

The Christmas Cookie

My mother, Freda, loved red and green, the colors of her favorite holiday, Christmas. Part of her Christmas celebration included baking dozens of cookies. She started just after Thanksgiving and filled her freezer with several varieties by Christmastime. Her menagerie included molasses cookies, orange dough balls, mincemeat filled sugar cookies, delicious thumbprint cookies, and of course, sugar cookies. Near Christmas, she carefully arranged a sampling of her cookies on decorated foam trays and then gave them to her sisters, friends and neighbors. Usually we'd get a few trays in return. On Christmas, we ate cookies for breakfast—a real treat.

The cookie tradition became threatened Christmas 1996. Mom had died of cancer the previous June. The thought of making cookies seemed almost too painful, but I decided to give it a try when my apartment complex announced a holiday cookie contest. Instead of the standard sugar cookie, I chose to make one of mom's crown jewels, an attractive thumbprint cookie rolled in almonds and topped with a centered circle of strawberry jam. I mixed the ingredients together, used her old-fashioned nut grinder to break up almonds and remembered my mom fondly while I assembled the baked cookies on a plate. I won first place, a prize of a nice leather bag, and achieved the motivation to bake enough cookies for Christmas breakfast. The tradition lived on, but the original recipe changed to reflect the colors of mom's favorite holiday

Freda's Festive Thumbprint Cookies

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 egg separated
1 1/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
2/3 cups pistachio nuts (may substitute almonds)
strawberry jam and/or green apple jelly

Beat butter, sugar, vanilla and egg yolk in a medium size bowl with electric mixer at high speed until light and fluffy. Stir in flour, gather dough into ball, wrap in foil or plastic wrap, and then refrigerate for several hours until firm.

Roll level teaspoonfuls of dough into balls. Dip into slightly beaten egg white and then roll in chopped almonds. Place on ungreased cookie sheets 1 inch apart. Make an indentation in each cookie with finger or tip of a spoon handle. Fill half of the indentations with the strawberry jam and the rest with the green apple jelly.

Bake at 300 degrees for 20 minutes or until lightly golden. Cool on wire racks Arrange on plate alternating between the green and red filled cookies

First Prize Winner
Submitted by
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