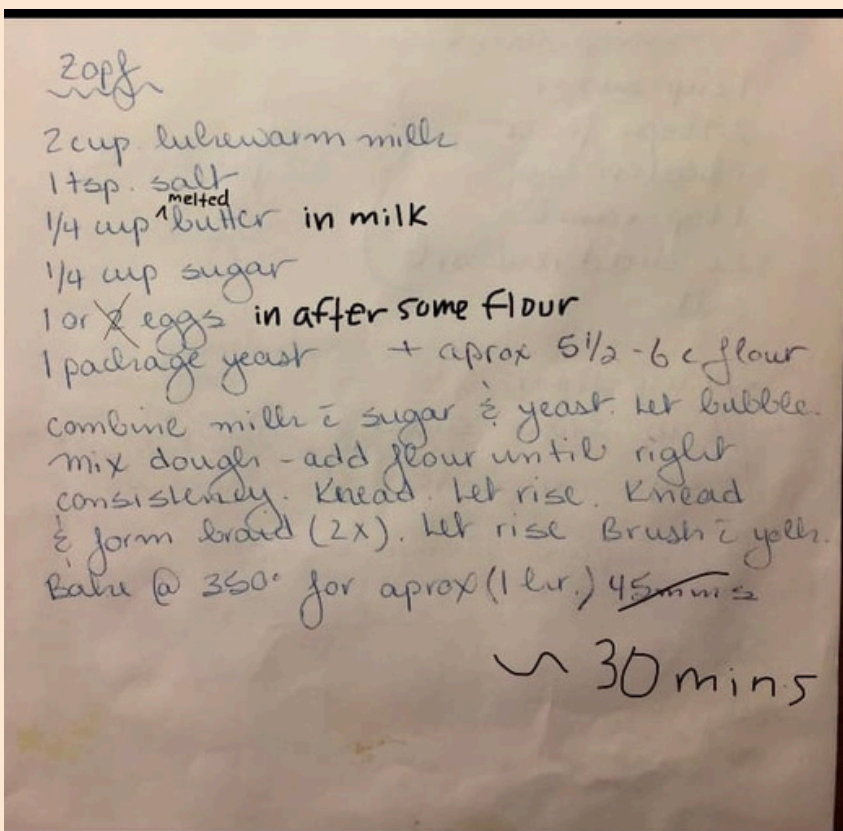
by Pauline Canzani



Meet Gabriella Canzani, my second youngest granddaughter and my son Wally's youngest. In this issue, I've asked her to share her zopf recipe with all of you. Zopf has been a cherished tradition in our family for many generations, passed down through our Swiss heritage.

In Switzerland, many families enjoy zopf every Sunday morning, but it holds special significance during the Christmas season. Traditionally, it is baked on the eve of December 24th, filling the house with the sweet smell of baking bread, and enjoyed by the family on Christmas morning, making it an essential part of their holiday celebration.

The original recipe as told to my mom by my Grandma. You can see the tweaks I made as I learned to make this for our family. On Page 3, you can get the full recipe with tweaks and instructions included. -Ella



CHRISTMAS ZOPF BY ELLA CANZANI



Mom's zopf recipe has always been more of a guideline than an exact science: “a bit of this,” “a bit of that,” and “until it’s just right.” She learned it from Grandma, who never measured anything, and over the years, Mom tweaked it here and there. Now that I’m the one baking it, I’ve made my own little adjustments too—just enough to make it feel like mine while keeping the heart of the original.

Zopf, a traditional Swiss braided bread, holds a special place in our Christmas mornings. For as long as I can remember, it has been the centerpiece of our holiday breakfast. I used to watch my mom knead the dough the night before, always eager to help her braid the loaves. It was a warm, comforting ritual, filled with laughter and anticipation.

As life got busier for our family, there came a year when Mom, tired from weeks of baking Christmas cookies, considered skipping the zöpf. That’s when I decided to take over. The thought of letting this cherished tradition slip away, one that brought us all together, was unthinkable. From that year forward, I became the family’s designated zopf baker.



This bread has grown into more than a recipe—it’s a connection to our shared past and an expression of love. Now, at Grandma’s request, I’ve finally written it down as I make it today, hoping it might bring the same joy to someone else’s family.

Zöpf (Yields 2 large loaves)

Ingredients

Dough

2 cups lukewarm milk
1/4 cup melted butter
1/4 cup sugar
1 package of yeast
Approximately 5 1/2 - 6 cups of flour
1 tsp. salt
1 egg, beaten
+ 1 tbsp. oil for greasing the bowl

Egg wash

1 egg yolk
1 tsp. water



Instructions

Heat up the milk and butter until they are lukewarm. In a separate bowl, mix the sugar and yeast. Add the warm milk and butter mixture to the yeast and sugar, and stir gently to dissolve some of the sugar. Leave the mixture for a minute or two, until the yeast begins to activate. Add around 1 cup of flour, the salt and the beaten egg and stir with a fork. Once combined, continue to add flour until the mixture can be removed from the bowl.

Place the dough, which should still be quite sticky, on a clean, floured surface. Pour a small amount of flour over the dough to ensure it does not stick to your hands, and begin kneading. Continue to knead, adding small amounts of flour whenever the dough begins to stick to the table. To test if the kneading is done, form it into a ball and lightly press a finger into it: if the dough bounces back up it is ready, if not, continue to knead.

Once the kneading is complete, form the dough into a ball and place it in a large bowl (the bowl should be greased with 1 tbsp. of oil to avoid sticking) and cover with a towel or plastic wrap. Leave the dough to rise until it has doubled in size (it can be placed in the oven with the pilot light on in order to speed up this process).

When the dough has doubled in size, press a fist into it in order to remove the air. Cut the dough into 6 even pieces for 3-stranded braids or into 8 even pieces for 4-stranded braids. On a clean surface, work the pieces of dough into long "snakes". Connect 3 or 4 (depending on the type of braid) "snakes" together at one end, and then braid them together. Fold the ends of the braid under the loaf to avoid them undoing themselves while baking. Repeat this for the other loaf. Place both braided loaves on a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Ensure that there is enough space between the loaves, as they will grow. Cover the loaves, and leave them to proof once more (around 30 minutes) until they have grown a bit more (this growth won't be as significant as when the dough rose for the first time).

Preheat the oven to 350°C. Create the egg wash by mixing the egg yolk with 1 tsp. of water. Brush this mixture onto the proofed loaves, ensuring that every surface is covered. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the loaf has a beautiful golden colour. Leave the loaves on the baking sheet to cool before cutting.

