

## 02/19/10 - Fabulous Hamantashen

These delightful triangle shaped filled goodies are cookie-like with a filling of jam or prune or even chocolate. We eat hamantashen traditionally for the festival of Purim in March, which recounts the story of the heroic Queen Esther and her blessed uncle Mordichai. When my children were young, we all participated in the baking. Everyone received his or her piece of dough to roll out and fill. Although the results weren't perfect, the kids loved eating theirs fresh from the oven.

On Purim, it is traditional to make Purim Platicos or Mishloach Manot, which are typically baskets of sweets and goodies and give them to family and friends. I always include hamantashen as one of items in the basket. Hamantashen are fantastic with tea or coffee and occupy a special nostalgic place in everyone's heart.



2 sticks of unsalted margarine (this way they are parve and can be eaten with anything)

1 cup of sugar

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 teaspoons orange juice

2 tablespoons of grated orange zest

¼ teaspoon almond extract

4 cups of all purpose flour, unbleached

2 teaspoons fresh baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

Extra flour for working on board

1 12 ounce jar of black cherry preserves or any flavor of preserves you prefer, such as red raspberry or apricot. You could also make the usual lekvar or prune filling.



Combine the margarine and sugar in the bowl of your mixer. Cream the ingredients on medium speed until light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl and mix for a couple more seconds. Add the liquid ingredients, eggs, orange juice, vanilla, and almond extract to the bowl and mix again. When all is incorporated, carefully add the dry ingredients. Turn the mixer on low-speed to start and then mix for a moment on medium until a ball forms.

Remove the ball of dough from the mixing bowl with floured hands and roll it into a disc.



If you want to bake right away you may, or you can refrigerate the dough for up to overnight. Divide the dough into four discs and wrap in plastic wrap if you are going to refrigerate.

To bake the Hamantashen, preheat the oven to 350°. Flour the granite or wood you are working on and roll out the dough into a rectangle about 1/8 to 1/6 inch thick. Using a 3 inch biscuit cutter cut as many rounds out as possible.



Work fast and with a light touch to keep the dough from becoming too warm and soft. Reform the left over dough and roll it out again with the rolling pin to utilize the rest of the dough. One batch of dough yields between 32-40 hamantashen. Place a small rounded teaspoon of jam or other filling in the center of each round. Pinch the dough round up to form a triangle, being careful not to let the filling ooze out.



Prepare 2 baking sheets with silpat liners or parchment paper liners. Place the formed triangles on the sheet to accommodate as many as possible without them touching as they expand a little during the baking process.

Place the filled pans, one at a time, on a rack in the center of the preheated oven. Bake until light golden color, around 20 minutes. Remove hamantashen from the pan with a spatula and place them on cooling racks to keep the bottoms crisp. Hamantashen should be stored in an airtight container when cool. Hamantashen freeze well in an airtight container.

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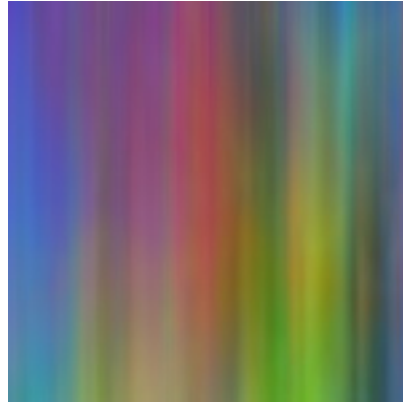
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