

Sweets

Elaborate desserts are not part of everyday Spanish cuisine, at least not for the Spanish immigrants in Spain. There are a several cookies that have endured over time and are popular. These cookies are not overly sweet, nor are they moist. . One has the distinctive anise flavor while the other uses roasted almonds. Getting the ingredients for the cookies was easy. The directions on how to make them was not quite so easy. It seems that one should innately know how to mix and shape them. That is, if you have seen them and eaten them, then, of course, you must know how to mix and shape them. Therefore, the directions are as clear as they can be without actually seeing how they are made. Obviously, the best way to make them is to first observe someone else who know what they are doing make them. Remember, these recipes are probably over 100 years old and came over with the original immigrants.

Traditionally, they are made at Christmas time and stored in airtight tins. For some reason, they never seem to get stale which is a good thing since dozens are made at one time. It is not uncommon for families to still be eating them in February!

Rosquillos

This recipe was contributed by Juanita Ramos. She cautions that making them during wet weather can affect how they turn out.

Ingredients:

½ c. oil

½ c. Crisco, melted

½ c. sugar

½ c. Sauterne wine (a port or sherry will also work)

1 t. anise seed

½ t. lemon extract

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3 c. flour

3 t. baking powder

Melt the Crisco with the anise seed and let it cool, but not too cool. Mix all together to make a dough. Make a rope – about 5/8” around. Grab a small piece of dough and wilt a little flour in your hands, roll it a little and shape into a ring, crossing the ends over each other.

Put on cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes. They will remain white. Let cool for few minutes and then roll the cookies in superfine sugar. Recipe can be doubled.

Polvorones

This recipe was contributed by Juanita Carrion. It is her mother’s recipe (Alice Carbahal) and she has shared her cookies and recipe with others for years!

Ingredients:

1 lb. unblanched toasted almonds, ground (to toast, put in 375 oven for 15 minutes, cool, then grind)

1 lb. white flour

1 lb. shortening

1 lb. powdered sugar

1 t. cinnamon

2 t. anisette (can use extract)

Mix shortening and sugar until well-blended. Add almonds, then flour, anisette, and cinnamon. Mix well. Take a small part of the dough, form into a flattened rope (about 1”x1” and 12” long) and cut cookies on the diagonal so that they are diamond shape. Do not make too large, they should be small. Bake at 325-350 degrees for about 20 minutes, the bottom should not get too brown. Let cool completely before removing from pan, they will set.

(Note: Some recipes use a different shape of the cookie by just putting about a small spoonful of dough in your hand and shaping into a ball, with a thumbprint on top. Some will also dust with a little powdered sugar.)

Mantecado de Peanut Butter

Mantecado is another very traditional Spanish cookie. What is different about this recipe, which was contributed by Carmen Rubio, is that it, in its own way, represents how quickly the Spanish immigrants embraced the American culture. Spanish women loved trying new foods and adapting their recipes to fit their new culture. The originator of this recipe is Carmen’s great-aunt who, while living in San Francisco, decided that mantecado sure would taste good with peanut butter! Carmen received this recipe from her Aunt Amalia Martin (Tita Amalia) and it is a family favorite!

Original recipe amounts

3 lbs. lard

3 lbs peanut butter

5 lbs sugar

1 ½ -2 oz. cinnamon

9 lbs flour

Cut down to 1/3 amounts

1 lb. lard*

1 lb peanut butter

3 1/3 c. sugar

1 tbsp. cinnamon

9 ½ c. flour

Cram lard and peanut butter together with electric beater in very large bowl. Add sugar and beat until creamy. Sift flour and cinnamon over creamed mixture. Stir until well-blended. You can use your hands to work dough. Form into balls, the size of a large walnut. Flatten a little with the palm of your hand. Place on cookie sheets, lined with parchment or brown paper. Bake at 350-375 degrees approximately 20 minutes. Do not remove from paper until cold. Roll is sifted powdered sugar.

*Carmen says she uses ½ lard and ½ shortening but if you prefer, all shortening may be used. She also uses peanut butter with only salt added. Skippy or other peanut butters may be used, if preferred. Add the whole jar, be it 16-18 oz.

Rosca

Rosca is not really a dessert. It is a sweet bread that can be eaten at anytime, usually with a good cup of coffee. Many have memories of company coming over and everyone sitting at the table with a platter of Spanish cookies, a beautiful roca, and coffee served in the best cups the hostess had.

This recipe was graciously contributed by Anna Martin. She has shared her recipe with many but most say they can never make it as good as she does!

Ingredients:

3 T. yeast powder

¾ c. sugar

¾ c. oil, warm

2 c. warm water

1 T. salt

2 T. anise seeds

1 oz. bottle anisette extract

7 c. flour

3 eggs

Warm a bowl and then add warm water, yeast and salt. Let sit about 10 minutes until bubbly.

In a big bowl, mix flour and sugar and rest of ingredients. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix with a spoon and then your hands, on a floured board, kneading until a soft dough forms. Let rise at least an hour, until it doubles.

Divide dough into 2 balls (3 balls if you want them smaller). Form into a ball, and then put your fingers into the middle to make a ring. Put on cookie sheets and let rise again for about 30 minutes.

Cut slits on the outside edge of the dough. Sprinkle with sugar. Decorate with blanched almonds or sugar cubes.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 30-40 minutes, depending on their size.