

Pastiera  
Ricotta and Grain Cake

Naples at Table - Cooking in Campania ©1998  
Arthur Schwartz

Makes 1 10-1/2-inch-diameter-cake or 9- by 13- 2-inch cake

*For the pastry*

3 cups bleached all-purpose flour  
1 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
14 tablespoons (7 ounces) butter, at room temperature  
4 egg yolks  
1/2 teaspoon grated lemon rind

*For the filling*

15 ounces whole milk ricotta  
1 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 tablespoon orange flower water  
1/2 cup finely minced mixed candied orange, citron, and lemon peel\*  
6 Eggs, separated (reserve 4 whites)

1/2 cup hulled wheat, soaked for 12 hours and boiled in lightly salted water for 40 minutes, until tender, or a 1/4 cup pearl barley, boiled until tender, about 30 minutes

*Plus:*

Confectioners' sugar

Note: In a pinch you can use 2 teaspoons orange extract instead of the classic orange flower water.

\*Note from Donna - I purchased both the orange flower water and a can of cooked wheat at Pastosa's in Cranford, NJ. You can try Joe Leone's in Point Pleasant, NJ, online at amazon.com, Uncle Giuseppe's or your local specialty grocer.

Mr. Schwartz also had a recipe to make your own candied orange peel, but I thought for working mom's, that might be asking too much of the home cook. I have made it before and will make it again for my Pastiera.

*To prepare the pastry:*

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, and salt. Mix well.
2. With a pastry blender or 2 forks, cut in the soft butter. The mixture should resemble coarse meal. Add the eggs yolks and lemon rind and stir to moisten the butter/flour mixture. Clumps of dough will start to form. The dough should not be overworked. Sprinkle ice water over the dough, a tablespoon at a time, as necessary to form larger clumps.
3. Place the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead it just enough to form it into a cohesive, soft yellow dough. Shape it into a loaf of about 9 inches long. Wrap it in a clean, wet, and squeezed out dish towel. Set aside while you prepare the filling.

*To prepare the filling:*

4. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the ricotta, sugar, cinnamon, orange flower water, and candied peels. Whisk in the egg yolks. Then mix in the drained wheat or barley.
5. In a clean mixing bowl, beat 4 eggs whites until stiff but not dry. Fold them into the barley mixture.

*To assemble and the pastiera:*

6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees
7. Place a sheet of wax paper about 20 inches long on a work surface. Dust it with flour and place 2/3 of the dough on top. Flatten it with a floured rolling pin and over with another sheet of wax. Roll it into a rectangle that will fit the bottom and sides of the baking dish pan--about 13 by 16 Inches and 1/4 inch thick.
8. Peel off the top sheet of paper and turn the pastry into the pan. Peel off the remaining sheet of paper while fitting it into the pan. Trim off the excess dough with a sharp knife. The dough may break in the process, but it is very easy to patch.
9. If using a springform pan, roll the dough into a circle at least 18 inches in diameter-large enough to cover the bottom and side of a 10 to 10-1/4-inch-diameter pan.
10. Pour the filling into the pastry-lined pan.
11. Roll out the remaining dough into a rectangle 9 by 13 inches and 3/8 inch thick. Cut it into 3/4-inch-wide diagonal strips. Arrange strips diagonally and very loosely over the filling and over the sides of the baking pan. Arrange the remaining strips in the opposite direction, to form a lattice top. Again, if the strips break, they patch easily and you will be sprinkling the finished cake with confectioners' sugar anyway.
12. Trim off the excess pastry and, using a table fork, pinch the ends of the lattice strip into the pastry lining.
13. Bake in the middle of the oven for 1 hour, or until a knife inserted near the edge comes out clean. If using a springform, bake it on a baking sheet. Turn the pastiera halfway through the baking to ensure even cooking. The filling will puff up during the baking and retract when it cools. It will turn a nutty brown, while the lattice top will turn only a shade of beige.
14. Let the cake cool thoroughly, then refrigerate for at least 12 hours. The pastiera should be served dusted with confectioners' sugar and at room temperature.