

COOK'S CORNER

## Christmas treats like 'nonno' used to make

I've been searching for years for a recipe my grandfather, born in Italy, made each Christmas. It was a fried "cookie," for lack of a better description — strips of a crisp, light dough that he sprinkled liberally with confectioners' sugar and/or honey. Since he died when I was a teenager, I've thought



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about those treats every holiday season, and made many an unsuccessful attempt at resurrecting that taste.

Imagine my delight while browsing *Dolci: Italy's Sweets* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$35) to find his cookie in the chapter on holiday desserts. Author Francine Segan describes them as "crunchy wisps, feather-light, generously sprinkled with confectioners' sugar — the classic Carnival or holiday treat." They're found throughout Italy, various named chiacchiere (chatter), zacarette (shavings), cenci (rags) or bugie (lies), each seasoned with the region's specialty wine or liqueur.

Segan's book gathers recipes for cookies, cakes, pastries, frozen confections and even after-dinner drinks. Favorites such as cannoli and zuppa Inglese are featured along with less well-known regional specialties and updated classics (for example, a tiramisu that does not use raw eggs). She

brings each recipe to life, introducing the region it came from and countless cooks who taught her, from Italian grandmothers to pastry chefs, bakery owners and food bloggers.

**Q.** I hope you can help me find a recipe I've lost for baked brie. It used frozen puff pastry and the result not only tasted good but looked sensational. It was a hit whenever I served it at parties. I don't remember how long it baked or exactly what I added to the cheese.

— **Stephanie**, Sacramento, Calif.

**A.** The concept is pretty simple: You defrost a sheet of puff pastry, wrap it around a round of brie and bake until the pastry is crisp. Some recipes add a layer of fruit in one form or another — I like to pulse a 10-ounce bag of fresh cranberries with a whole, seedless orange and 1/2 cup of sugar in

the food processor and ladle on top of the cheese before closing the pastry. Then I brush the pastry with orange liqueur just out of the oven. The recipe here is from Smucker's, touting its triple-berry orchard preserves, but you can use it as a template.

**Q.** A couple of years ago I had a recipe for a quick turtle candy you made with pretzels and Rolo candies. It was so easy I would like to make it again as little tokens for my coworkers for the holidays.

— **Frannie**

**A.** I'm happy to pass the rec-

ipe along, though the one I snagged from a friend last Christmas calls for Dove caramel candies, but either one will work. You get about 56 Rolo candies or 30 Dove Promises in a standard bag. It will take you longer to unwrap the candies than it will to make the recipe! This is easiest with mini square pretzels if you can find them. For those who worry about nut allergies, skip the pecan half and top with another pretzel or a red or

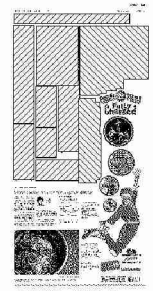
green M&M candy.

### WHAT'S COOKING?

Do you think your homemade soup recipe can outshine a premium store-bought version? Home cooks can enter a favorite family or original soup recipe in a head-to-head taste and nutrition test against any one of the eight New England Country Soup flavors (newly introduced at Publix). Five finalists will participate in the Southeast Soup Challenge in Orlando on March 24. Three finalists will be chosen by popular vote, and two by the company, based on the originality of the recipe and the creativity of the story behind it.

Entries must be received by Feb. 12. For rules and prizes, go to [www.SoupChallenge.com](http://www.SoupChallenge.com).

Send questions and responses to [LindaCiceroCooks@aol.com](mailto:LindaCiceroCooks@aol.com) or *Food*, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, FL 33132. Personal replies are not possible.





FROM FRANCINE SEGAN'S 'DOLCI: ITALY'S SWEETS'

## ITALIAN CARNEVALE CRISPS

### Sleuth's Corner

**Q.** When Deli Den was alive and well in Hollywood, my friends and I went there for dinner at least every other week, and always took home something from their bakery. Our favorite was a chocolate cake with mocha filling between the four (or so) layers and a chocolate ganache outer shell. We miss that cake! My friend's birthday is coming up and I'd love to bake/buy that little torte for him. Can anyone help?

