

ilovefoodcommt

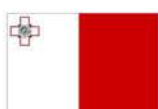
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EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
MALTA 2007-2013



Newsletter Issue December 2011



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Dear friends,

Welcome to the special Christmas Edition of "il-Borma".

This year was full of satisfying achievements and interesting milestones which were reached by our Maltese Food project. In just over 9 months we have brought together more than 13,000 friends from all over the world on our Face Book page dedicated to Maltese Food. During this year we launched the website portal www.ilovefood.com.mt which is growing on a daily basis with features, recipes and news. Last October we launched the ilovefood Cooking Club – which has generated a lot of interest and feedback.

Just last month we launched the Maltese food online shop which so far has been a very encouraging experience. The first product to be offered online were Twistees, but we plan to keep on adding more Maltese products, food stuffs, books and all sorts of related gift items. The portal is serving as an excellent opportunity to promote local producers of typical Maltese foods.

Best of all, over the last year, we have made so many friends of different nationalities, from all over the world. Our online community is open to anyone who is interested in Maltese food. The internet has allowed us to get to know each other, share common interests and best of all enjoy Maltese Food.

We look forward to the coming year where we hope to make this project, dedicated towards promoting Maltese Gastronomy even bigger, more interesting and even more global! We strongly believe that there are so many people all over the world, who are interested in promoting, sharing and getting to know more about Maltese Gastronomy. Together we can make this project an even bigger success than it already is!

On behalf of all the ilovefood.com.mt team, I would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful 2012.

Tony

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Click on the following link to view November Newsletter - <http://www.ilovefood.com.mt/newsletter/2011/november/il-borma.pdf>

Click on the following link to view October Newsletter - http://www.ilovefood.com.mt/newsletter/2011/october/October_Newsletter_full.pdf



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even to moon if need be!

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Baci Cake by Roselle Grech

posted by Patricia Azzopardi

Ingredients

- 20 cream crackers
- 200 grms Hazel nuts
- 2tblsps cocoa
- 4tblsp drinking Choc
- 6 egg whites
- 200grm caster sugar
- 2tsp vanilla
- 2tsp melted margarine or butter



Method

Crush the crackers in a blender.

Add the nuts and crush with the pulse button so not to crush them too much, just chopped small.

Add the cocoa & the choc, mix well.

Beat the egg whites and sugar till its soft white and slightly stiff(xkuma)

Add the vanilla and beat for 1 minute.

Fold in the mixture of nuts and cocoa

Fold in in batches so it won't go flat & be quick in doing so.

Add the melted butter and fold till its all in.

Bake it in a spring form dish that is greased with butter and bake on gas 5(moderate oven) for 30 minutes.

You will know when it's ready cause the sides will shrink a bit from the tin. I covered mine with Chocolate Ganache!



The Famous Baci Recipe by Roselle Grech

posted by Patricia Azzopardi

Ingredients

- 2x180grms morning coffee Biscuits crushed fine in blender
- 500grms of roasted hazelnut
- 5 tbs icing sugar
- 3 tbs cocoa, warm water
- 6 tbs rum, brandy or whisky
- 300grms x2 plain chocolate to melt

Method

Pick 60 hazelnuts, set apart and cut the rest into small pieces using a blender.

Dissolve the cocoa, icing sugar in warm water, add the alcohol & mix with the crushed biscuits & crushed hazelnuts. If necessary add more water and alcohol till you form hard dough like texture.

Form small balls and place a nut on each ball.

TIP: (i dipped the nut in melted choc and pushed it slightly in the ball so it won't fall).
Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Melt the choc Bain Marie making sure that the water never touch the bottom of the bowl.

Put the cold baci on a fork, dip the bottom in choc, then with a tablespoon drizzle the melted choc on the baci till its all covered, wipe bottom of fork with a tooth pick and place on rack, pushing the baci off the fork with a tooth pick so it won't spoil the choc.and viola` baci done! Enjoy xx



*Chocolate Coconut
Rounds
by Patricia Azzopardi*

Ingredients

- 125grms butter
- 2 cups icing sugar
- 1/4 cup double cream
- 2teaspoons rum
- 2&1/4 cups coconut
- pink food colouring
- 200 grams dark choc to cover
- 100 grms milk choc to drizzle

Method

Melt butter in saucepan till is a deep golden brown, remove from heat.

Stir in sifted icing sugar, cream, rum & coconut.

Tint with the pink colouring.

Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Melt choc over water Bain Marie.

Place a tooth pick gently into each ball, dip balls in choc...

