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A Cookie Chock-full of History

By Susie Iventosch



Divine biscotti and cup of coffee Photos Susie Iventosch

Italy and were never able to see their children again. Fitzsimons is not positive why her great-grandparents returned to Italy, but she postulates that perhaps they could only afford to send the children to the U.S., and they wanted for them a better life.*

Upon entering the U.S., young Morizio became Frank Fassio and he lived with his aunt and uncle until he married Pauline in 1922. That's when Pauline's Italian cooking lessons began. If this biscotti recipe is any indication, she most certainly excelled in her studies!

Fitzsimons says that her grandparents' house is still standing in Cinaglio.

"We've been to Cinaglio twice, and I doubt much has changed since my grandfather left 100 years ago."

* In researching the emigration patterns from Italy to the U.S., I discovered that from 1890 to 1900, some 655,000 Italians emigrated to the U.S. to escape low wages and high taxes. Between 1900 and 1910, it is reported that more than 2.1 million arrived, but of these, roughly 40 percent later returned to Italy.

Source: <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAEItaly.htm>

Geppetto's Caffe

87 Orinda Way

Orinda

(925) 253-9894

Hours:

Monday thru Friday 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturdays 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Anyone who has had the good fortune of dining at Geppetto's Caffe in Orinda already knows they serve delicious pastries and desserts, as well as wonderful sandwiches for lunch. I am personally addicted to their apricot bars and they make an awesome chicken curry salad sandwich!

What is less known, because they are not served at the restaurant, is that proprietor Sue Fitzsimons makes divine biscotti. The recipe, made with anise, almond extract and plenty of vanilla, is one of many handed down from her grandmother's Italian cooking file.

"My grandmother, Pauline Fassio, was not Italian, but she learned to cook from my grandfather's older sisters," Fitzsimons notes. "All of the recipes she passed on to me were Italian. It was all about pleasing your husband back then, and she did with her wonderful Italian cooking.

"We made ravioli together when I was younger and it was so much fun!"

Fitzsimons says that her grandfather, Morizio Fassio, was born in Cinaglio, Italy in 1901. Eight years later, his parents brought him, along with his siblings, to the United States to live with relatives; the couple then returned to



Photos Susie Iventosch

(Makes about 4 dozen)

INGREDIENTS

4 cups flour
1-1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup whole almonds, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon anise seeds
1/2 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped
2 cubes butter
6 eggs
5 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 teaspoons pure almond extract
1/2 teaspoon anise extract
1 shot glass of whiskey (approximately 1.5 oz. or
3 tablespoons)

DIRECTIONS

Cream butter and sugar together until fluffy. Add eggs and beat well. Add all extracts and whiskey and beat until smooth. Stir in nuts and anise seeds. Sift flour with baking powder and salt, and add to dough. Mix well. Dough will be soft and rather sticky. At this point you can refrigerate the dough for about 10 minutes, to make handling easier, but you don't absolutely have to.

Form dough into four long, narrow logs, approximately 14-16 inches each, and place on greased 14x16-inch greased baking (two logs per sheet). Bake for 20 minutes at 350°. Remove from oven and with a sharp knife, cut logs on a slight angle crosswise into 3/4-inch strips. Return to oven and continue to bake until slightly browned. (For softer biscotti, bake the second time for about 10 minutes, and for crunchier biscotti, slightly longer, maybe 15 minutes. You can also turn the slices onto their sides for the second baking, if you desire, but again, not necessary.) The logs expand quite a bit in width while baking, (almost double) so make sure you start with a log about 2 inches wide, or half as wide as your desired finished cookies.

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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