

RECIPES



Annuska's Sourdough Bread

This bread takes two or three days to make. Sometimes the dough doesn't rise. Some people say that if you're a woman, you have a better chance that the dough will rise because women are more "yeasty." If your dough doesn't rise, try to feed it longer until it does. This is an adaptation from a recipe in *The Joy of Cooking* (New York: Scribner, 1997), p. 756. All I did was to replace water with breast milk at the beginning. I have done it twice, and I got great bread both times.

2 loaves or 4 baguettes

FOR STARTER DOUGH:

½ cup flour
¼ cup warm breast milk

FOR BREAD:

1 cup starter dough
2 cups water
4½ cups flour
1 tablespoon salt
Oil

First, mix ½ cup of flour with ¼ cup of warm breast milk in a clean bowl. Turn it out onto a clean (unfloured) work surface, and knead it until smooth and elastic. Return the dough to the bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and poke some holes in the plastic. Let it stand at room temperature for half a day, approximately.

Repeat this three times, adding ¼ cup of warm water instead of milk, and then give it twenty-four hours to rise. Then do it twice more, or as necessary. The dough should be bubbly and smell a little sour. This is the starter for the bread.

To 1 cup of the starter dough, add 2 cups of water, the flour, and the salt and mix. Adjust the consistency of the dough by adding flour or water. The dough should be sticky to the touch but should not actually stick to your hands. Knead it until smooth and elastic.

Coat the dough with a little oil, and let it rise in a bowl, covered with plastic. It will take less time in a warm place, but a slower, longer rise will make a tastier loaf.

Divide the dough, and shape as you like. Place the loaves on floured wax paper or on oiled cookie sheets. Cover with oiled plastic or a cloth, and let it rise at room temperature until doubled in volume.

Preheat oven to 450°F (220°C). Make some cuts on top of the loaves with a razor blade or a fine knife, as this is essential to help the bread rise in the oven.

Spray the oven with water, wait a minute, and slide in the loaves. Wait a little more and spray the oven walls once more. Bake until browned, 35 to 45 minutes. Turn off the oven and let the loaves stay there for 5 more minutes.

Cool completely before eating.

Gayle's Breast Pump-kin Pie

A Thanksgiving favorite—after all, we have so much to be thankful for as breastfeeding mamas! Share your abundance, your overflowing horns of plenty, with your guests!

- 6 eggs
- 1 can (20 oz.) solid packed pumpkin
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ginger
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 cups milk (a combination of evaporated and breast—
see below)
- 2 prebaked 9-inch pie shells (store-bought or your
favorite recipe)

Beat eggs in a large bowl. Add pumpkin, sugars, salt, and spices. Mix until smooth.

Express breastmilk into measuring cup (up to ¼ cup.) Add enough evaporated milk to make 2 cups of milk total. Gradually stir the milk into the mixture and pour into pie shells. Bake at 450°F (220°C) for 10 minutes; reduce heat to 350°F (180°C) and bake for 40–45 minutes.

Put aluminum foil over edges of pie crust if they look ready to burn. When a knife inserted in the center of the pie comes out clean, it's done.

Let the pies cool on a wire rack before serving. You may want to put a generous mammatocumulus mound of whipped cream or ice cream (breastmilk laced, perhaps?) on top of each slice.

If you think some of your guests will freak out when they discover that breastmilk is a featured ingredient, divide the pie filling into two bowls, and only add breastmilk (from a few squirts up to ¼ of a cup) to one of the pies. Let your guests know beforehand which is which. (Or see if they can guess!)

Nick's Vanilla Diazepam Ice Cream¹

Easy to prepare² and tasty! Makes one-and-a-half servings.

- ¾ cup breast milk from an editor at a prominent newsweekly³
- ¼ cup organic skim milk
- 1 teaspoon imitation vanilla extract⁴
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 raw egg⁵

Mix the ingredients in a bowl for a while. Worry about salmonella poisoning. Pour into ice-cream making machine. Let mix until thick (about twenty minutes) while reading Flannery O'Connor stories.⁶ Pray for nothing bad to happen. Consider the symbolism.⁷ Eat.⁸

¹ Before I could meet my friend Jennifer, the editor of a prominent newsweekly, for the handoff of the transfusion bag full of mother's milk, we had an email exchange in which I said that I was both drug-free and allergic to penicillin. Jennifer revealed that she was recovering from a bad infection for which she had been prescribed both diazepam (in the popular Valium brand) and penicillin. It was therefore decided that she would wait a few days for these medications to vacate her system before using the pump to express her bounty on my behalf. For guilty ice cream users and those who might need a little serenity, I therefore suggest you contact a donor who has recently recovered from a bad infection, so that you might reap the benefit of her prescription.

² The recipe had better be easy to prepare because if you're like me, you will have many misgivings before embarking on this project. I confess, for example, to some apprehension having to do with the intimacy issues involved. I was about to make ice cream from the extrusions of Jennifer's physique! A day or so passed in which it was clear to me that I was going to throw away the mother's milk in my refrigerator and forget the whole

business. Had it not been for the easy-to-prepare character of this recipe, I'm not sure I would have made it at all.