Place on foil and leave till set, when choc is hard, melt the milk choc and drizzle the top of the balls as seen in picture..makes round 30 balls in all!

Chocolate, coconut rounds:

These will keep in fridge for at least a month. If you manage to keep them that long that is!!!! lol

(this is for Maltese who wants to know bout what cream i used,i used double cream, 50% less fat. you find it in malta. The name is Elmlea double light its a light blue tub, dark blue is full fat. Its long life aswell, which is good so the chocolate can keep more.)



Traditional Mincemeat Filling

by Georgina
Lawrence

Ingredients

- 175g raisins
- 175g sultanas
- 250g currants
- 85g mixed peel
- 85g flaked almonds, toasted
- 125g eating apples, cored and chopped but not peeled
- 125g shredded suet
- 250g dark muscovado sugar
- 1tsp nutmeg powder
- ½tsp allspice powder
- ½tsp cinnamon powder
- 1 orange - grated rind and juice
- 75ml brandy or whisky

Method

Prep: 20 mins | Cook: 5 mins | Extra time: 2-4 wks, marinating

1.Prepare the ingredients: toast the almonds in an oven at 180 C / Gas 4 for about 5 minutes, but watch carefully as it turns brown suddenly.

2.Mix all the ingredients together and seal in a large tub, or ideally a bucket with a lid.

3.Stir it once or twice in the maturation period. Put in sterilised jars. Let sit for a couple of weeks before using.

Tip

-You can use brandy, sherry or whisky for the booze element.

-Use during the year to make baked apples or a quick mincemeat pie for your sweet.



Mincepies Recipe

by Georgina
Lawrence



Ingredients

Pastry Dough

- 120g chilled salted butter, diced
- 175g plain flour
- 60g caster sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon cream

Vanilla almond topping

- 125g salted butter, slightly softened
- 125g icing sugar
- 25g plain flour
- 125g ground almonds
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 eggs

You also need good store bought or home made mincemeat

Method

For the Pastry

Place the butter, flour, salt and sugar in a bowl and rub together until it looks like coarse breadcrumbs.

Add the egg yolk and cream and stir briefly until the pastry comes together in a ball.

Wrap with clingfilm and chill for one hour.

For Vanilla Topping

Use an electric beater to whisk the butter and icing sugar together for a few minutes. Stir in the flour, ground almonds and vanilla. Beat in the eggs, then continue to whisk for 4 or 5 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 190 C / gas mark 5. Lightly dust two 12-hole bun tins with plain flour.

Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured surface until it is about 2mm thick. Cut out 8cm pastry circles to line the bun tins.

Spoon a teaspoon of mincemeat into each pie. Then place about 3/4 teaspoon of almond topping on each one.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until lightly golden on top. Leave to cool for a few minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool down completely.

Easy Truffles

by George Sciberras



Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 3 cups semisweet chocolate chips, melted
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla

Method

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar until well blended. Stir in melted chocolate and vanilla until no streaks remain. Refrigerate for about 1 hour. Shape into 1 inch balls.

Footnotes

Roll truffles in ground walnuts (or any ground nuts), cocoa, coconut, confectioners' sugar, candy sprinkles, etc. To flavor truffles with liqueurs or other flavorings, omit vanilla. Divide truffle mixture into thirds. Add 1 tablespoon liqueur (almond, coffee, orange) to each mixture; mix well.

Gluten Free Nut Cake

by Patricia Azzopardi



Ingredients

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| ● 250g seedless dates | ● 100 g ground almonds |
| ● 150g mixed peel | ● 1/2 teaspoon baking powder |
| ● 90g red cherries | ● 3 eggs |
| ● 90g green cherries | ● 2 tablespoons honey |
| ● 80 g raisins | ● 1 teaspoon vanilla essence |
| ● 250g brazil nuts | ● Rum |
| ● 185 g walnuts or pecans | |

Method

Place whole fruit and nuts in bowl, then stir in ground almonds and baking powder. Beat the eggs in small bowl with electric mixer till thick & creamy, beat in the honey & vanilla. Stir into the fruit mixture. Spread evenly into 2 greased & paper lined 8cm x 26cm bar pans. Bake in slow oven for 1 1/2 to 2 hrs or until firm to touch. Sprinkle cakes with rum, while cakes still hot, wrap in foil and cool in pans overnight. Serve thin slices with coffee and liqueurs x

Christmas Traditions in Malta

I l-Priedka tal-Milied (Sermon of the Kid)



The Priedka or Kid's Sermon is a very typical Maltese Christmas tradition, which started in 1984 when a 10 year old boy called Gorg Sapiano recited the first Priedka tal-Milied during the midnight mass in Hal-Luqa. The kid's sermon is basically a short story which narrates the story of Christmas, the story of Our Lord Jesus Christ being born in Betlehem, and the meaning of this feast for us all.

