12/25/09 - Biscotios de Huevo, Sephardic Tea Biscuit

The first generation of my family to come from Turkey, my grandmothers and my aunties, used to sit and rest a bit in the afternoon. After preparing dinner and finishing their housework, they traded bits of gossip about the community and themselves (*char lashon*) with a cup of Turkish coffee and a *biscotio* in hand. These circular biscuits topped with sesame seeds, are not sweet like cookies, nor are they savory. They are perfect for dunking in coffee, espresso, or even tea. *Biscotios* keep a long time in an airtight container and are very portable. It is good to keep a couple in a small plastic bag in the bottom of your handbag, just in case. I guess we all turn into our mothers or fathers as the case may be, eventually.

Yield 80 *biscotios*

Serves 40 to 80

4 extra largeeggs

1/2 cup orange juice, I prefer fresh squeezed

1 cup of sugar

3/4 cup oil, safflower or sunflower

2 heaping tablespoons of Masticha (optional)

1 and 1/2 teaspoons ground anise

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

4 teaspoons baking powder

2 tablespoons freshly grated orange peel

½ teaspoon salt

6 cups flour

1 egg, well beaten with a small whisk, in a shallow bowl

1 cup sesame seeds for garnish, in a shallow bowl

Preheat the oven to 350º F. Crack 4 eggs in a glass bowl and check for shells and blood spots. Place eggs in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat on medium for a minute, add 1/2 cup of orange juice. Beat until well blended. With the mixer running on low speed, slowly add 1 cup sugar then, 3/4 cup of oil. Lastly add the Masticha. Continue mixing until very well blended. In a separate bowl combine 1 cup flour with other dry ingredients and orange zest, and then, add it to liquid mix, while the mixer is off. Start mixer on lowest speed for 30 seconds, then raise speed to medium and mix until well incorporated. Turn off mixer again and add the last 5 cups of flour. Start the mixer on the lowest speed until flour begins to incorporate, increase the speed to medium for a couple of moments. The dough should be soft, but not sticky.

Remove dough from mixing bowl, gather it into a ball, and let dough rest for 10 minutes on your work surface. Wood or stone is best. Divide dough into 4 quarters. Wrap 3 pieces in plastic wrap. Roll the remaining piece into a log , about 1 ½ inches in diameter, on a very lightly floured surface. Cut log in 20 even pieces. Roll each piece out to a 4 ½ inch long rope, nick rope on the outer edge at 1/3 inch intervals, creating a design. Draw rope into a circle, and pinch edges together. Arrange your two shallow bowls, one with with beaten egg and one with sesame seeds next to cookie sheets for baking. Line the cookie sheets with parchment paper or a Silpat. Dip each *biscotio* into beaten egg on one side, and then, sesame seeds, place *biscotio* on prepared baking sheet, sesame side up. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until golden in color.

After all *biscotios* are baked, turn down the oven temperature 200º F. Bake *biscotios* in oven for 30 minutes until crisp. I turn off the oven after the 30 minutes and leave them sit inside for a couple of hours. Cool them on a rack and then store them in an airtight container. This recipe makes about 80 biscotios.

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