

## DAILY LIVING



## Purim Delight

It's been snowing nonstop for what seems like years in New York and I've been watching it vicariously through my family up north. I can't say I miss the shoveling or the lovely shade of brown the snow turns the day after a storm, but I do miss the quiet of falling snow, watching the snow in the middle of the night as it falls past the streetlights and dare I say it, snow days.

Having everyone home on a snow day can be a lot of fun – the first few times it

will be the one I pass on to my daughters. It's so good I even hesitated sharing the recipe here, but only for a minute. Of course I'll share – we're all friends.

Just a note, this recipe makes a pretty big batch of hamantaschen – I use a 3" round cookie cutter and the yield is usually about four-dozen cookies. The recipe can also be halved if you don't need quite so many, but who doesn't need so many? And besides, they freeze beautifully (and taste great straight from the freezer) so why not make the full batch?

Here's what you'll need for the Yummy Hamantaschen:

- 4 cups flour
- 1½ cups of sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cold margarine
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 6 tablespoons of orange juice



happens. Once snow day number six hits, perhaps not so much and the real creativity has to come out.

Last year, when we still lived in New Jersey, there were more snow days than I care to remember, but one thing I do recall is being ready for Purim very early because baking hamantaschen is an awesome snow day activity – it takes hours, the dough is super-easy to make and relatively young kids can be taught to fold the dough by older kids who pick up the skill a little faster – all while you drink a coffee.

In our house, there is only one hamantaschen recipe. I mean, there are many, many discarded ones, ones that held such promise from fancy cookbooks and not-so-fancy cookbooks alike, but there is only one that has stood the test of time.

I wish I could say this recipe is a family heirloom, passed down from my grandmother to my mother and then to me, but it's not. My friend's mom found the dough recipe on the back of a bag of flour and used it to shape hamantaschen instead of sugar cookies. And it's so fantastic that this



Start by washing your hands because you're going to actually use them.

Place the first four ingredients into the bowl of a mixer. Cut the margarine into small pieces and add to the mixing bowl, using your hands to make into a crumb mixture.

Add the eggs and orange juice and mix well, using the mixer's dough hook.

Form the dough into a ball, wrap it in plastic wrap and chill in the fridge for an hour – or until you come back to the kitchen and remember that you're in the middle of making hamantaschen.

Okay, an hour has passed – and you

know this because you have a seven-year-old who has his own watch – and now it's time to shape the hamantaschen.

You now have two options: You can lightly flour your countertop and roll the dough out directly on the counter or you can use a Silpat, which is a non-stick silicone mat that can be placed directly into the oven and can withstand heat up to 500° degrees. It's actually pretty cool and if you like to bake, these mats are a great investment. I've baked these hamantaschen both ways and both were fine; the dough is not sticky, so you should not have too much trouble rolling out the dough on a (cleaned



and floured) counter or table.

Take about a quarter of the dough and roll it out to about 1/8 of an inch thick. Be sure to rewrap the rest of the dough and put it back into the fridge.

Use your 3" round cookie cutter and cut out circles. Fill the hamantaschen with your filling of choice (we'll get to that in a minute\*) and fold the sides up to form a triangle. Reroll the scraps and cut out more circles, repeating until you're done.

If you've never done this before or if you need a more visual reminder of some hamantaschen how-to, the Spice and Spirit cookbook has a great step-by-step tutorial. Or you can just Google it.

Once filled, place the hamantaschen directly on a foiled and greased or parchment-covered baking sheet.

Place the tray into the fridge for ten minutes to firm up the dough. Don't skip this step. It sounds like a waste of time when you're baking many trays of cookies, but firming up the dough before baking helps the hamantaschen retain their shape in the oven, which, from personal

experience, is usually the cause of a hamantaschen's downfall.

Brush the hamantaschen with a watered-down beaten egg and bake for 12-13 minutes (no really, not more than that - they may not look fully done, but they are) in a preheated 400° degree oven.

Let them cool, eat a few and freeze the rest – Purim is still pretty far away, but not that far and once it's around the corner and you're knee deep in *mishloach manot* ideas, costume searches and *seuda* preparations, you'll be pretty thankful for the baking-marathon of a snow day. And the next time a snow day hits and your freezer is full of hamantaschen, you'll be wishing for a second kitchen so you can get a head start on that *Pesach* baking. (I'm kidding. Totally kidding.)

\*We've tried a pretty big assortment of hamantaschen fillings over the years, including all the different fruit preserves, peanut butter and chocolate, Nutella, M&M's, Hershey Kisses and even chocolate chips in the dough itself – but last



year we won the jackpot with brownie hamantaschen. Start with a box of Duncan Hines brownie mix – make the recipe for fudge brownies, not cake ones. Bake the brownies in a 9"x13" for 15 minutes, way less time than it would take to fully bake the brownies. Let the brownies cool for a few minutes and then using a small spoon and the half-baked brownies, fill and fold the hamantaschen. Then bake the hamantaschen themselves in the oven. The brownies will fully bake in the center of the hamantaschen and won't ooze out the sides because they are already half-baked. A win for everyone.



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