



Dulce de Leche Pecan Sweet Rolls is excerpted from [SECRETS OF THE SOUTHERN TABLE](#) © 2018 by Virginia Willis.  
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### **Dulce de Leche Pecan Sweet Rolls**

Makes 12 rolls

Dulce de leche is caramelized sweet milk. My friend and colleague Von Diaz, a writer, radio producer, and self-taught cook who explores Puerto Rican food and culture in her work, calls dulce de leche a “rich, decadent, and sweet concentrated burst of caramel in your mouth.” Loosely translated, it means “sweet jam of milk” and I can pretty much guarantee it would improve the flavor of shoe leather. This recipe makes about 1 1/2 cups, a little more than is needed for the rolls, but I promise you will put the leftovers to good use. It will keep in a resealable container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. My grandmother used to make quick bread rolls instead of yeast-based rolls, which speeds up the time it takes to get the rolls on the table—this dough is very user-friendly and can be thrown together quickly on a Saturday morning. The dulce de leche, however, does take more time and patience; I suggest making it the night before. If you want the rolls without the dulce de leche, you can simply use caramel sauce or the glaze from Apple Stack Cake (page 294/not provided).

#### **For the dulce de leche:**

**4 cups 2% or whole milk**  
**1¼ cups granulated sugar**  
**¼ teaspoon baking soda**  
**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**Pinch of fine sea salt**

#### **For the dough:**

**3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling and shaping the dough**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**1½ teaspoons baking powder**  
**½ teaspoon baking soda**  
**½ teaspoon fine sea salt**  
**1½ cups buttermilk**  
**6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**  
**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**¼ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar**  
**½ cup coarsely chopped pecans**

1. *To make the dulce de leche*, combine the milk, granulated sugar, and baking soda in a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until caramelized and thickened, 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 hours. (After about 1 hour, stir more often as the milk caramelizes to avoid burning.) Stir in the vanilla and a small pinch of salt. Transfer to a bowl to cool. (This can be made ahead and refrigerated overnight to ensure a smooth start to the next day.)
2. Heat the oven to 400°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with a silicone baking mat.



3. *To make the dough*, stir together the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Combine the buttermilk, 5 tablespoons of the butter, and the vanilla in a bowl or measuring cup. Add the buttermilk mixture to the dry ingredients and stir to combine.
4. Transfer the dough to a well-floured surface and roll it into a 12-inch square just under 1/2 inch thick. Brush the dough with the remaining 1 tablespoon butter. Sprinkle evenly with the brown sugar and 1/4 cup of the pecans. Roll the dough into a log, starting with a longer edge. Pinch the seam closed as well as you can; it'll be a bit messy, with filling spilling out. That's okay. It might also stretch out a bit when you roll it, so push it back together at both ends to return it as close to 12 inches as possible.
5. Using dental floss or a serrated knife, cut the log into 1-inch slices (see sidebar). Transfer the slices to the prepared baking sheet. Bake the buns until they're golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes, covering them with foil near the end of baking if the exposed pecans start to darken too much.
6. Drizzle over the cooled dulce de leche and top with the remaining 1/4 cup pecans. Serve immediately. These are best served the same day that you make them.

**Sidebar:**

One challenge with any sweet roll or cinnamon roll recipe is cutting the log of rolled-up dough into individual buns without squeezing out the filling in the process! Unflavored, unwaxed dental floss solves this problem. Section off a 10-inch length of floss and slide it under the roll where it needs to be cut. Grab both ends of the floss in each hand, crossing over the top of the roll, moving your hands in opposite directions. Pull it taut to cut through the roll and form a slice.



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