Spicy Orange, Cherry and Rosemary Christmas Wreath

A soft tempting bread which should be eaten warm the day it is made. Alternatively it can be frozen as soon as it is cool, and re-warmed and decorated when needed.

- 2 eggs
- Milk (approximately 300 ml)
- 500 g strong bread flour
- 50 g butter — cut into small chunks
- 4 tbs sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbs finely chopped rosemary
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1½ tsp grated nutmeg
- Zest of a large orange
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2½ tsp dried yeast
- 75 g dried cherries
- 50 g melted butter
- 3 tbs flaked almonds

To decorate:

- 3 tbs icing sugar
- A tub of glace cherries
- Rosemary and holly leaves

Firstly prepare the liquid, break the eggs into a measuring jug, beat lightly and make up to 350 ml with milk at room temperature.

Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl and mix in all the other ingredients except for the cherries, almonds and melted butter. Make a well in the centre and add the prepared liquid.
Gradually mix together to give a slightly sticky dough.

Turn this out onto a floured surface and knead for about 5 minutes.
Gradually knead in the cherry pieces for 5 minutes more. The dough should be smooth and elastic.
Cover the bowl and leave in a warm place for about an hour until doubled in size.

Line a very large square baking sheet with baking paper and position an upside-down oven-proof circular ramekin (about 8 – 10 cm diameter) in the centre.
Punch the dough back and divide into 24 pieces, rolling each piece into a ball.

Assemble the wreath, dippping each ball in the melted butter as you work.
Space a ring of balls around the ramekin with a 5 mm gap between each.
Make a second ring around the first, spacing the balls slightly apart in the same way.
Brush any remaining butter over the top of the dough and sprinkle on the almonds pressing in lightly.
Cover loosely with oiled clingfilm and leave to rise for 30 – 45 minutes, until doubled in size.

Bake at 180°C / 350°F / Gas Mark 4 for 30 to 40 minutes until lightly golden brown.
If the almonds brown too quickly, lay a sheet of foil loosely over the top to protect them after 20 minutes.

Ease out the ramekin and cool the bread a little on the baking paper.
Decorate with sifted icing sugar, glace cherries and lots of foliage.

You can, of course, use your bread maker on the dough setting, adding the ingredients in the order suggested in the instructions, and putting the dried cherries in the dispenser.