

Sesame Studded Biscuits

Reshikas

Most Sephardic households from Rhodes Island have a stash of crunchy pretzel shaped sesame- studded biscuits on hand. These traditional biscuits made with fresh orange juice have been such a firm favourite for generations and are an ideal, not-to-sweet, nibble offered with tea or simply dunked into Turkish coffee.

4 eggs

1 cup caster (superfine) sugar

1 cup vegetable or sunflower oil

1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice

7-8 cups cake flour, sifted

3 heaped tsp baking powder

For the topping:

1 cup sesame seeds placed in a shallow bowl

For the egg wash:

2-3 whole eggs, lightly beaten in a shallow bowl

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F). Line 2 baking trays with baking paper.

Make the dough: Beat the eggs and sugar in a free-standing electric mixer, fitted with a whisk attachment, until they are fluffy and pale. Over a low speed, beat in the oil and orange juice.

Change to a beater attachment and add 3 cups of flour, a cup at a time, with the baking powder. Set the bowl aside, add in the remaining 4-5 cups flour, kneading with your hands, to make a soft but not sticky dough*.

Shape the *reshikas*: Divide the dough into 4 portions. Cover 3 portions with a tea towel while you work with 1 portion. Break off into 20g (3/4oz) pieces and evenly roll each piece into about 30cm (12in) pencil-shape lengths. Shape by looping the ends of the dough ropes over the middle to form the pretzel shape and press the ends lightly. Turn the top-side of the biscuit over into the sesame seeds, making sure that they are well coated.

Arrange the biscuits, with the topping side up, 2.5cm (1in) apart on the prepared baking trays. Brush with egg wash over the sesame seed-topped biscuits.

Place the tray in the centre of the oven and bake for 20 minutes or until the biscuits are firm and golden brown. While the first batch is baking repeat with the remaining portions of dough.

Transfer the biscuits to a wire rack and allow to cool completely.

Crisp the *reshikas*: Pile them on a baking tray and return to the oven, turn off the heat and leave them in the oven to crisp for about 1 hour. Transfer again to a wire rack and allow to cool completely. Makes about 80.

Stella's Hints:

- * *For a crisper biscuit put the dough through a mincer attachment of a free-standing mixer.
- * Should the biscuits soften in damp weather, crisp in a preheated 150°C (300°F) oven for 10 minutes.
- * To store *reshikas*: Store in an airtight container for up to 1 month.