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Almond Paste

Recipe Courtesy of Chef Dana Calicchio
Makes Approximately 3 Pounds

Who has bitten into an Almond Croissant or Stollen or Danish and not loved the almond filling? It almost tastes like something you could never make in a regular kitchen. However, almond paste is one of the oldest fillings for pastries.

It is believed to have originated in the Middle East... China and Turkey having the earliest mentions. During the Ottoman Empire, Wars, Spice Routes, it made its way to the far Northern Countries, and so we get our almond paste fillings in our Stollen's and Danishes and Croissants.

And they didn't have Stand Mixers or Food Processors then. But they made it. and it was time consuming, Using a Mixer and/or Processor makes life easier and allows you to get baking a lot faster than waiting for it to cool and grinding your almonds a little at a time with a mortar and pestle, although doable, is extremely time consuming. (I like the way it blends with the dough hook in the stand mixer vs just using the food processor, but if you only have a processor it comes out fine)

Making your own Almond paste is also extremely cost effective as this recipe calls for 1 pound of blanched almonds, and it makes 3 pounds, extremely flavorful, of almond paste and costs about what a pound of almonds costs. Half a pound of almond paste costs around \$5.00. A pound of almonds costs around \$5.00 So that \$5.00 makes the same amount that \$30.00 buys.

So make your own with no preservatives and that tastes like it's supposed to taste like.
SPECIAL TOOLS: Food Processor or Blender, Stand Mixer, Candy Thermometer

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound of blanched almonds

1 cup water

3 TBS lemon juice

1 tsp Almond Extract

2 cups white Cane Sugar

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a small saucepan add the sugar and water and simmer until 240° on a candy thermometer.

While syrup is cooking:

Place almonds in food processor or blender until it looks like cornmeal, polenta, or grits, no chunks.

Place all the ground almonds in the large bowl of a stand mixer or your food processor bowl fitted with your dough hook or dough blade, and add the almond extract. This adds a lot of flavor.

Mix together carefully, on low speeds, and add the hot syrup, it is HOT!, Till blended well. Turn mixer off and cool until easy to touch it, where you can handle without burning your hands. You are allowing sugar and almonds to melt together.

Once cooled enough put mixer/processor on and let it knead dough for around 4 or 5 minutes in mixer and 1 minute for Processor.

Roll into logs or squares and store in airtight bags or containers. This can last 1 month in the refrigerator or 1 year in the freezer if airtight with no air in the container,

You can thaw out on counter since there is nothing to spoil like eggs as it thaws.

Now go make something delicious!