³ Our lunch was at a midtown New York expense-account joint. We talked about the new Warren Beatty vehicle (bad!) and about a television writer we both knew. Throughout this light conversation, a MOMA bag sat beneath the table, concealing the two little transfusion bags, one containing the mother's milk with diazepam, one without.

⁴ Most vanilla extract has alcohol in it, of course, so I use the fake stuff. If you're ambitious about your ice cream, you might want to try using actual vanilla beans.

⁵ I might have worried that I was going to get a dire communicable disease from my kind donor. However, I was more worried about raw eggs and salmonella. What allowed me to go forward, despite my worries, was my past as an abuser of drugs. I took many, many pills in my youth without bothering to ask what was in them or where they came from. I smoked an assortment of unidentified weeds. I am lucky to have had as few problems as I did. I therefore tasted mother's milk with the abandon of youth.

⁶ On the night in question, I happened to be composing a paper on O'Connor's stories. Choose a different book if you like.

⁷ This is the important part of the recipe. You will not be surprised if I tell you that the results of this adventure were imperfect, at least when compared with fresh Vermont ice cream produced right at the dairy. Mother's milk is not the same stuff, is not rich with the abundancies of fat, and therefore the culinary results of my adventure were imperfect, as I say. It was a half measure in the realm of ice cream. But in spite of this there was something incredibly interesting about the whole experience, about my adventure, and maybe it was because I had never had mother's milk before, maybe it was because I was never held by my own mother at her breast. My mother was performing according to type in 1961 and therefore cannot be held accountable, not entirely. Maybe it was the absence of breastfeeding, maybe it was the narrative of the absence of breastfeeding, whichever, it was also true I was absolutely nauseated by this performance I'm recounting. And yet I had this epiphany on the generosity of the maternal physique, that it can feed others, that it contains all they need for a long time. A child can live a year off the sustenance of his mother, requiring little else but to be held and thus fed. Mothers, I understood for an instant, embody the earthly perfection of generosity. Having produced the swaddled babe in the first instance, having fed it in the second, they are conjoined with the fate of the babe, though feeding the babe might cause cracking of nipples and pain of many kinds. I was nauseated by my performance and I was also moved by it.

⁸ I ate. Then I threw out the rest and went back to work.

But these are relatively obscure, and there is very little, even in feminist nonfiction, that gazes steadily on the fully lived experience of all the people involved.

Within this fully lived realm, I learned of the vastness and diversity of people's experience with breastmilk. I heard from women who had never had children, nor even been pregnant, who produced milk during sex. Another woman, who longed to become pregnant, told me that her breasts felt heavier after she'd been cuddling her friend's baby. A grandmother who'd weaned her own children thirty years earlier said she spontaneously produced milk for her grandson, and so helped her daughter to feed him. Perfectly ordinary men confessed how they longed to drink milk from a woman's breasts, both as a sexual turn-on and as a means to deepen a friendship. Mothers who'd ceased feeding their babies told me they'd decided to keep up their supply for their husbands. Others noticed that if they squeezed their breasts, many years after weaning, droplets of milk still emerged.

I heard from mothers who topped up their family's breakfast bowls with milk from their breasts, or added it to their coffee, or the mashed potatoes. A woman whose baby died continued to pump her milk and donate it to a milk bank. A thirteen-year-old Melbourne girl was given two cups of breastmilk a day, donated by other women, to survive her allergies. A New Yorker, who wasn't breastfed as a child, told me of his curiosity about the flavor of breastmilk and offered to make it into ice cream for me if I could find a donor. A father told me how he'd comforted his daughter by letting her latch onto his breast when the mother was away. An Englishman emailed to say he'd produced milk for his baby in the 1970s and helped his wife breastfeed. I spoke to the New York-based artist Patrick Bucklew, who was once offended by a stripper in a Provincetown club squirting milk at him,

but went on to produce prosthetic breasts that squirted coconut milk ten feet and incorporate them into his own performances.

Perhaps the most surprising story from a man came from a Sydney taxi driver who told his passenger—a lactation consultant—that as a child in Bosnia he had been hired out by his dad, in exchange for cigarettes, to relieve nursing mothers of their engorgement by sucking their breasts. He told the lactation consultant with some pride, "Some days I sucked tit before school, and some days after school. The ladies thought I was cute so they gave me cakes and sweets after I finished. Some days I was so full of milk and cakes I had a belly-ache."

I heard from large-breasted women who had discovered they could breastfeed themselves, and one of them added this to her repertoire when masturbating. After one interview I conducted for this book, I experienced the feeling of letdown, as though my milk were coming in, even though I'd not breastfed for over a year.

I could only conclude that there is much more breastmilk in our lives, in our bodies, and in our cultural imaginary, than we realize. Through my research, it has gradually made itself known to me, almost as if it is a great lost resource of contemporary life.

In addition to listening to stories, I also sent out questionnaires, and received over two hundred replies, mostly from women but approximately 10 percent from men. Replies came from Australia, America, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, South Africa, and France. I used the questionnaires to find more stories and to get a broad, qualitative picture of the attitudes to breastfeeding in our culture. Naturally, I received many more answers from breastfeeding enthusiasts than any other kind. But within that group there exists not only an incredible