A young boy normally around seven to ten years old would be chosen to recite the Priedka tal-Milied. From experience I can say that the sermon is not easy to learn and it takes weeks to memorise completely. The boy would recite the priedka from the pulpit as part of the celebrations related to the midnight mass held on Christmas Eve. The boy's mentor would normally stay very close to the boy should he forget something and need some prompting.

Nowadays the Priedka has taken a more gender friendly approach, and its not uncommon for a girl to recite the sermon. Sometimes a boy and a girl take turns in reciting the Christmas Story. In this case the Priedka takes the form of a conversation between the two children. The children use a lot of hand gesticulations to help explain what they are reciting.

The children's parents are obviously very proud of their children's performance and the Priedka is very well received by the congregation who erupt in a loud applause as soon as the recital finishes. I recited the Christmas Priedka when I was eight years old and will always remember the excitement I had felt before the midnight Mass, as well as the big satisfaction I felt when it was all over. The parish priest had given me a beautiful statue of Jesus holding a small white lamb in his hands.



The Christmas Novena

A Novena is a Christian devotion, consisting of a prayer repeated on nine successive days. The Christmas Novena was introduced by the Dominicans in Valletta during the time of the Knights. This consisted of a sung mass for nine days in preparation for Christmas. Later on this Novena was also introduced in other parishes led by Dominican priests. Nowadays most parishes in Malta and Gozo organize the Christmas Novena with the participation of children and various



The Papal Blessing in Maltese

The "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city of Rome and to the world) is a Papal address given on Christmas day at noon. Part of the urbi et orbi blessing is the remission of all temporal punishment due to sin through a plenary attached to the Papal blessing.

The blessings are broadcast throughout the world by the European Broadcasting Union. The indulgence and remission of venial sins is not only granted to the people in Saint Peter's Square but also to Catholics watching the ceremony on television and listening on radio.

Before this blessing the Pope gives an address to the crowd and to the world, with seasonal greetings in many of the major world languages. Since the Christmas of 1980, Pope John Paul also included Maltese in his greetings. All the major TV stations in Malta transmit this event. It is such a great honour to be addressed in our beloved Maltese language.



Gulbiena

Sowing Gulbiena is part of the Christmas preparations. In Malta it is traditional to sow wheat, grain and canary seed, 'gulbiena', on cotton in flat pans five weeks before Christmas. These are left in dark corners until the seeds produce white grass-like shoots. The pans with the fully-grown shoots are then used to decorate the crib or the statue of Baby Jesus.

Maltese Christmas Carol



Ninni La Tibkix I zjed

"Ninni la tibkix izjed
ninni Gesù Bambin
Hallih ghalina l-biki
ghax ahna midinbin."

(This carol was written by a Jesuit Priest Indri Schembri. When he wrote this Christmas carol, which was originally named "il-Benniena ta Gesu Bambin", Fr Schembri was in Algeria. He wrote it for Maltese immigrants in Tunisia. The carol became very popular when it started being sung during Christmas processions.

Ninu Ninu tal- Milied

Taqbila popolari hafna tat-tfal
li saret ghanja.

"Ninu Ninu tal-Milied,
Ommu ghamlet il-qaghqiet.
Il-qaghqiet tal-qastanija,
Santu Rokku bit-tigrija.
Ghaddew il-Festi kollha,
Baqa' biss Santa Marija."

O Gesù Helwa Tarbija

Ghanja fuq melodija Maltija
miktuba minn G.Mallia

"O Gesù helwa tarbija
Ejja twieled gewwa fija
Gesù tfajjel, frott l-imhabba
Twieled f'qalbi, mieghi trabba."



Cucumber-mint sorbet

by Patricia Azzopardi

Ingredients

- 2 very large cucumbers
- 1/2 c. honey
- Handful of mint leaves - chopped
- 1 lime or 1/2 lemon
- Salt

Method

Peel and seed cucumbers. Roughly chop and place in food processor or blender. Add a generous pinch of salt, and let sit for about 10-15 minutes - they will start to release their liquid. Add both the zest and the juice from the lemon/lime, along with the honey and mint leaves. Process to a fine purée. Refrigerate for at least two hours so the flavors can mingle.

