

Love and Cookies

By Kate, Boston Mamas Guest Contributor

With the 2008 holidays coming to a close, I am reflecting on one moment in the past few weeks that was especially special for me: baking holiday cookies for my father with the help and company of my toddler daughter.

My father's family came to the United States from Germany in the 19th-century and brought with them a recipe for cookies called Butter Gebachans. Made from a base of butter and ground almonds and lots and lots of flour, the cookies are less sweet and more spicy - cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves are all included in generous portions - than the average American holiday cookie. They have a nice flavor and texture, though, and have a solid consistency that allows them to stand up to delicate cookie cutters. A wash of egg yolk and milk at the very end gives them a lovely golden color, and they always make the house smell nice while baking.

The specific details are unimportant; the point is that my father loves these cookies. Loves them like childhood. Loves them the way we love anything that reminds us of home and comfort and parents many years gone. I first started making the cookies for him when I was an early teenager, and I have continued to do so each year, sometimes with more and less grace. They're effortful to make and roll and cut and bake, and I've been guilty over the years of complaining about it - complaining about the work and the mess and the fact that it felt like an unwanted obligation.

This year, however, I decided to approach it differently, and to embrace the project as a way both to show and honor my love for my father - in a year in which we had decided to forgo purchased gifts all together - and to bring my daughter into the mix as a fun way to pass the tradition along. Doing so made for a much more satisfying experience, and also taught me a little something about making the holidays what you want them to be without shutting out the wishes of others. Best wishes to everyone for a great 2009, and for the creation and nurturing of traditions both old and new.

Butter Gebachans*

- 1/2 pound of butter
- 2 1/2 cups of sugar
- 6 eggs
- 2 tablespoons of cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon of cloves
- 1 tablespoon of nutmeg
- 1 lemon rind - grated
- 1/2 cup of milk
- 1 pound of almonds - ground
- 3 teaspoons of baking powder
- Approximately 7 cups of flour to stiffen
- egg yolk + milk for glaze

1. Cream together butter and sugar.
2. Add the eggs one at a time, and mix until well blended and smooth.
3. Add the three spices and the lemon rind.
4. Add the milk and the almonds slowly and mix well.
5. Add the baking powder and two cups of flour until mixture is well blended.
6. Add flour - approximately five cups - until the mixture is no longer very sticky.
7. Chill dough in fridge for at least an hour.
8. Roll and cut cookies.
9. Brush with glaze and bake on a greased cookie sheet (I like Silpat) at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes, or until the cookies are golden and fragrant.

**This makes a large recipe that can easily be halved.*