

FOOD AND CULTURE

La Rosca de Reyes (King's Cake)



Jesus wrapped in clothes being presented at the temple.

The rosca de reyes (King's Cake) represents a crown and is adorned with dried and crystallized fruits, which simulate jewels crusted in the crowns of the king's men, which signify peace, love and happiness.

For the Christians, the circular form represents the love of God, which has not beginning nor end.

Some investigations say that the origin of this round sweetbread is French where a lima bean was hidden inside the bread. Today, in France, the sweetbread takes the name of Galette de Rois or King's Cake and is formed with puff pastry on a flat surface.

In Spain, it is called Roscon de Reyes, and it is made with orange blossom water with dried fruits and looks much like the Mexican Rosca de Reyes. It is said that this custom celebrates the last get together of the Christmas holidays, during which time gifts may be exchanged and to remember the gifts that were given to baby Jesus by the three kings.

In some places in Mexico, the people have the custom to put a ring or a thimble in the sweetbread. If the person finds a ring in his piece, it means that he will soon be getting married, and the person finding the thimble will remain single for at least a year.

Recipe

3 lbs. flour
2 packages of dry yeast
½ tsp. salt
1 ½ C. of sugar
1 ½ C. of milk
3 tsp. of grated orange rind
8 eggs
1 ½ lbs. butter
1 little porcelain or plastic doll

Put all of the ingredients, except the butter and the plastic doll, in the mixer. Add the butter until you get an elastic and firm dough.

Decoration with vegetable shortening

1 lb. of vegetable shortening
1 lb. of sugar
1 lb. flour

Cream the shortening with the sugar, adding in the flour.

Fruits for the decoration

Caramelized orange rind and figs, cherries, etc.

Shape the dough into a large circle, and add in the little doll. Take pieces of the vegetable shortening decoration, make flattened strips and place on cake like rings around the cake. Decorate with the fruits.

Bake for 40 minutes to an hour at 350°. ♦

To eat King's Cake in Latin American countries is something very special during the Day of the Epiphany or Three King's Day on January 6. This custom finds its origin in the times of the Roman Empire.

The Catholic church adopted this originally pagan tradition into their religious customs, and later it made its way to the Latin America with Spanish colonization.

In Mexico, the representation of the nativity is incorporated into the King's Cake. Inside the cake, there are one or various little porcelain, ceramic or plastic dolls that are heat resistant and that represent Jesus Christ who had to be hidden and protected by Mary and Joseph to be saved from Herodes. The amount of dolls that are put inside the cake vary as to the size of the cake that is made. Whoever gets one of the little dolls in his piece of cake is supposed to make a party and prepare tamales on February 2, which is the day of the Candelaria. During this celebration, it is the custom to eat wrapped tamales to represent