Put it in an ice cream maker and run it for about 15 minutes. Transfer to a freezer-safe container, and freeze it for a good hour or until it firms up nicely. (Or you could just skip the ice cream maker and put it directly into the freezer in a metal bowl and stir it once an hour or so until it's ready.) Check on it though, because once it gets really frozen solid (e.g. the next day), you will need to let it sit out at room temperature for a good 30 minutes before you'll be able to scoop it. If you have texture issues with pulp, you may want to strain the mixture through a fine sieve or cheesecloth after it's been refrigerated and before you put it in the ice cream maker. Add gin or vodka to keep it from freezing completely solid.



A Christmas Cake with a difference by Mary Scicluna

Ingredients

Ingredients which have to be prepared a day before commencing the recipe:

- 3 spoonful of rum
- 3 spoonful of cherry brandy
- 3 spoonful of cognac
- 3 spoonful of port
- 3 spoonful of water
- 2 teaspoonful of mixed herbs
- 1 ½ teaspoon of vanilla essence
- 1 spoonful of brown sugar

- 450g raisins
- 225g currants
- 110g sliced prunes
- 50g cherries, cut
- 110g candied sweets
- 50g mixed almonds and cut

Ingredients for the cake:

- 250g self-raising flour
- 250g brown sugar
- 250g unsalted butter
- 350g eggs

Method

1. The day before starting this recipe, mix the fruit with the alcohol.
2. In order to initiate the cake process, apply some butter to the pan in which you will place the cake and cover with a baking sheet.
3. Preheat the oven at a temperature of 275f/140c/gas1.
4. Combine the flour, butter and sugar together. Stir.
5. Add the eggs and continue stirring.
6. Finally add the fruit which have been combined with the alcohol and bake the cake for at least 3 hours.



COOKING CLUB Submitted Images



Apple pies by Kenton Grima



Bambaluni by Carl Azzopardi



Christmas Log by Donna Mizzi



Christmas Log by Kiki Gouder



Christmas Log by Rene Isabelle Barun



Christmas Log by Ruth Ferrigi



Christmas Log by Simon Alosio



Christmas cake by Sarah Ann Carabott

COOKING CLUB Submitted Images



Christmas Cup Cakes by Therese Wood



Lakumja by Georgina Lawrence



Gingerbread man by Ruth Ferrigi



Christmas Log by Lyuba Naleskina



Mince pies by Ruth Ferrigi



Mince pies Graziella La Manna



Qaghaq tal-Ghasel by Alina Maria Mizzi



Qaghaq tal-Ghasel by Helen
Farrugia Anastasi

COOKING CLUB Submitted Images



Qaghaq tal-Ghasel by Jerry Reed



Spicy gingerbread cookies
Georgina Lawrence



Steamed Christmas cake by
Rene Isabelle Barun



Ginger biscuits by Aquilina Ray



Christmas Log by Mary Scicluna



Pastini by Mary Scicluna



I mbuljuta tal-Qastan

(A traditional Maltese drink made of chestnuts)

Imbuljuta is a traditional Maltese drink served after Midnight Mass on Christmas and New Year's Eve. It is hot, spicy, delicious and comforting to take during those windy wintery nights. This sweet drink seems to contain a Christmas fragrance and it's normally served while hot in mugs or bowls.

Ingredients

- 400g dried chestnuts
- 175g sugar
- 50g drinking chocolate
- 50g dark chocolate chopped in large pieces
- Grated rind of 1 orange
- 1 tangerine peel finely chopped
- Mixed spice
- Ground cloves

Method

Wash the chestnuts a couple of times, always changing the water after every wash.

Place the chestnuts in a large bowl, and then cover them with water again. Leave them to soak overnight.

The next day first take off any remaining peel, then put all the chestnuts and the water into a large saucepan. Hence add all the other ingredients.

Put on a moderate heat till it starts boiling.

Next reduce the heat and let the mixture simmer for about 50 minutes, or until the chestnuts are tender. If you deem it necessary, add some boiling water.

Christmas Log Recipe



Ingredients

- 2 Packets biscuits plain (you can use Morning Coffee or Digestive)
- 1 large tin Condensed milk
- 100g Glace cherries
- 100g Walnuts
- 100g Candied peel
- 150g Hazelnuts and Almonds (crushed)
- 100g Bar Milk Chocolate
- Some Brandy

Method

Crush the biscuits

Chop the nuts (make sure they are roasted beforehand)

Mix all ingredients (except Bar Milk Chocolate) by hand in a large bowl.

Shape Mixture to form the log and wrap in a greaseproof paper.

