

LEITE'S CULINARIA



Lemon Biscotti

by Gerald Gass with Jacqueline Mallorca

from *The Olive Harvest Cookbook: Olive Oil Lore and Recipes from McEvoy Ranch* (Chronicle, 2004)

Makes about 36 cookies

Cookies are a favorite at the ranch. We serve them at some of the tours that are conducted for visitors and, of course, for dessert. These have a sprightly flavor thanks to fresh lemon zest, lemon oil, and a good splash of lemon-flavored vodka, which you can easily make at home or buy. Once the vodka has steeped, I like to store it in the freezer: the flavor stays fresh, and the vodka is always ready for making a great-tasting martini. Pure lemon oil is just that, oil extracted from lemon zest, rather than lemon extract, which is lemon oil mixed with alcohol. It is perishable, however, so always store it in the refrigerator.

INGREDIENTS

For the lemon vodka

3 organic lemons

1 almost full bottle good-quality vodka

For the biscotti

1 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups yellow cornmeal

1/4 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt

1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature

2/3 cup sugar

2 large egg yolks

1 tablespoon grated lemon zest

1/4 teaspoon pure lemon oil such as Boyajian brand

1/4 cup Lemon Vodka

METHOD

Make the lemon vodka

1. Using a vegetable peeler and working in a spiral from one end to the other (a few breaks won't matter, but try to remove as little of the white pith as possible), remove the zest from 3 organic lemons. Poke the strips into an almost-full bottle of good-quality vodka (the zest will displace some of the vodka so you cannot start with a full one). Cap the bottle and leave it in a dark place for 3 to 4 weeks before using.

Make the biscotti

1. Sift together the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt into a medium-sized bowl. In a large bowl, using a hand mixer at high speed, cream together the butter and sugar until light in color, about 2 minutes. Add the egg yolks one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Mix in the lemon zest, lemon oil, and vodka. Using a wooden spoon or the hand mixer at low speed, add the sifted dry ingredients, mixing well. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Butter a baking sheet and dust it lightly with

cornmeal, or line it with a silicone baking sheet.

3. Divide the dough in half. Using your hands and working on a lightly floured surface, form each half into a log 9 inches long by 1 1/4 inches in diameter. Place the logs on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them well apart (they will spread during baking). Bake the logs for 30 minutes. They will be very pale in color.

4. Remove the baking sheet from the oven, and reduce the oven heat to 300°F (150°C). When the logs are cool enough to handle, transfer them to a cutting board and cut on the diagonal into slices 1/2 inch thick. Place the slices cut side down on the baking sheet.

5. Return the baking sheet to the oven and bake the cookies for 15 minutes. Turn them over and continue baking until lightly browned, about 10 minutes longer. Transfer the cookies to a wire rack and let cool completely. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

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