Pan de Muerto *Recipe from Executive Chef Donaciano Pacheco*

*Makes 14 pieces*

Pan de muerto, or "bread of the dead," is a traditional Mexican bread made for Día de los Muertos. This slightly sweet, soft bread is shaped like a round loaf and decorated with bone shaped dough pieces to symbolize life and death. It honors deceased loved ones and is often placed on altars with sugar skulls and marigolds.

Made from flour, sugar, yeast, and eggs, pan de muerto typically includes orange zest or blossom water for added flavor, symbolizing the marigolds that guide spirits.

Join us in celebrating life and honoring your loved ones with this recipe from Executive Chef Donaciano Pacheco.

**Ingredients:**

For the dough:

1 tbsp dry yeast

8 oz of warm water

1 tsp of white sugar

1 large egg

2 ½ cups flour

¼ cup of refined sugar

1 tsp orange blossom essence or 1 orange zest

1 stick of butter, softened

1 cup of flour for dusting

**For the Topping:**

1 large egg

2 Tablespoons water

Juice from 1 orange for glaze

Pinch of salt

1 stick of butter, softened

½ cup of refined sugar

**Method:**

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F/ 180°C. Line a tray with parchment paper.
2. To activate the dry yeast, combine it with 8 oz of warm water and 1 tsp of sugar, and let sit for 5 to 10 minutes. The yeast is activated when foamy
3. In a large bowl, mix the activated yeast and egg. Stir in the flour, sugar, and the orange blossom essence (or orange zest or both). Add the softened butter to the dough little by little and mix well.
4. Dust your work surface with flour and turn the dough onto it, or place it in the bowl of a stand mixer. Knead until the dough looks silky and soft (15-20 minutes by hand or 12 minutes low- medium speed in the stand mixer with a dough hook)
5. Lightly oil a bowl with a neutral oil, like avocado or coconut oil, and transfer the dough to it. Brush the surface of the dough with oil or butter, cover with plastic wrap or a damp cotton towel, and let the dough rise until doubled, about 30 minutes.
6. Shape the dough into 2-ounce portions and let sit for another 30 minutes covered with plastic wrap or a damp towel.
7. To shape the pan de muerto into ¨huesitos¨ (the illusion of bones that go on top of the bun), take small portions of dough and roll them in small logs, putting a little pressure with the fingers to form the bones. Once your bones are formed, make indents on top of each bun and brush with a mixture of one beaten egg with one Tablespoon of water; place the bones crossed, cutting any extra dough.
8. Lastly, with the leftover dough, form small balls, brush the center of the buns where the bones come together with the egg and water mixture, and put the ball there. Cover baking sheets with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until buns are touching and doubled in size.
9. Add a pinch of salt to the orange juice and brush the buns before placing them in the oven. Transfer the buns to the oven and bake for approximately 15-17 minutes or until golden brown.
10. Transfer to a wire rack and cool to room temperature.
11. Once your pan de muerto bread has completely cooled, brush with the softened butter and dust with sugar.