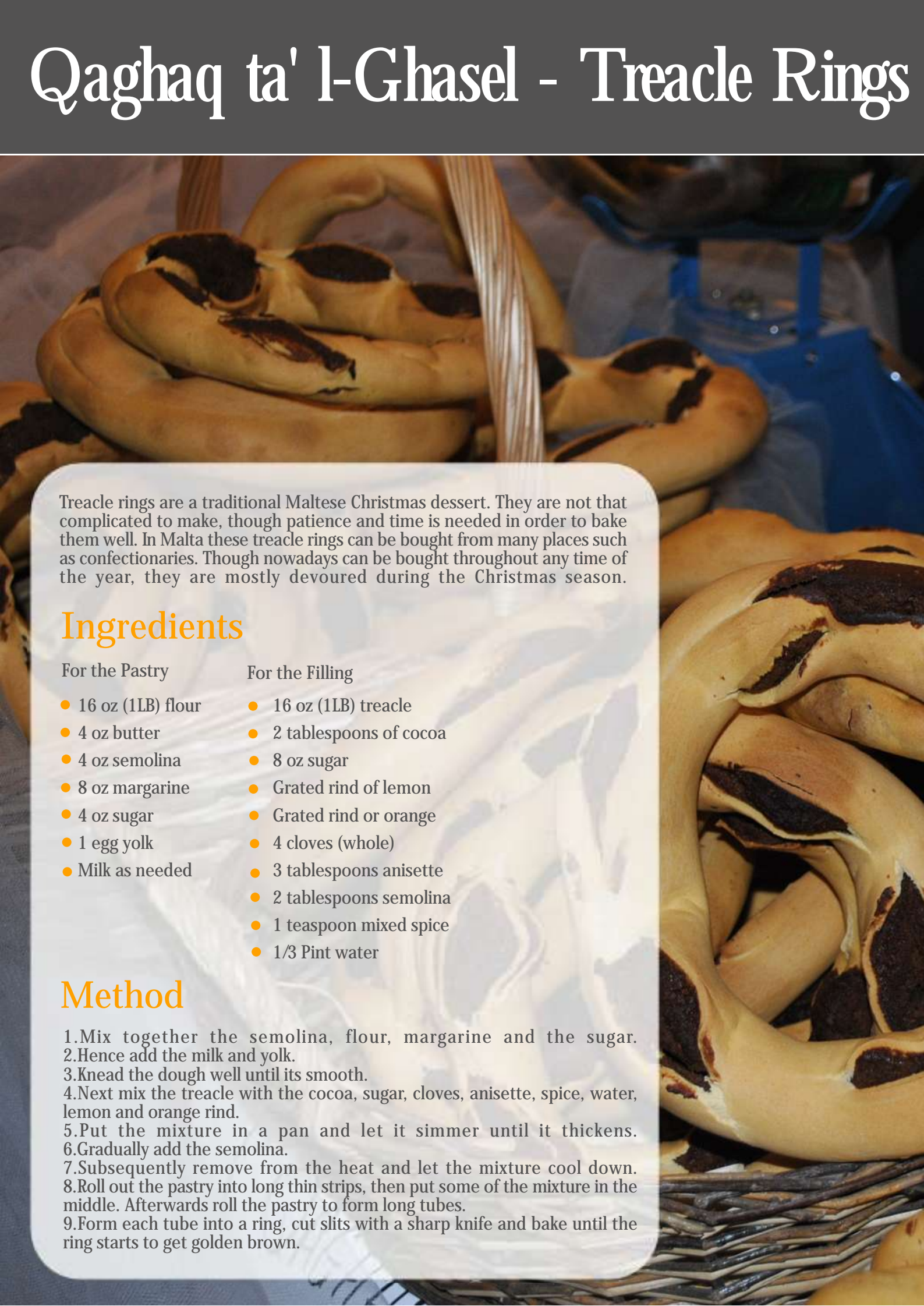
Put into the fridge and leave it for 12 hours to harden.

Remove the log shaped mixture from paper.

Melt the chocolate in a bowl over boiling water and cover to decorate the Christmas log- you can use flakes of hardened choc to add texture to your Christmas log



Qaghaq ta' l-Ghasel - Treacle Rings



Treacle rings are a traditional Maltese Christmas dessert. They are not that complicated to make, though patience and time is needed in order to bake them well. In Malta these treacle rings can be bought from many places such as confectionaries. Though nowadays can be bought throughout any time of the year, they are mostly devoured during the Christmas season.

