

Honey Cookies (Honigplatzchen)

Early bakers had no refined sugars to help sweeten their cakes, cookies and pastries, so they relied on honey, Germany's oldest and most readily available sweetener. Makes about 6 dozen cookies.

*1 cup honey
¾ cup packed brown sugar
1 cup finely chopped nuts (such as hazelnuts or almonds)
2 Tbl grated lemon peel
2 tsp lemon juice
3 cups plain flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp ground nutmeg
½ tsp ground allspice
¼ tsp ground cloves
1 egg, slightly beaten
Blanched almond halves
1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup water
½ cup icing sugar*

Bring honey to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Remove honey from heat. Stir in brown sugar, chopped nuts, lemon peel and lemon juice. Cool slightly.
In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda, nutmeg, allspice and cloves. Add egg and honey mixture to flour mixture. Using your hands, form a soft, sticky dough. Cover dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
Preheat oven to 190°C (375°F).
Combine 1 cup granulated sugar and ½ cup water in a small saucepan. Bring to a full boil over medium-high heat; boil 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir ½ cup icing sugar into hot sugar mixture. Let cool to warm.
Lightly grease several baking sheets. Flour a work surface. Roll chilled dough out to ¼ inch thickness. Cut out 2 inch rounds with a cookie cutter. Press blanched almond halves evenly around the edges of each cookie round, like petals on a flower. Brush cookies and almonds with warm glaze. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges of cookies are lightly browned. Let stand 1 minute on baking sheets; remove and cool on wire racks.

Source: Marianna Olszewska Heberle (1996). German Cooking: The Complete Guide to Preparing Classic and Modern German Cuisine, Adapted for the American Kitchen, HP Books, New York.