

BISCOCHITOS

From Chef Cristina Martinez

My maternal grandmother, Lela Chavez always made biscochitos for her grandchildren around the holidays. As we watched her, she'd always share her secret with us. "It's all about the lard and brandy," she'd say. That is the secret to making melt-in-your-mouth, flaky, biscochitos. My grandmother would make them in the shape of a star, a bell, and a tree. The more edges, the more crispy-cinnamon, and sugar yumminess!

3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3 teaspoons anise seeds (I like to slightly crush them with a small pan, so the oils come out a bit.)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 pound of lard, softened (You could use shortening but it's not the same.)
1/2 cup + 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 large egg
2 tablespoons of brandy or sweet wine, whiskey works as well!

For the cinnamon sugar topping:

1/4 cup granulated sugar
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Chef Cristina's Biscochitos Recipe:

1. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
2. Beat the lard in an electric mixer, while gradually adding the sugar. Cream the lard until extremely fluffy and light, for about 10 minutes.
3. Add the anise and the egg, followed by the booze, and continue beating. Scrape down the sides of the mixer with your spatula.
4. Mix in the dry ingredients, gradually adding about one-third of the mixture, at a time. Stop the mixer as you make each addition. Incorporate dry ingredients but do not over mix. The dough should be like a stiffish pie-crust.
5. Chill the dough for at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator.
6. Roll the dough to 1/4-inch thickness and cut out with desired cookie cutters.
7. Place cookies on ungreased cookie sheets, about 2.5 inches apart.
8. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake for 10 - 12 minutes, until just set and cookies are a pale golden color.

For the cinnamon sugar topping:

1. While the cookies bake, stir together 1/4 cup granulated sugar and 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon.
2. Allow cookies to cool for a minute or two on the baking sheets, then gently dunk the tops of each cookie into the cinnamon-sugar topping. Sprinkle more with your fingers to coat generously.