Ingredients

For the Pastry

- 16 oz (1LB) flour
- 4 oz butter
- 4 oz semolina
- 8 oz margarine
- 4 oz sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- Milk as needed

For the Filling

- 16 oz (1LB) treacle
- 2 tablespoons of cocoa
- 8 oz sugar
- Grated rind of lemon
- Grated rind of orange
- 4 cloves (whole)
- 3 tablespoons anisette
- 2 tablespoons semolina
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice
- 1/3 Pint water

Method

1. Mix together the semolina, flour, margarine and the sugar.
2. Hence add the milk and yolk.
3. Knead the dough well until its smooth.
4. Next mix the treacle with the cocoa, sugar, cloves, anisette, spice, water, lemon and orange rind.
5. Put the mixture in a pan and let it simmer until it thickens.
6. Gradually add the semolina.
7. Subsequently remove from the heat and let the mixture cool down.
8. Roll out the pastry into long thin strips, then put some of the mixture in the middle. Afterwards roll the pastry to form long tubes.
9. Form each tube into a ring, cut slits with a sharp knife and bake until the ring starts to get golden brown.



This year the village of Ghajnsielem is organizing the fourth edition of 'Bethlehem in Ghajnsielem'. Thousands of people have attended this event during previous years. The event consists of a life-size crib built on 20,000 square meters of fields in the area know as Ta' Passi in Ghajnsielem Gozo. In December, around 150 actors perform the nativity scene which takes us back to 2000 years ago.

It is a unique experience, where visitors can observe the blacksmith and carpenter at work in their small houses, Bakers baking deliciously fragrant bread in the bakeries, villagers going along their daily chores , a wine tavern, live animals in their pens, a functioning travelers inn known as the Bethlehem Inn and finally the grotto in which Mary, Joseph and Jesus found refuge.

Before this event started being organized Ta' Passi fields were just a patch of discarded and an uncultivated land. The Ghajnsielem Local Council together with the NGO's situated in Ghajnsielem, worked on this project in order to transform this land into Gozo's own mini Bethlehem . In a number of weeks, each year Ta' Passi is transformed into a large real life crib. Thanks to Mr. Franco Ciangura, the project director, this event is being organized for the fourth consecutive year.

Bethlehem in Ghajnsielem provides the observer with a realistic replica of the surroundings of 2000 years ago. The entrance is free, and a map handout allows visitors to explore the mini Bethlehem. This is an event for the whole family, traditional local food and wine can be obtained from the tavern. A big picnic area is open for anyone wishing to enjoy meal in the countryside (weather permitting) Visitors visiting the crib at the night will be given oil lamps which will help them find their way around and at the same time keep in line with the whole rustic setting of the crib.



The directors of this event are making their utmost to make this event safe and green. This effort was recognized when the project was the first NGO to receive the ISO 140001. Many local trees were planted at Ta' Passi and over 60,000 cypress tree seeds are handed out to visitors. The project is eco friendly and promotes waste recycling. Children are given educational pamphlets on recycling paper, and visitors are encouraged to use public transport instead of their own private vehicles.

Bethlehem Inn is a two-storey hotel with four rooms offered for rent. These are decorated in the same style in which Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus found refuge 2000 years ago. Out of the inn's rooms over look the village centre and the nativity village. People wishing to rent a room can chose to stay for one night or for five days. Residents can feed the horses, donkeys, sheep and goats. They can also dress up in costumes to act as shepherds' or baker's assistants.



Schedule

DECEMBER 2011

Sunday 11th (Opening) 4.30pm - 9.00pm
Monday 12th (School Children) 9.30am - 12.00am
Tuesday 13th 2.00pm - 7.00pm
Wednesday 14th (School Children) 9.30am - 12.00am
Saturday 17th 4.30pm - 9.00pm
Sunday 18th 2.00pm - 7.00pm
Saturday 24th 3.00pm - 7.00pm
Sunday 25th 3.00pm - 8.00pm
Monday 26th 3.00pm - 7.00pm
Thursday 29th 3.00pm - 7.00pm
Friday 30th 3.00pm - 7.00pm
Saturday 31st 3.00pm - 7.00pm

JANUARY 2012

Sunday 1st 3.00pm - 8.00pm
Saturday 7th 4.30pm - 9.00pm
Sunday 8th (Adoration of the Magi) 2.00pm - 8.00pm



Christmas Starters

by Patricia Azzopardi



Sun-dried tomato aioli and prawn canapes

Combine 1 cup mayonnaise with 2 tablespoon sundried tomato pesto and 2 cloves of garlic;

Cut the baguette into slices and toast them

Spread onto toasted baguette. top each with 1 prawn and 1 fresh basil leaf.

