
MASTER RECIPE

BASIC LEBKUCHEN DOUGH

LEBKUCHENTEIG

1 1/2 tsp xanthan gum

- 3 1/3 cups all-purpose flour* *6 2/3*
- 1 teaspoon baking soda*
- 1 teaspoon baking powder*
- 1 Tablespoon cinnamon*
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom*
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves*
- 1/2 teaspoon powdered anise*
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg*
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger*
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons honey* *1 1/4 C*
- 1 cup superfine sugar*
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter*
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten*

It is important to heat the fat, sugar, and honey sufficiently to allow the sugar to dissolve, but not let the mixture come to a boil as a certain amount of evaporation will occur, making the gingerbread brittle. Because different brands of honey have different degrees of concentration and because humidity varies, the amount of flour required will also vary slightly. When all the ingredients have been kneaded together and the dough is still warm, it will be soft and look somewhat moist and sticky, but will not stick to your hands. Once the dough cools and has rested for a time, it becomes quite firm.

For the best flavor, make any cookies or cakes using this dough several weeks or even months before they are needed.

Sift the flour onto one sheet of wax paper and the other dry ingredients onto another. Heat the honey, sugar, and butter together over low heat, stirring all the time until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Do not allow the mixture to boil. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the sifted spices. Gradually beat in the sifted flour, adding as much as is needed to make the dough, when stirred, pull away from the sides of the pan. You will need most of the amount given. Allow the dough to cool for 5 minutes. If the pan is still very hot, remove

the warm dough to a bowl. Beat in the lightly beaten egg and then knead the dough with your hands first in the pan or bowl, then briefly on a flat surface. If the dough is too sticky to handle, knead in a little more flour until it no longer sticks to your hands.

If not using immediately, wrap the warm dough in plastic wrap and leave at room temperature until required.

VARIATION

In some of the plainer recipes, additional texture and flavor can be imparted by adding, for the quantity of basic dough given above:

*2/3 cup mixed candied fruit, finely chopped
1 cup blanched almonds, finely ground*

Add the mixed fruit and/or ground almonds to the Basic Lebkuchen Dough just before adding the flour to the mixture of honey, sugar, and butter.

VERZIERTER LEBKUCHEN

DECORATED LEBKUCHEN

Makes about 35 3-inch cookies

Basic *Lebkuchen* Dough, after it has rested overnight, can be rolled out 1/8-inch thick and cut out with decorative cutters before being baked. However, traditionally it is rolled out slightly thicker—1/4 inch—and cut out in simple 3-inch stars, hearts, or rectangles, which are decorated with split almonds in the corners and a halved candied cherry in the center. If you don't have a large cookie cutter, you can make a stencil from a piece of cardboard and use it as a pattern, cutting out hearts or stars around it with a knife. For puffier cookies, the dough can be rolled out, cut and baked as soon as the dough is made, while it is still warm. They can be left unglazed or brushed with a lightly beaten egg before they are baked.

HONIGKUCHEN VOM BLECH

DECORATED LEBKUCHEN SHEET CAKE

MAKE 20 LARGE
RECTANGLES

1 recipe Basic
Lebkuchen Dough,
with added finely
chopped candied
fruit and ground
almonds

1 egg, lightly beaten

DECORATION

Split blanched
almonds

(see Almonds)

Halved candied
cherries

EQUIPMENT

Rimless baking sheet
or baking sheet
turned upside
down; minimum
size 13 × 13
inches (or make
the cake to fit
your baking
sheet, using 2
smaller sheets
if necessary)

Making *Lebkuchen* in a sheet cake is especially simple. The warm dough made according to the basic recipe is rolled out directly on a rimless baking sheet, marked off in rectangles, and decorated before baking. The sheet is baked, and the large cookies/cakes are cut out when done. This method produces an especially thick cookie or cake, the type often seen at Christmas fairs in Germany, and is quicker to make than the other methods.

ROLLING OUT AND DECORATING

Make up Basic *Lebkuchen* Dough. Butter and flour one 13 × 13-inch rimless baking sheet or use the underside of one with rim. While the dough is still warm, roll it out on the prepared baking sheet in a rectangle 12 × 12½ inches, leaving a small amount of space on your baking sheet to allow for expansion. Brush the dough with lightly beaten egg. Using a sharp knife, mark off rectangles 2½ × 3 inches. You can cut clear through the dough. It will cook together when baked, but can be easily separated when done. Place a halved cherry in the center of each rectangle and a split almond in each corner.

BAKING AND STORING

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Bake in the preheated oven until golden, approximately 25 to 35 minutes. When done, remove from the oven and cut through the marked rectangles while the cake is still warm. Trim off any rough outer edges. Allow the cake to cool on the baking sheet before removing the individual cakes. Store in an airtight tin at room temperature.

HONIGKUCHENWÜRFEL

HONEY CAKE SQUARES

This iced sheet cake cut into bite-sized squares is made with two layers of *Lebkuchen* sandwiched with a fruity apricot/raisin/almond filling which keeps it moist. A favorite Christmas treat of mine for many years, this recipe came from a friend in Frankfurt. I once forgot a tin which I had purposely put out of my own reach high on a cupboard shelf. When I discovered it eight months later, the little cakes were better than ever—proof that they can be made long in advance and will keep well.

ROLLING OUT

Butter and flour the baking sheet and set aside. Make up the Basic *Lebkuchen* Dough and while it is still warm, divide the dough in two. Roll out one piece directly onto the buttered and floured rimless baking sheet, making a rectangle approximately 13 × 8½ inches. There should be at least a 1-inch rim left free on the baking sheet to allow for expansion. Roll out the second piece the same size as the first on a piece of wax paper or parchment. Set aside.

PREPARING THE FILLING AND ASSEMBLING

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Make the filling. Mix all the ingredients for the filling together in a bowl, adding additional lemon juice if the mixture is too thick to spread. Distribute the filling evenly over the dough on the baking sheet, leaving a ½-inch rim around the edges. Reverse the other half

MAKES ABOUT 55

1 recipe Basic
Lebkuchen Dough,
p. 40

FILLING

1½ cups coarsely
chopped
unblanched
almonds

1 cup raisins

1¾ cups apricot jam

3 tablespoons lemon
juice

½ cup firmly packed
diced mixed
candied orange
and lemon peel

ICING

3 tablespoons lemon
juice

1½ cups powdered
sugar, sifted

EQUIPMENT

Rimless baking
sheet 15 × 11
inches; or invert a
baking sheet
with sides and use
the underside.