

Lebkuchen

German Spice Cookies

Original German (Das Kuchbuch der Sabina Welserin by Sabina Welserin)

English Translation: (by Valoise Armstrong)

#151 To bake good Lebkuchen

Take first a pound of sugar, a quart of clear honey, not quite a third quart of flour, take two and a half ounces of cinnamon, one and a half ounces of cloves, two ounces of cardamom. Cut the other spices as small as possible, the cinnamon sticks are ground as coarsely as possible. Also put ginger therein and put the sugar into the honey, let it cook together, put the flour in a trough, pour the cardamom into it first, afterwards the ginger and the other spices.

After fiddling a bit with redaction on this recipe, I opted for a modern interpretation and worked backwards since I had a hard time making it work. I modified the modern recipe to use similar flavor profiles and methods of construction so it would be more like the period selection. Brown sugar and milk were used instead of honey. The honey makes dough very difficult to work with. We also added baking soda to make them rise more. There's no explanation here as to what was done with the dough as far as rolling or shaping -- or even if it was baked! (Like a period gingerbread?) For the feast, I did not decorate with nuts or seeds since there were many nut allergies — but it does make a lovely presentation and would be a period method.

This makes about 40, 2" cookies.

Ingredients:

1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups brown sugar

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter

3 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour

1 TBSP. Spices (TBSP Cinnamon, Ginger, cardamom, clove

(I use: 1 tsp. Cinnamon, 1 tsp. Ground Ginger, 1 tsp. cardamom)

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

1 egg white

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons liquor (like brandy or rum. I used Captain Morgan Spiced rum)

Nuts, seeds or dried fruit for decoration, as desired

For Brushing:

2 egg yolks

1 tablespoon water

Directions:

1. In a saucepan heat brown sugar, milk, water and butter on medium until the butter is melted and mixture begins to bubble.
2. Take off heat and add flour, spices, and salt stirring with a wooden spoon or spatula until combined. Return saucepan to the stove. Continue heating the dough stirring continually until it thickens and starts to pull away from the sides.
3. Set saucepan in a cool place (i put mine outside since they are generally made while it's cold outside!) Chill until the dough is cool enough that it won't cook the egg white.
4. Beat the egg white until stiff. When the dough has cooled, stir/knead in the stiff egg white, baking soda and liquor. At this point you could chill or freeze the dough, if you want to bake the cookies at a later point.
5. Preheat oven to 350° F and place parchment paper on baking sheets.
6. Flour a surface and roll out $\frac{1}{4}$ of the dough at a time, adding only as much flour as needed to keep it from sticking to the work surface and rolling pin. Roll to about $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thickness.
7. Cut out desired shapes, place on a baking sheet and decorate with nuts and seeds, if desired. Bake one sheet at a time for 15 minutes.
8. In a small bowl combine the egg yolks and water. Take the finished cookies from the oven, and immediately brush with a thin layer of the egg wash. The egg will cook enough while cookies are hot. This gives them their lovely shiny look.
9. Transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool.
10. Store in an airtight container. Cookies also freeze well in Ziploc bags or airtight containers.