

Italian Anisette Christmas Cookies

I have eaten many versions of this cookie throughout the years. You can find them in round, drop cookie style, or in an "S" or pretzel shape, but the white icing with the multicolored sprinkles always remains the same. They're always made at Christmas, sometimes at Easter but never the rest of the year. One aunt made them without the anise flavor, but in my house we always add plenty. Believe it or not even the kids like them that way although that may have more to do with the heavy coating of confectioner sugar icing. This version of the recipe comes mainly from The North End Cookbook.

Ingredients:

1 c granulated sugar
12 heaping tablespoons Crisco
6 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c milk (room temperature)
5 cups flour
6 heaping teaspoons baking powder
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoons anise extract

For the icing:

1 pound confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon anise extract
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c milk (room temperature)
Multicolored sprinkles (the little round kind that roll everywhere)

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees
Using an electric mixer cream the sugar and shortening for about 5 minutes
Add the eggs mixing well after each one
Add the milk, 3 cups of flour, the baking powder, anise extract and mix slowly on low
Slowly add the remaining flour - it will be a little sticky
Continue to mix for about 5 more minutes to knead the dough
Using a cookie scoop (1 tablespoon size preferred) drop dough to cookie sheet. Because the dough is sticky you'll have to give each drop a little twist or flip to get it to land in a nice round heap.
Bake 8-10 minutes until lightly brown on bottom.
Cool completely on wire rack before icing.
Makes about 95 cookies

To ice the cookies:

Stir confectioner sugar with extract, add milk and mix well. You may need a little more milk to get a good consistency - it should pour slowly from the spoon.
You'll want to put some wax paper under your cooling racks for easy cleanup.

Dip the top of each cookie into the icing and give it a little twist or dab at it with the spoon to get the runoff icing.

Place it on the wire cooling rack

Every 8 cookies or so sprinkle on the colored sprinkles so that they'll stick before the icing dries
Let the icing dry for a full hour and you'll be ready to plate them!