

Pastiera Napoletana

INGREDIENTS

The pie crust:

500 gr. flour
 250 gr. lard (at room temperature)
 1 cup sugar
 4 yolks

The grain:

250 gr. well-drained soaked grain
 1 & 1/2 cups milk
 The zest of a half an orange
 A walnut-sized piece of lard
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

The filling:

250 gr. ricotta
 3/4 cup sugar
 3 eggs separated
 1 vial (1/4 cup) acqua di fiori d'arancio
 A pinch powdered cinnamon
 1/4 cup minced candied citron
 1/4 cup minced candied orange peel
 1/4 cup candied squash



Preparation

This dish requires presoaked grain, which takes time to prepare. To start from scratch, purchase 1/2 pound whole grain and soak it in cold water for two weeks, changing the water every two days. Come cooking time, drain it and cook the amount indicated. The pastiera is traditionally served in a 10-inch diameter round metal pan with a two-inch rim. Begin the day ahead by cooking the soaked grain with the milk, zest, lard, sugar and vanilla over an extremely low flame for at least four hours, or until the grains come apart and the milk has been absorbed, so that the mixture is dense and creamy. The next morning make the pie crust: Make a mound of flour, scoop a well in the middle, and fill it with the lard, sugar and yolks. Use a fork or pastry cutter to combine the ingredients, handling the dough as little as possible (don't knead it). Once you have obtained a uniform dough press it into a ball and cover it with a damp cloth. Pass the ricotta through a strainer into a large bowl, stir in the 3/4 cup sugar, and continue stirring for 5-6 minutes. Next, stir in the yolks, one at a time, and the grain. Next add the orange water; begin with half the amount and taste. Add more if you would like it orangier, keeping in mind that the aroma will fade some in baking. Stir in the cinnamon and the candied fruit as well, then whip the whites to soft peaks and fold them in. Roll out 2/3 of the pastry dough and line the pan. Fill it with the filling. Next, roll out the remaining dough and cut it into strips, which you will want to lay across the filling in a diagonal pattern (lift them from the pastry cloth with a long spatula to keep them from breaking). Bake in a moderately hot oven (180 C or 370 F) for an hour or slightly more. The filling should dry almost completely and firm up, while the pie crust should brown lightly. Serve the pie in its pan, and continue to enjoy it over the next few days for breakfast.