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RUSSIAN FOOD NETWORK
Project form

Recipe:

Pryaniki – Russian Honey Spice Cookies

Prep time 2 hours Cook time 20 mins Total time 2 hours 20 mins

Ingredients

Cookies:

½ cup instant coffee

½ cup hot water

1 cup butter

1 cup sugar

1½ cups honey

1-2 teaspoons vanilla extract

½ teaspoon allspice

¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg

½ teaspoon anise (ground or liquid extract)

2 eggs

1½ teaspoons baking soda dissolved in 1 teaspoon white vinegar

1½ teaspoons baking powder

6 cups flour

Glaze:

4½ cups powdered sugar

½ cup milk

Instructions

In a medium saucepan, dissolve the instant coffee in the water.

Add the butter, sugar and honey to the dissolved coffee in the saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat and cook, stirring, just until the butter melts and the sugar dissolves and the mixture is homogenous. Take off the heat, pour it into a large bowl. and cool for about 10-15 minutes.

Add all the spices - vanilla, allspice, nutmeg and anise. You can also add cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, cloves, mint extract, etc. Whisk in the eggs, the baking soda dissolved in vinegar and baking powder. You will notice that the mixture will fizz a little when it's all mixed up.

Add the flour and mix with a large wooden spoon until all the flour is incorporated.

Cover the batter with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel and set aside at room temperature for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Shape the batter into approximately 1 Tablespoon balls and place them on the prepared baking sheet, leaving some room around each cookie, since they will expand while baking. I use a 1 Tablespoon measuring scoop to get the batter out of the bowl and then roll it around in my hands. This will make sure that all the cookies are the same size and will bake evenly. Bake in the preheated oven for 20-25 minutes. Do not overbake, or the cookies will be too hard. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar and the milk to make a glaze. You can flavor the glaze by adding some kind of extract to it, like vanilla, mint, almond, etc. Dip the cooled cookies into the glaze, letting the excess run off. Set the glazed cookies on a rack or parchment paper to dry. When the glaze is dry, you can flip the cookies over and glaze the other side as well. When glazing the cookies, work fast, since the glaze will be harder to work with when it starts to dry up. You can add a tiny splash more of milk to thin it out if it hardens. Store the cookies at room temperature in a sealed container.

1). Photo of the prepared dish:



2). A synopsis of your research on the recipe and the area where the recipe originated:

Essentially it's Russian Gingerbread, they can be filled with jellies but I chose not to do that in order to keep things simple. They first became popular in the 9th century, and they were called "honey bread." The recipe has morphed over time, it used to be rye and honey based and now you add coffee and other additives to make them more like cookies than in the past. Once Russia started to trade with China and India, other spices were introduced to baking and every region has its own take on the recipe. They're commonly eaten with tea and coffee.

3). Your description of the experience of preparing and tasting the recipe (any ingredients you needed to substitute, any changes you made to the recipe... does it remind you of something you tasted before? What would you serve to accompany it? Etc.

Making the pryaniki was fun, my roommate helped me bake and the house smelled delicious once they were in the oven. They tasted like sweet gingerbread and were delicious. We didn't

have to make any substitutions, we used the recipe as is. Since it recommended drinking tea with them in every recipe I found, a pot of tea accompanied the pryaniki that we made.

4). Like a wine recommendation to accompany a dish, make a recommendation of a reading from Russian literature that would accompany the making or tasting of the dish you prepared. Perhaps the reading would suit the mood of the dish, its spiciness or its sweetness... perhaps there was a mention of one of the ingredients or the dish itself in the reading... etc. You may select from the stories read or presented in class, or some other Russian work with which you are familiar.

I would recommend reading Pushkin while eating these! I felt like Tatyana at the window watching the snow fall outside as I ate the cookies and drank my tea. The birthday scene in Eugene Onegin would be fitting since this is a sweet, but it's just a good treat just for sitting down to read with a cup of tea.