

Mrs. J. H. Epp's Old Fashioned Peppernuts

From Peppernuts Plain and Fancy by Norma Jost Voith (Hearld Press, Scottsdale, PA)

1/2 c. butter

3/4 c. granulated sugar

3/4 c. packed brown sugar

1 egg

*1/2 c. cream**

*2 T. honey**

*1/3 c. white syrup**

1/2 t. vanilla

1 1/2 t. ground cinnamon, heaping

1 t. ground cloves

1/2 t. freshly grated nutmeg

1/2 t. ground black pepper

2 t. ground allspice, heaping

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. soda

1/2 t. cream of tartar

1/4 t. baking powder

4.5 c. all purpose white flour

1. Mix all the dry ingredients together. You can sift, use the mixer, a spoon or a whisk. If you have used the mixer, dump the dry mix into another bowl. No need to clean the mixing bowl.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together until light and a little fluffy.
3. Add the egg and beat until incorporated, then add the remaining liquids and mix again.
4. Add the dry ingredients and mix until the flour is all absorbed.
5. Put the dough in a covered bowl in the refrigerator at least overnight. It will keep in the refrigerator, so don't worry about how long it takes you to bake it all up.
6. On a lightly floured board, roll dough into a ball about the size of a walnut. (*If you have a scale, my notes say 28 g. balls.*) then roll the ball into a rope about 15" long (*That's the length of the pans I use to put them on.*) and 1/4" to 3/8" in diameter. Put the rope onto a flat baking sheet and continue making ropes until they fill the baking sheet. Try to leave a little space between the ropes. Freeze until ready to bake. (*A light touch will help when rolling the ropes. I roll mostly with my fingers rather than my palms. Pushing down too hard and rolling too fast will make the ropes break. It helps to squeeze the ball a couple of times to warm it up a little before rolling. You'll get a feel for it.*)
7. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 375° and lightly grease a baking pan. (*Sides on the pan does help here. I use a half sheet pan for baking.*) Take 3 or 4 ropes out and return the rest to the freezer. Lay the ropes side by side and cut into pieces about 3/8" long. Put the peppernuts onto the baking sheet about 3/8" apart. Repeat cutting and placing a few ropes at a time so the peppernuts stay cold. (*Putting the peppernuts on the pan can pretty fiddley if you want to maximize the number you get on the baking sheet. A good job for little hands, but it will probably get old pretty fast. If you don't care, just throw them on the pan and let them stay there they land. If some stick together they can easily be broken apart as they cool. Or just consider it a bonus when you get a double.*)
8. When the pan is full, bake at 375° for about 10 minutes. The peppernuts should be nicely browned. When they are done I scrape them out with a spatula onto waxed paper to cool. I'm always disappointed if I eat them the same day they are baked. They really need to mellow overnight. I know. Fat chance, right?

**Why honey in addition to the syrup? Can you sub milk for the cream? I don't know the answer to either of those questions, but the recipe works for me so I don't mess with it. Same with the amounts of leavening in the dry ingredients.*