

Nini's Perfection Springerle Cookies



These dense, cake-like delicacies date back to at least the 1600s and originated in Bavaria, Switzerland, and the Alsace area of France. For eating quality, ease, and quality of prints, this recipe is just perfection!

Yields 3 - 5 dozen cookies, depending on size of mold*

ingredients

- 1/2 teaspoon baker's ammonia (hartshorn**) or baking powder
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 6 large eggs, room temperature
- 6 cups confectioner's sugar (1.5 lbs.)
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened but not melted
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon oil of anise***
- 2 lb. box sifted cake flour (Swansdown or Softasilk)
- 1 teaspoon very finely grated zest of orange or lemon—use a microplane to get it fine enough (optional, though this enhances flavor of the traditional anise or citrus flavors)
- More flour as needed

*Mold sizes vary widely, as will baking temperatures and times.

**Hartshorn, or baker's ammonia, a traditional leavening agent that used to be purchased at the pharmacy, is available from House on the Hill.

CAUTION: Hartshorn must be baked—DO NOT EAT RAW DOUGH!

***Flavor variations include anise, vanilla, lemon, orange, almond, cinnamon, and more.

directions

1. Dissolve hartshorn or baking soda in milk and set aside at room temperature for 30 - 60 minutes. With a stand mixer, beat eggs until thick and lemon-colored (10 - 20 minutes). Using a small handheld mixer for 30 minutes (to incorporate a lot of air), slowly beat in confectioner's sugar, then softened butter. Add hartshorn or baking soda and milk, salt, preferred flavoring, and grated zest of lemon or orange, if desired. Gradually beat in as much flour as you can with the mixer, then stir in remainder of 2 lbs. of flour to make a stiff dough.

2. Turn onto floured surface and knead in enough additional flour until dough no longer feels sticky to the touch and will make a good print in the mold without sticking to it. Roll out dough into a pancake about 1/2" thick. Adjust thickness of dough to depth of carving in mold (may need to be thicker). Brush selected cookie mold with a dry pastry brush and flour. Tap off excess flour, turn mold onto pancake of dough, and press firmly. Lift mold straight up.

3. Cut cookie out and move to a parchment-lined baking sheet to dry. You will need to move each individual cookie or, in the case of a multiple press mold, each group of cookies. Press, cut, move, repeat. Under normal, cool, and dry conditions, leave cookies to dry for 24 hours, uncovered. For standard size cookies (1-1/2" - 2"), bake at about 325° for about 12 minutes. Ovens vary—cookies should be slightly brown at bottom and a pristine white on top (the white top is what sets springerle cookies apart).