

## Signature Dish: Portuguese Sweet Bread

**Who:** John Pacheco of St. Petersburg, 58, an adjunct professor at Hillsborough Community College and a registered nurse who reviews medical files for an insurance company in Tampa.

**What:** Portuguese Sweet Bread (Massa)

**About the recipe:** Every Easter, Pacheco's mom, Christina, baked loaves of Portuguese Sweet Bread. Sometimes he helped her. "Every child would want a mother like her," Pacheco says. "She always, always had delicious suppers and weekend and Sunday dinners." Today, he carries on his mother's tradition, baking sweet bread for neighbors and colleagues at Easter.

It's a family recipe, passed down from his grandmother, who came to America from the island of St. Michael in the Azores. Back then, he says, people didn't have oven thermometers, so they got creative. "They used to put their hands in the oven, and if they couldn't finish a Hail Mary, they knew the oven was hot enough to bake the bread," he says.

**Tips for others:** "Don't give up," Pacheco says. "Follow the recipe." For this recipe, he says, "the most important thing is, you've got to let it rise twice. After the second rising, put into the baking pan, let it rise in the baking pan, and bake it."

He also says the bread makes delicious French toast after a few days.

**On the side:** Coffee goes well with the sweet bread.

**Want more recipes?** Pacheco compiled 289 family recipes in his book, *Pimental Family and Friends Cookbook*. You can order it at [portugueserecipes1.com](http://portugueserecipes1.com).

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**Portuguese Sweet Bread (Massa)**

*This makes enough dough for 5 loaves. Make sure you have the time to make the bread because it needs at least 3 1/2 hours of rising time.*

**2 1/2 cups milk**  
**1 stick (1/2 cup) butter**  
**2 tablespoons shortening**  
**2 1/2 cups sugar**  
**6 eggs, slightly beaten**  
**2 packages dry yeast, dissolved in 1/2 cup lukewarm water**  
**2 1/2 pounds (about 8 cups) flour**

***For top of bread:***

**1 egg**  
**1/2 cup milk**  
**Dyed hard-boiled eggs (optional)**

Heat milk, butter and shortening until melted. Pour over sugar in large mixing bowl. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Let mixture cool. Add eggs and stir. Add yeast and blend. Dump in flour all at once. Mix until all flour is dampened. Knead for about 10 minutes or until dough pulls away easily from back of hands. (Or use the dough hook of your standup mixer.)

Butter or oil the inside of a nonmetallic bowl and place dough inside, turning over once so the dough is coated and won't dry out. Cover with a clean damp towel or plastic wrap, then place in a warm place, free from any drafts.

Allow to rise for about 90 minutes, or until doubled in bulk. Punch dough down. Repeat process for double-rising. (Time varies; check after about 1 hour.)

Divide into loaves and put into greased loaf pans. Let rise for 30 minutes. Make two or three slits on top of each loaf. Brush tops with egg whisked with milk. (If you are using the dyed Easter eggs, push one into the dough about 1/2 inch.) Bake in preheated 325-degree oven for 25 minutes.

Source: Adapted from a recipe from Mary R. Bedard in the *Pimental Family and Friends Cookbook* by John Pacheco