

Austrian Linzer Cookies

Ingredients:

1 cup whole almonds (natural or blanched)

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature

¾ cup granulated white sugar, divided

2 large egg yolks, room temperature

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Raspberry or strawberry jam, for filling (about ½ cup, may use other flavors if preferred)

Powdered sugar, for dusting the tops of cut-out cookies

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Place the almonds on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and toast until lightly browned and fragrant, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let the almonds cool for 10 minutes.

Once the almonds have cooled, place them in a food processor with ¼ cup of sugar. Turn the processor on and blitz until the almonds are finely ground, like breadcrumbs. The sugar will prevent the almonds from forming into a paste as they process.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon and salt until well combined; set aside.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter on medium speed for 1 minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl, then add the remaining ½ cup of sugar and beat on medium speed for 3 minutes until the mixture is light and fluffy.

Add the egg yolks and vanilla and beat for 1 minute to combine. Add the ground almonds and beat on medium-low speed until incorporated. Add the flour mixture and mix on the lowest speed until well combined.

Divide the dough in half and flatten each half into a disk about ½ to 1-inch thick. Place the disk between two pieces of parchment paper or plastic wrap and roll out the dough until it is about ¼ to 1/8-inch thick. Transfer the dough with the parchment paper to a baking sheet and refrigerate for at least 30, or up to 2 days. Repeat with the second disk of dough. The dough can also be made in advance and frozen for up to one month, wrapped tightly in plastic and secured in an airtight container.

To cut-out and bake the cookies:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Remove one sheet of the rolled-out dough from the refrigerator and remove the top piece of parchment or plastic wrap. I keep the dough on the bottom piece of paper but gently separate it first just to loosen it so that it is easier to remove the cookies once they are cut.

You can use a special Linzer cutter or a 2-3 inch cookie cutter (round, heart, diamond, square) to cut out the cookies and place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Use a smaller cookie cutter to cut out the center from half of the cookies. I recommend baking the solid and cut-out cookies separately to ensure even baking. Save the scraps to re-roll and cut out more cookies. Repeat this process until all the dough is used.

Chill the cut-out cookies in the refrigerator for 15 to 20 minutes before baking – this will help them hold their shape as they bake.

Bake the cookies until the edges are lightly golden brown, about 12 to 13 minutes. Remove from the oven and place the baking sheet on a wire rack to cool for 5 minutes, then transfer the cookies directly to the wire rack to cool completely before assembling.

Once the cookies have cooled, use a sifter to dust the tops of the cut-out cookies with powdered sugar, as generously as desired.

Next, flip the solid cookies upside down and spread a thin layer of jam on the surface, smoothing almost all the way to edge. Top with the cut-out cookies and gently press together to create a sandwich.

Store sandwich cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days, or in the refrigerator for up to one week. The cookies will soften as they age (which I prefer), so for crispy sandwiches, assemble them on the same day as you serve them. You may also freeze the plain cookies for 2 to 3 months and assemble them late.