Orange-Cranberry Braided Bread

A festive golden braid with orange zest and sweet-tart cranberries.

Makes: 1 braid (12 slices) Oven: 350 F Time: 3-4 hr

Bread Dough

- 3 1/2-3 3/4 cups all-purpose flour (420-450 g), divided
- 2 1/4 tsp instant yeast (1 packet)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup milk, lukewarm (100-110 F)
- 1/4 cup orange juice, room temperature
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 1/4 cup butter, softened

Fruit / Finishing

- 3/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1 Tbsp finely grated orange zest
- Egg wash: 1 egg + 1 Tbsp water
- Optional: coarse sugar for sprinkling
- Optional glaze: 1/2 cup powdered sugar + 2-3 tsp orange juice

Trail Tater Method

1. Mix 3 1/2 cups flour, yeast, sugar and salt. Add milk, juice, egg, butter and zest. Knead 8-10 minutes by hand (5-7 in a mixer), adding remaining flour only as needed for a soft, slightly tacky dough.
2. Knead in cranberries until distributed. Place in a greased bowl, cover and rise until doubled, about 60-90 minutes.
3. Divide into 3 equal pieces. Rest 10 minutes, then roll each into a 16-inch rope. Pinch ends together and braid loosely on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Tuck both ends underneath.
4. Cover loosely and rise 45-60 minutes, until puffy. Heat oven to 350 F. Beat egg wash; brush gently over the braid. Sprinkle with coarse sugar, if using.
5. Bake 30-40 minutes, until deep golden and the center reaches 190 F; tent with foil if needed. Cool on a rack. If glazing, stir powdered sugar with enough juice to drizzle and apply after cooling.

Trail Tater Tip

If the ropes spring back, cover and rest them another 5-10 minutes before shaping. Keep the braid loose enough for the dough to expand during its final rise.