Cucumber Croutes

Process 250 gm cream cheese with 1 large avocado and add lemon juice.

Pipe or spoon onto slices of cucumber, top each with canned flaked red salmon & onion slices.



Mini Zucchini Frittatas

The frittata mixture can be prepared up to 2 hrs ahead, but NOT baked until just before serving.

You need the following:

12 hole non stick muffin pans or cupcake baking trays.
8 eggs
1 cup cream or sour cream
1/4 cup finely chopped chives
1 large zucchini(150gm) grated coarsely
1/3 cup parmesan cheese grated
2tblspoons coarsley chopped chives to decorate
preheat oven to moderate.

Method:

Lightly oil the tray pan. whisk eggs with two-thirds of the cream or sour cream in a large bowl untill smooth. stir in finely chopped chives, zucchini and cheese.

divide mixture among holes of prepared pan. bake in moderate oven for 15 minutes. tourn on to wire rack and repeat the baking with the rest of the mixture.

Top the frittatas with remaining cream and decorate with chives. Serve at room temperature.



Bocconcini, olives and cherry tomatoes skewers with pesto

*This can be made day before covered in fridge.
Pesto 2 days before.*

Ingredients:

40g finely grated parmesan cheese
80gr pine nuts, toasted
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup (250ml) olive oil extra virgin
2 cups firmly packed basil leaves
16 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
32 baby mozzarella or as known bocconcini(450grm)
32 green olives without stone

Method:

Blend or process cheese, nuts, garlic and half the oil till combined. Add basil and remaining oil. process till almost smooth. Transfer pesto into small serving bowl and cover with cling film. Keep in fridge till ready to use.

Thread one tom half, one cheese and one olive onto a toothpick. Serve round the pesto bowl



Smoked salmon cones

Cheese mixture can be made a day before and keep it in the fridge. (serves 48)

Ingredients:

800grm smoked salmon
300ml cream
125g soft cream cheese
1/4 cup (50 g) toasted pistachios, chopped finely
2 tblsp finely chopped chives
100g(48) small spinach leaves or endives or rocket, what is in season.

Method:

Blend or process 100grms of the salmon until chopped finely.

Add the cream and cheese; process until smooth. Transfer mixture to medium bowl; stir in the nuts and chives.

Refrigerate until firm or overnight.

Cut the remaining salmon widthways, place one spinach leaf or what you have as green leaves on the salmon slice, top with 1 teasp of the cheese mixture.

Roll each into small cones to enclose the filling.

Place cones on serving tray, cover and refrigerate for 2 hrs.
Serve cold.

Tomato & Mozzarella Shortbreads

Ingredients for Shortbread:

115g(4oz) plain flour, sifted
100g(3 1/2oz) unsalted butter, cubed
85g(3oz) grated Parmesan
pinch of salt
pinch cayenne pepper
flour to dust.

Ingredients for Topping:

250g mozzarella
6cherry tomatos
1 tbsp pesto

Method:

Preheat oven gas mark 5/170c/375f

Using the paddle blade, beat the flour and butter on low speed till it looks like breadcrumbs.

Stop the mixer, add the cheese, salt and cayenne pepper, then continue on low speed until the mixture begins to combine.

On a floured board, pat the mixture a round, cover with cling film and refrigerate for 1 hr.

Line a baking sheet or tray with grease proof paper, dust the cool surface of pastry and roll out to about 1/4 in(5mm) thick.

Cut out discs with a 3.5cm(1 1/2 inch) cutter, place on baking tray and return to fridge for 1/2 an hr.

Transfer to oven and bake for 10 minutes or until golden brown.

Layer with grease proof paper and place in an airtight container till ready to use.

Cut mozzarella rounds same as the biscuits, keep in fridge till ready to use.

Slice tomatoes into 30 rounds, remove the mozzarella from fridge, place the tom on top and keep in fridge.

When ready to assemble, place short breads on a nice plate or tray, using a palate knife, position the discs of the mozzarella and tomatoes in centre of bisc, top with a tiny bit of pesto and serve with drinks.



Salmon Tartare

Ingredients:

2tblspons lemon juice
2 tesp jar horseradish
1 tblsp capers, finely chopped
2 tblsp chives(if fresh finely chopped)
250 grms fresh salmon finely chopped
1 small red onion(100grms) finely chopped
1 packet mini toasts (80grms)
65g(2.3oz) soft cheese
1tblsp cider vinegar

Method:

Dill or parsley small leaves to decorate.

