



ANSON MILLS

Pfeffernüsse

Yield

About 6 dozen 1-bite cookies

Time

About 20 minutes active time, two overnight rests, about 30 minutes to bake, about 30 minutes to make and apply the icing, and time to let the icing dry

Baking Notes

Comporting with their age and tradition, many German Christmas cookies use an ancient form of leavening called *Hirschhornsalz*. In the United States, it is known as baker's ammonia (short for ammonium carbonate). The substance smells ghastly, but it does good things in baked goods (its odor dissipates at temperatures above 140 degrees). Because baker's ammonia is not activated by liquid, but by heat, doughs made with it may be left to ripen in the refrigerator without suffering any loss of oven bounce. Cookies bake up crisp, with an open crumb, and stay crisp for long periods. King Arthur Flour sells baker's ammonia.

Our *Pfeffernüsse* are tricky bakers. By any customary measure of doneness, they will feel overwhelmingly soft to the touch when they are actually done baking. Their bottoms should have taken on a nice brown hue; check the browning with a thin metal spatula. Leave them in the oven longer at your own peril—they'll still taste great but will cool to veritable jaw breakers.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a digital kitchen scale, a small bowl, a small saucepan, a silicone spatula, a large bowl, a wooden spoon, a gallon-size zipper-lock bag, two baking sheets, silicone baking mats or parchment paper, a metal bench knife, two wire racks, and a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment.

Ingredients

for the cookies

- 1/2 teaspoon baker's ammonia
- 1 teaspoon hot water
- 3.5 ounces light molasses
- 3.5 ounces honey
- 2.5 ounces dark brown sugar
- 1.5 ounces unsalted European-style butter
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground anise
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Pinch of cayenne
14 ounces Anson Mills Colonial Style Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest

for the icing

1 ounce egg white
2 teaspoons juice from 1 juicy lemon
5.5 ounces confectioners' sugar

Directions

- 1. Make the cookies:** In a small bowl, combine the baker's ammonia and hot water, stir to dissolve, and set aside. In a small saucepan, warm the molasses, honey, brown sugar, butter, ginger, anise, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, salt, black pepper, and cayenne over medium-low heat, stirring with a silicone spatula, until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool for 10 minutes.
- 2.** Put the flour in large bowl. Pour in the molasses mixture, add the lemon zest and dissolved baker's ammonia, and stir with a wooden spoon to form a fudgy, gingerbread-like dough. Turn the dough into a gallon-size zipper-lock bag, seal well, and refrigerate overnight.
- 3.** Line 2 baking sheets with silicone mats or parchment paper. Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces and roll each piece into a 10-inch log on the countertop; the dough will roll easily without additional flour. Using a metal bench knife, cut bits of dough off the logs; each bit should weigh 0.3 ounce. Roll them into balls and place them 1½ inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. Let the cookies dry overnight, uncovered, at room temperature.
- 4.** Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 325 degrees. Bake the cookies one baking sheet at a time until lightly browned on the bottoms, 12 to 14 minutes; they will feel quite soft to the touch, but will firm up as they cool. Let cool on the baking sheet for about 2 minutes, and then transfer the cookies to a wire rack. Let cool completely.
- 5. Make and apply the icing:** Combine the egg white, lemon juice, and confectioners' sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium speed until the mixture is opaque, glossy, and thick (and holds stiff peaks, 5 to 7 minutes. Working one at a time, dip the tops of cookies in the icing, allowing some of the icing to drip back into the bowl, and then use the side of your forefinger and a hooking motion to remove the excess, leaving a perfect cap on top. Return the cookie, upright, to the wire rack. Let the glaze dry completely. Store the pffernüsse in an airtight container for up to 1 month.