

Ballymaloe Cookery School

A Simply Delicious Christmas 2016

“Baking & Puddings”

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Sophie Grigson's Ruggelach

Lovely Sophie of the many earrings, was a guest chef at the Ballymaloe Cookery School in 1993. This was one of the many delicious things she shared with us, for me the best Ruggelach we tasted, and somehow they always taste of Christmas to me.

Makes 16

Pastry

110g (4oz) cream cheese
110g (4oz) softened butter
150g (5oz) flour

Filling

50g (2oz) pale brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon pure ground cinnamon
35g (1 1/2oz) walnuts, finely chopped
25g (1oz) raisins, chopped

Glaze

1 egg, beaten
caster sugar

Beat the cream cheese vigorously with the butter until well mixed and softened. Stir in the flour gradually. Gather into a ball and wrap in cling film or parchment paper. Chill for 30 minutes.

Mix the sugar with the ground cinnamon, and with the walnuts and raisins. On a lightly floured board, roll the pastry out into a 33cm (12 inch) circle. Brush with the beaten egg and sprinkle the filling evenly over the pastry. Cover with a sheet of greaseproof paper and run the rolling pin over it a couple of times to fix the filling firmly into the pastry. Lift off the paper.

Divide the circle up like a cake into 16 triangles. Roll up each one, starting with the wider end, as if you were making a croissant. Arrange on a baking sheet, brush with egg, and sprinkle with caster sugar. Bake at 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6 for 12-15 minutes until golden brown.

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Recipe taken from 'A Simply Delicious Christmas' published by Gill Books

Butterschnitten

Makes 65 biscuits

This brilliant recipe makes lots of biscuits, enough to share with all your friends was given to me by Helga Dennhardt, the German grandmother of our little Zaiah.

Makes 65 biscuits

210g (7 1/2oz) unpeeled almonds, ground

125g (4 1/2oz) caster sugar

120g (4 1/4oz) butter

110g (4oz) flour

100g (3 1/2oz) ground chocolate

1 egg, beaten

Glaze

2-3 egg yolks

150g (5oz) icing sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla sugar

50g (2oz) chopped pistachios

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.

Mix the dry ingredients together, add the beaten egg and form loose dough. Form the dough into 2 rolls and put in the fridge until cold.

Cut 5mm (1/4 inch) rounds from the dough and put on a baking tray lined with bakewell paper.

Bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

To make the glaze, whisk the egg yolks, sugar and vanilla sugar until light and fluffy, it will be a bright yellow colour.

Spread the glaze over the cooled biscuits and sprinkle the pistachios on top. Let dry at room temperature.

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Gateau Pithivier

Serves 8

Puff Pastry (see recipe) made with:

225g (8oz) flour
225g (8oz) butter
pinch of salt
water, approx. 150ml (5fl oz)

Filling

110g (4oz) ground almonds
100g (3 1/2oz) caster sugar
45g (1 1/2oz) melted butter
2 egg yolks, preferably free range
2 tablespoons double cream
1 dessertspoon rum (optional)
egg wash made with 1 beaten egg and a tiny pinch of salt

Glaze

icing sugar

To Serve

crème fraîche or softly whipped cream

Preheat the oven to 230°C/450°F/Gas Mark 8.

Divide the pastry in half, roll out just less than 1/4 inch thick, cut into 2 circles approx. 25.5cm (10 inch) in diameter. Put one onto a damp baking sheet, chill and chill the other piece also.

Mix all the ingredients for the filling together in a bowl until smooth. Put the filling onto the pastry base, leaving a rim of about 2.5cm (1 inch) free around the edge. Brush the rim with beaten egg or water and put on the lid of puff pastry, press it down well around the edges. Flute the edges with a knife.

