Pumpkin Cinnamon Rolls

Ingredients

Pumpkin Dough

- 1/3 cup (80ml) **whole milk***
- 2 Tablespoons (28g) **unsalted butter**
- 1/2 cup (115g) canned **pumpkin** *(not pumpkin pie filling)*
- 1/4 cup (50g) **granulated sugar**
- 1/4 teaspoon **ground nutmeg**
- 1/2 teaspoon **salt**
- 1 large **egg**
- 2 and 1/4 teaspoons (7g) **instant** or **active dry yeast** *(1 standard packet, see note)*
- 2 and 2/3 cups (335g) **all-purpose flour** (spooned & leveled), plus more as needed for hands and work surface

Filling

- 6 Tablespoons (85g) **unsalted butter**, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup (100g) packed light or dark **brown sugar**
- 1 Tablespoon **ground cinnamon**
- 1/2 teaspoon **ground nutmeg**
- 1/2 teaspoon **ground allspice**
- 1/4 teaspoon **ground ginger**
- 1/4 teaspoon **ground cloves**

Maple Cream Cheese Icing

- 4 ounces (113g) full-fat brick **cream cheese**, softened to room temperature
- 3 Tablespoons (45ml) **pure maple syrup**
- 1 Tablespoons (15ml) **whole milk**
- 2/3 cup (80g) **confectioners' sugar**, sifted
- **optional:** 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Instructions

1. **Make the dough:** Warm the milk and butter together over the stove or in the microwave. Warm the two together until the butter is *just* melted. You want the mixture lukewarm (105°F (41°C)-115°F (46°C)), not scorching hot. Set aside. Whisk the pumpkin puree, sugar, nutmeg, and salt together in a large bowl or in the bowl of your stand mixer. Whisk in the warmed milk/butter, egg, and yeast until combined. Using the dough hook or paddle attachment on low speed or mixing by hand using a silicone spatula or wooden spoon, mix in 1 cup of flour. Mix for 1 minute, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add 1 and 2/3 cups more flour and beat for 1 more minute.
2. **Knead the dough:** Keep the dough in the mixer (and switch to the dough hook if using the paddle) and beat for an additional 5 full minutes, or knead by hand on a lightly floured surface for 5 full minutes. (If you're new to bread-baking, my How to Knead Dough video tutorial can help here.) If the dough becomes too sticky during the kneading process, sprinkle 1 teaspoon of flour at a time on the dough or on the work surface/in the bowl to make a soft, slightly tacky dough. Do not add more flour than you need because you do not want a dry dough. After kneading, the dough should still feel a little soft. Poke it with your finger—if it slowly bounces back, your dough is ready to rise. You can also do a "windowpane test" to see if your dough has been kneaded long enough: tear off a small (roughly golfball-size) piece of dough and gently stretch it out until it's thin enough for light to pass through it. Hold it up to a window or light. Does light pass through the stretched dough without the dough tearing first? If so, your dough has been kneaded long enough and is ready to rise. If not, keep kneading until it passes the windowpane test.
3. **1st Rise:** Lightly grease a large bowl with oil or use nonstick spray. Place the dough in the bowl, turning it to coat all sides in the oil. Cover the bowl with aluminum foil, plastic wrap, or a clean kitchen towel. Allow the dough to rise in a relatively warm environment for 2 hours or until double in size. (I always let it rise on the counter and it takes about 2 hours.)
4. Grease the bottom and sides of a 9-inch square baking dish, 9-inch round baking dish, 9×13-inch baking dish, or 11×7-inch baking dish. This recipe yields 10-12 rolls and they can fit into any of those size pans.
5. **Roll out the dough:** Punch down the dough to release the air. Place dough on a lightly floured work surface and using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll dough into a 10×14-inch rectangle. Make sure the dough is smooth and evenly thick. If the dough keeps shrinking as you roll it out, stop what you're doing, cover it lightly, and let it rest for 10 minutes to relax the gluten. When you return to the dough, it should stretch out much easier.
6. **Add the filling:** Spread softened butter evenly on top of the rolled-out dough. Combine the brown sugar, cinnamon, and spices into a small bowl. Sprinkle all over the top. Roll it up tightly. Using a very sharp knife, cut into 10-12 even rolls. Arrange rolls in the prepared pan.
7. **2nd Rise:** Cover the rolls tightly and allow to rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour. (Or use the overnight option below.)

8. Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C).
9. Bake rolls for about 22-28 minutes or until they are lightly browned on top. After about 15 minutes, tent a piece of aluminum foil over the top of the pan to prevent the tops from browning too quickly and baking unevenly. Remove pan from the oven and place pan on a wire rack for about 10 minutes as you make the icing.
10. **Make the icing:** Using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a paddle or whisk attachment, beat the softened cream cheese in a medium bowl on medium speed until smooth. Add the maple syrup and milk and beat on high until smooth. Add the confectioners' sugar (and cinnamon, if using) and beat on medium speed until creamy. Spread on warm cinnamon rolls.
11. Cover leftover frosted or unfrosted rolls tightly and store at room temperature for up to 2 days or in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Notes

1. **Overnight Instructions:** Prepare the rolls through step 6. Instead of allowing the cut rolls to rise in a warm environment in step 7, place the pan in the refrigerator and allow the rolls to rest for up to 14 hours before baking. When it's time to bake the next day, bring the rolls to room temperature and rise for 1 hour on the counter, or until almost doubled in size. Then bake as directed.
2. **Freezing Instructions:** You can freeze cinnamon rolls for up to 3 months, and I recommend a few different methods for freezing cinnamon rolls. The first method is to freeze them after shaping, before they've had their 2nd rise (step 6). Thaw in the refrigerator overnight, then let rise for 1.5–2 hours at room temperature before baking. The second method is to par-bake the risen rolls for 10 minutes, let cool completely, then cover and freeze. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight, then let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before baking. Finish baking for 15–20 minutes. You can also freeze fully baked cinnamon rolls.
3. **Special Tools**: Stand Mixer or Large Glass Mixing Bowl | Silicone Spatula or Wooden Spoon | Whisk | 9-inch Square Baking Dish, 9-inch Round Baking Dish, 9×13-inch Baking Dish or 11×7-inch Baking Dish | Rolling Pin | Cooling Rack | Electric Mixer (Handheld or Stand)
4. **Milk:** For super soft rolls, I recommend whole milk. Nondairy or lower fat milks work too, but the rolls may not taste as rich and fluffy.
5. **Yeast:** You can use active dry or instant yeast in this recipe. Follow all of the same instructions. If using active dry yeast, the rise times are usually *slightly* longer, but not much.
6. **Spices in Filling:** If needed, you can use 1 Tablespoon ground cinnamon and 1 and 1/2 teaspoons store-bought or homemade pumpkin pie spice in the filling. The pumpkin pie spice replaces the nutmeg, allspice, ginger, and cloves.

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