

POLISH CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Pierniczki - Gingerbread Cookies



1/2 cup honey
1 pinch of black pepper
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 tsp. allspice
1 cup sugar
4-5 cups flour
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. cloves
4 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda dissolved in water

Heat honey until it boils, then allow it to cool until lukewarm. In a large bowl, sift the flour with the spices. In a separate large bowl, beat the eggs with the sugar until thick. Add the soda to the eggs, then the honey, then the flour. Mix well.

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured board to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut cookies into Christmas shapes with cookie cutters. Bake them on parchment-covered cookie sheets in a 350 degree oven for about 10-15 minutes, or until just lightly browned.

After cooling, The pierniki may be decorated with icing made of powdered sugar, water, and a drop or two of almond or vanilla extract. Or they can be covered with a chocolate glaze.

To hang: Make a hole in the cookies with a plastic straw before baking, if you want to hang them on your Christmas tree. Loop a thin red ribbon through the hole before hanging. These cookies are delicious as well as pretty enough to add a special Polish touch to your tree.

Yield: 36 cookies

Kolaczki



1 (8-ounce) cream cheese, softened
12 ounces (3 sticks) butter, softened
3 cups all-purpose flour

2 (14-ounce) cans fillings of choice (apricot, prune, raspberry, etc.)
powdered sugar

Mix cream cheese and butter until light and fluffy. Add flour 1 cup at a time and mix well. Wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Roll out dough 1/4-inch on a surface that has been dusted with equal parts powdered and granulated sugars (not flour). Cut into 2-inch squares. Place 1/2 to 1 teaspoon filling on center of each square. Overlap opposite corners of dough to the center over filling. Bake for 15 minutes or when corners start to brown. Cool and dust with powdered sugar before serving. If not serving immediately, store cookies in a tightly covered container, or freeze, without the powdered sugar. Dust with powdered sugar just before serving.

Rogaliki - Almond Crescent Cookies



1/2 pound (2 sticks) butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon almond extract
1/4 cup ground blanched almonds
1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
Powdered sugar

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl or stand mixer, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolk and almond extract, mixing well. Add almonds and flour, and blend thoroughly.

Using walnut-size pieces of dough, shape into a crescent with your hands and place on ungreased baking sheets. Bake 20 minutes or until slightly brown on the edges. While still hot, roll in powdered sugar. Re-roll in powdered sugar when cool and store tightly covered.

Yield: 36 cookies

Ciasteczka Waniljowe - Polish Vanilla Cookies



7 ounces softened butter
1/2 cup sugar
vanilla bean, scraped of its seeds

3.5 ounces ground almonds
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 to 2 tablespoons milk, if necessary
1 tablespoon powdered sugar mixed with 1 tablespoon vanilla sugar

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar. Add scraped seeds from vanilla bean and almonds, and mix again. In a separate small bowl, whisk together flour and baking powder. Add it to the butter mixture and thoroughly combine. If dough is too dry, add 1 to 2 tablespoons milk.

On parchment-lined baking sheets, portion out small balls of dough. Roll in your hands and shape into small crescents. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until bottoms are golden. While cookies are still on the baking pan, sprinkle with sugar mixture. Let cool completely. Store in a tightly covered container.

Yield: 60 cookies

Ciasteczka Przekładane - Jam Sandwich Cookies



3 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 pound (2 sticks) cold butter, cut into cubes
2 tablespoons vanilla sugar
1 cup sour cream
1/2 cup raspberry jam
Powdered sugar

Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, cut butter into flour as for pie dough. Add vanilla sugar and sour cream, and bring together quickly. Wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate for 2 hours.

On a parchment-lined baking sheet, roll dough thinly and cut into circles of the diameter you wish, leaving 1 inch between circles. Using a smaller, round cutter, cut out the centers out of half the circles, leaving a small hole in the center. Remove the center scraps of dough, reroll, and use to cut more cookies. Bake 10-15 minutes or until turning lightly brown around the edges.

When the cookies have cooled, sprinkle powdered sugar on those with holes and spread a light layer of jam on the whole cookies. Press them together lightly, powdered sugar and jam sides up. When set, store tightly covered.

Yield: 30 cookies

Chrusciki - Angel's Wings Cookies



1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
3 large egg yolks
3 tablespoons sour cream
1 tablespoon vodka or whiskey
Vegetable oil
2 and 2/3 cups powdered sugar

Place flour and sugar in medium bowl; stir to combine. Make well in center of flour mixture; add egg yolks, sour cream, and vodka. Stir with spoon until soft dough forms. Place dough on lightly floured surface; knead gently until dough is smooth. Form dough into 2 discs; wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, 30 minutes or overnight.

Working with 1 disc at a time, unwrap dough and place on lightly floured surface. Roll out dough with lightly floured rolling pin to 1/8-inch-thick (12 x 10-inch) rectangle. Cut dough lengthwise in half; cut each half into 12 strips. Make a 1-inch vertical slit down center of each strip. Insert one end of strip through cut to form twist; repeat with remaining strips.

Heat oil in large saucepan to 375 F. Place 6 strips at a time into hot oil. Fry about 1 minute or until golden brown, turning cookies once with slotted spoon. Drain on paper towels. Dust liberally with powdered sugar.

Cookies are best when served immediately, but can be stored in airtight container 1 day.