Make a small hole in the centre brush with egg wash and leave for 5 minutes in the refrigerator. With the back of a knife, nick the edge of the pastry 12 times at regular intervals to form a scalloped edge with a rose petal effect. Mark long curving lines from the central hole outwards to designate formal petals. Be careful not to cut through the pastry just score it.*

Bake for 20 minutes in the preheated oven, then lower the heat to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6 and bake for 30 minutes approx. While still hot dredge heavily with icing sugar and return to a very hot oven or pop under a grill (**Do Not Leave the Grill**) - the sugar will melt and caramelize to a dark brown glaze. Serve warm or cold with a bowl of crème fraîche or softly whipped cream.

Note: Gateau Pithivier is best eaten warm, but it also keeps well and may be reheated.

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Mummy's Plum Pudding with Mrs. Hanrahan's Sauce

It has always been the tradition in our house to eat the first plum pudding on the evening it is made. The grandchildren can hardly contain themselves with excitement - somehow that plum pudding seems the most delicious, it's our first taste of Christmas. The plum pudding can be made from about mid-November onwards. Everyone in the family helps to stir so we can all make a wish.

It's fun to put silver plum pudding charms in the pudding destined to be eaten on Christmas Day. Wrap them individually in silicone paper so they are bulky and clearly visible.

This recipe makes 2 large or 3 medium puddings. The large size will serve 10-12 people, the medium 6-8 but I also like to make teeny weeny ones.

350g (12oz) raisins
350g (12oz) sultanas
350g (12oz) currants
300g (10oz) brown sugar *
350g (12oz) white breadcrumbs (non GM)
350g (12oz) finely-chopped beef suet
110g (4oz) diced candied peel (preferably home-made)
2 Bramley cooking apples, coarsely grated
110g (4oz) chopped almonds
rind of 1 lemon
3 pounded cloves (1/2 teaspoon)
a pinch of salt
6 eggs
62ml (2 1/2fl oz) Jamaica Rum

Mix all the ingredients together very thoroughly and leave overnight; don't forget, everyone in the family must stir and make a wish! Next day stir again for good measure. Fill into pudding bowls; cover with a double thickness of greaseproof paper which has been pleated in the centre, and tie it tightly under the rim with cotton twine, making a twine handle also for ease of lifting.

Steam in a covered saucepan of boiling water for 6 hours. The water should come half way up the side of the bowl. Check every hour or so and top up with boiling water if necessary. After 5 hours, 3 hours, 2 hours depending on the size, remove the pudding. Allow to get cold and re-cover with fresh greaseproof paper. Store in a cool dry place until required.

On Christmas Day or whenever you wish to serve the plum pudding, steam for a further 2 hours. Turn the plum pudding out of the bowl onto a **very hot serving plate**, pour over some whiskey or brandy and ignite. Serve immediately **on very hot plates** with Brandy Butter.

You might like to decorate the plum pudding with a sprig of holly; but take care not to set the holly on fire - as well as the pudding!

Mrs. Hanrahan's Sauce

This recipe is so delicious that people ask to have more Plum Pudding just so that they can have an excuse to eat lots of sauce. This makes a large quantity but the base will keep for several weeks in the fridge, so you can use a little at a time, adding whipped cream to taste.

110g (4oz) butter

200g (7oz) Barbados sugar (moist, soft, dark-brown sugar)

1 egg, preferably free-range and organic

62ml (2 1/2fl oz) medium sherry

62ml (2 1/2fl oz) port

1.3 – 1.4 litres (2 1/4-2 1/2 pints) lightly whipped cream

Melt the butter, stir in the sugar and allow to cool slightly. Whisk the egg and add to the butter and sugar with the sherry and port. Refrigerate.

When needed, add the lightly whipped cream to taste.

This sauce is also very good with mince pies and other tarts.

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Chapel Window Cake

Mummy made this cake with us before Christmas every single year when we were little. We loved watching her assemble it. We all gathered round the kitchen table like little birds in a nest, waiting for titbits and trimmings. It's called a chapel window cake because the different colours in the cake look like stained glass. It's a sticky job and a bit of a fiddle but it was once a real Christmas tradition. As far as I'm concerned, the end result is worth the effort. This cake is sometimes called Battenberg.