— Tracy, Hollywood

## COOKIES

### ITALIAN CARNEVALE CRISPS

The secret to making these treats light and ungreasy is to roll the dough paper thin. If you don't have a pasta maker, manually roll it, a small portion at a time, until you can almost see through it.

1½ cups flour  
2 large eggs  
2 tablespoons butter, diced  
2 tablespoons sugar  
½ teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons marsala wine  
Grated zest of 1 lemon or ½

orange  
Sunflower or light vegetable oil

Confectioners' sugar

Put the flour in a large bowl and make a well in the center. To the well, add the eggs, butter, sugar, salt and Marsala. Gradually incorporate the flour into the liquids, working with your fingers, until a dough forms. Adjust consistency with a few more drops of marsala or a bit more flour if necessary.

Knead the dough for at least 5 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Cover the bowl with a clean dish cloth and let rest at room temperature for 1 hour. (This is key to getting those pretty little bubbles on the dough when you fry it.)

Working in small batches, run the dough through a pasta machine, starting at the thickest opening and ending at the thinnest. Lay the strips of thin dough on a clean cotton canvas cloth or lightly floured work surface.

Cut the dough into whatever shapes you like with a curly-edged ravioli cutter or knife. One common shape is a rectangle about 3½ inches long by 2 inches wide with a 2-inch slit in the center

Pour 1 inch oil into a deep pot and heat to 335 degrees or until hot enough that a small bit of thin dough rises to the top in a second or two. Fry the dough in batches until lightly barely golden (They fry very quickly.) Drain on a paper-towel lined plate. Dust both sides with lots of confectioners' sugar and serve at room temperature. Store airtight. Makes about 5 dozen.

**Per cookie:** 20 calories (26 percent from fat), 0.6 g fat (0.3 g saturated, 0.2 g monounsaturated), 7.2 mg cholesterol, 0.5 g protein, 2.9 g carbohydrates, 0 fiber, 25 mg sodium.

## DESSERT

### EASY CHOCOLATE CAMEL TURTLES

- 30 miniature pretzels
- 30 chocolate-covered caramel candies
- 30 pecan or walnut halves

Heat the oven to 300 degrees. Cover a cookie sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil.

Arrange pretzels on cookie sheet, leaving ½ inch between. Center a caramel candy on each. Place in oven for 3 to 4 minutes, until candy softens. Remove from oven and press a pecan half into each candy. Allow to cool completely before storing in airtight container. Makes 30.

**Per turtle:** 85 calories (44 percent from fat), 4.2 g fat (0.7 g saturated, 1.5 g monounsaturated), 0 cholesterol, 1.8 g protein, 10 g carbohydrates, 0.8 g fiber, 28 mg sodium.

## APPETIZER

### BAKED BRIE WITH PRESERVES

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry thawed
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup fruit preserves
- 1 (8-ounce) round brie cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped hazelnuts or pecans
- 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water
- Assorted crackers or slices of pear and/or apple

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Unfold puff pastry on a lightly floured surface. Roll gently to seal any cracks. Spoon preserves onto center of pastry. Place cheese on top of preserves. Sprinkle evenly with nuts. Fold pastry up over the cheese to cover. Trim excess pastry and press to seal seams. Reserve pastry scraps.

Brush seams with egg mixture. Place seam-side down on baking sheet. Cut pastry scraps into decorative shapes and arrange on top, if desired. Brush with egg mixture. Bake 25 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand 20 minutes before cutting. Serve with crackers and sliced fruit. Makes 16 servings.

**Per serving:** 96 calories (61 percent from fat), 6.6 g fat (2.9 g saturated, 2.6 g monounsaturated), 25.8 mg cholesterol, 3.7 g protein, 5.8 g carbohydrates, 0.3 g fiber, 102 mg sodium.