

Cuccidati (Italian fig cookies)

A Bite of History | December 2004



- 2½ CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- ½ CUP SUGAR
- 2½ TSP. BAKING POWDER
- ¼ TSP. SALT
- ½ CUP COLD BUTTER
- 2 EGGS, SLIGHTLY BEATEN
- ¼ CUP MILK
- ½ TSP. VANILLA
- 2 OZ. HAZELNUTS, TOASTED*
- 4 OZ. DRIED FIGS, HALVED AND STEMS REMOVED (⅔ CUP)
- ¼ CUP RAISINS
- 2 TSP. FINELY SHREDDED ORANGE OR LEMON PEEL
- ¼ CUP HONEY
- 2 TBSP. BRANDY
- ¼ TSP. GROUND CINNAMON
- 1 RECIPE *DRIZZLE FROSTING*
CRYSTALLIZED SUGAR

In a large bowl stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut in butter with a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. In a small bowl combine eggs, milk, and vanilla. Stir milk mixture into dry ingredients. Turn mixture onto a lightly floured surface and knead lightly with hands until dough forms a ball. Cover and chill for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a food processor process nuts until finely chopped. Add figs, raisins, and orange or lemon peel; cover and process until fruit is coarsely chopped. In a small bowl whisk together honey, brandy, and cinnamon until smooth. With food processor running, add honey mixture in a continuous stream to fig mixture, processing until mixture is combined.

Divide the chilled dough into thirds. Refrigerate remaining dough while working with 1 portion. Dough will be soft and a bit sticky. Roll dough on a well-floured work surface to about ¼-inch thickness. Cut dough with a 2½-inch round cookie cutter. Place about ½ teaspoon fig filling in the center of each dough round. Fold each round over and press edges of dough around the filling; press with a fork to seal edges, dipping the fork in flour frequently to prevent sticking. Place the cookies on greased or parchment paper-lined baking sheets.

Bake in a 400° oven about 10 minutes or until cookies are light brown around edges. Cool cookies on a wire rack. Ice with *Drizzle Frosting*; sprinkle with crystallized sugar. Makes about 80 cookies.

***TO TOAST HAZELNUTS:** Spread hazelnuts in a single layer in a shallow baking pan. Bake in a 350° oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until light golden brown, watching carefully and stirring once or twice so the nuts don't burn. Cool slightly. Place the nuts on a clean kitchen towel, fold towel over top, and rub vigorously to remove the skins.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Dough and filling may be prepared and chilled up to 24 hours before baking cookies. Baked and iced cookies can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature up to 3 days or in the freezer up to 3 months.

DRIZZLE FROSTING: For citrus frosting, in a medium bowl stir together 2 cups sifted powdered sugar and 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon or orange juice until smooth and of drizzling consistency. For vanilla frosting, substitute 1 to 1½ tablespoons milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla for the juice.