Serves 10–12

175g (6oz) butter
175g (6oz) caster sugar
4 eggs, preferably free-range and organic
225g (8oz) plain white flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
zest of 1/2 organic lemon
1/4 teaspoon pink colouring and drop of pure almond extract
25g (1oz) drinking chocolate powder
a little milk (optional)

225g (8oz) almond paste (see recipe)
3/4 pot homemade raspberry jam (see recipe)
caster sugar

three 19 x 11cm (7 1/2 x 4 1/2 in) tins, lined on the base and sides with greaseproof paper

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/ gas mark 4.

Cream the butter well, add the caster sugar and whisk until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one by one, whisking well between each addition. Then stir in the sieved flour and baking powder.

Divide the cake mixture into 3 equal parts. Flavour one part with the lemon zest, the next with almond extract and pink colouring. Stir the drinking chocolate into the last portion and add a few drops of milk if it becomes too thick.

Spoon into the prepared tins and bake for 15–20 minutes. Turn out and leave to cool on a wire rack. Remove the paper.

Meanwhile, make the almond paste and wrap in silicone paper until needed.

To assemble, trim the edges of the cakes and cut each one lengthways into three equal strips. Spread a little jam over all of the sides of each strip. Assemble the strips into a 3 x 3 block so that the colours are mixed up. Press all the pieces firmly together and trim the edges if necessary to ensure a uniform shape.

Sprinkle a little caster sugar on the worktop. Roll out the almond paste to a thickness of a scant 5mm (1/4in). Brush the base of the cake with a little more jam. Lay it on top of the almond paste. Brush the sides of the cake with a little more jam. Wrap the paste around the cake. Press the edges together to seal. Smooth the surface with a palette knife if necessary. Score the top into a diamond pattern, pinch the edges and dredge with caster sugar.

Note: if you follow the instructions above, the two ends of the cake are left un-iced, so you can see the ‘chapel window’. However, if you want to seal the cake entirely so it will keep for longer, roll out thinly an extra 110g (4oz) of almond paste and seal the ends. If you can resist, it keeps perfectly for 4–5 weeks.

Almond Paste

450g (1lb) golden caster sugar
450g (1lb) ground almonds
2 small eggs, preferably free-range and organic
2 tablespoons Irish whiskey
a drop of pure almond essence (be careful, it’s very intense)
icing sugar, for dusting the worktop

Sieve the caster sugar and mix with the ground almonds. Beat the eggs, add the whiskey and 1 drop of pure almond essence, then add to the other ingredients and mix to a stiff paste. (You may not need all of the egg). Sprinkle the work top with icing sugar, turn out the almond paste and work lightly until smooth.

Raspberry Jam

Makes 3 x 450g (1lb) pots

Raspberry jam is the easiest and quickest of all jams to make, and one of the most delicious. Loganberries, Boysenberries or Tayberries may also be used in this recipe.

900g (2lbs) fresh raspberries
790g (1lb 12oz) granulated sugar

Wash, dry and sterilise the jars in a moderate oven 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4, for 15 minutes. Heat the sugar in a moderate oven for 5-10 minutes.

Put the raspberries into a wide stainless steel saucepan and cook for 3-4 minutes until the juice begins to run, then add the hot sugar and stir over a gentle heat until fully dissolved. Increase the heat and boil steadily for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Test for a set by putting about a teaspoon of jam on a cold plate, leaving it for a few minutes in a cool place. It should wrinkle when pressed with a finger. Remove from the heat immediately. Skim and pour into sterilised jam jars. Cover immediately. Hide the jam in a cool place or else put on a shelf in your kitchen so you can feel great every time you look at it! Anyway, it will be so delicious it won't last long!

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