Combine juice, vinegar, horseradish, capers and chives in a medium bowl, add the salmon and onion, toss to combine well. Refrigerate for 4 hrs. Turning every now and then to make sure the salmon is always covered.

Divide the salmon tartare among mini toasts, top each with a small teaspoon of cheese and top with the dill or parsley leave. chill. serve cold.



Luxury orange mince pie pastry by Linda Speight



Ingredients

- 1lb (400gr) plain flour
- 8oz (200gr) butter
- 4oz (100gr) vegetable fat (not sure if you have Trex or Cookeen, but that type of hard vegetable fat)
- Grated rind of one large orange
- Orange juice

Method

Cut the fat into the flour then rub with the fingers, lifting the flour up in the bowl so as to allow air to circulate, until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Then stir in the grated rind of the orange. Then with a knife stir the orange juice into the mixture until it just begins to stick together (if there isn't enough orange juice you can add a tiny bit from a carton or a little water). Then gather the mixture into a ball and put into the fridge for about an hour before using.

This pastry is very rich and hard to handle, so roll it out slightly thicker than you would normally do.

Making the Mince Pies (the pastry is sufficient for about 24)



Christmas cake recipe

by Sandra Probert

This is a Delia recipe so everything was weighed and soaked.
Delia's classic Christmas cake

Ingredients

- 450g currants
- 175g sultanas
- 175g raisins
- 50g chopped glacé cherries
- 50g mixed chopped candied peel
- 100ml brandy
- All above premixed and pre- soaked
- 225g plain flour
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg freshly grated
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mixed spice
- 225g soft dark brown sugar
- 50g chopped almonds
- 1 dessertspoon black treacle

You will also need

- 225g very soft butter
- 5 medium eggs
- Grated zest of lemon
- Grated zest of orange
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 100g whole blanched almonds
(only if you don't intend to ice the cake)

Method

Before you begin:

You will need a 20 cm round cake tin, greased and lined with a double thickness of baking parchment, or bake on a glide and a spot of oil.

Tie a band of brown paper or (a double thickness of news paper will do) round the outside of the tin with string for extra protection.

Preheat oven to 140°C gas Mark 1

Now all you do is sift the flour salt and spices into a very large roomy mixing bowl then add the sugar butter and either whisk or beat with a wooden spoon until everything is light, pale and fluffy. Now gradually fold in the pre-soaked fruit mixture, chopped nuts and treacle and finally the grated lemon and orange zest.

Next using a large kitchen spoon, transfer the cake mixture into prepared tin, spread it out evenly with the back of the spoon and, if you don't intend to decorate the cake with marzipan and icing, lightly drop the blanched almonds in circles over the surface.

Finally cover the top of the cake with double layer of baking parchment with a 50p - size hole in the centre. (this gives extra protection during the long slow cooking). Bake the cake on the lowest shelf of the oven for 4 hours until it feels springy in the centre when lightly touched. Sometimes it can take 30 to 40 mins longer than this, but in any case don't look for 4 hours.

Cool the cake for 30 mins in the tin, then remove it to the wire rack to finish cooling. When it's cold, feed it by making small holes in the top and bottom with a cocktail stick and spooning in a couple of tablespoons of armagnac or brandy then wrap it in double baking parchment secured with an elastic band and either wrap again in foil or store in an airtight tin. You can now feed it at odd intervals until you need to ice or eat it.

If you are using a fan oven, it is useful to secure the baking parchment cover with a few paperclips. Please refer to manufacture's guidelines for the cooking time and oven temperature.

To decorate

1 heaped tblsp apricot jam
1 tblsp Armagnac or brandy
250g marzipan
500g ready to roll icing
A little icing sugar
Silver balls to decorate

A cake board
A set of 3 star cookie cutters
Red ribbon

Place the cake on the cake board, then melt the jam with the armagnac or brandy in a small saucepan, stirring until all the lumps have dissolved. Now using a brush, coat the surface of the cake quite generously with the melted mixture. Take the marzipan and roll it out on a surface lightly dusted with icing sugar and cut it to 20cm round and place this over the top of the cake.

Repeat this step with the icing, and place it over the marzipan. Using the cutters, cut out one star of each size from the remaining rolled out icing, dampen one side of the largest star with cold water and then place this side in the centre of the cake. Then repeat with the medium and small stars. Decorate the edges of the cake and the stars with silver balls using a little water mixed with a little icing sugar as a glue to keep the silver balls in place.

Keep the cake in a tin and tie a ribbon around it on Christmas day.

