



La Pastiera Napoletana, an Italian Easter Cake

Our recipe was inspired by Giorgio Locatelli's *pastiera* recipe in his cookbook [Made in Italy: Food and Stories](#), as well as by a few other versions. The *pastiera* begins with a crust of *pasta frolla*, which is found in several other Italian cakes and tarts, such as [crostata](#) and [crostatine di frutta](#), and [torta della nonna](#).

It calls for cooked wheat, an Italian specialty product. We happily found that it can be ordered online from [Marchese Italian Market](#); purchase the product called *Valgri' Grano Cotto Pastiera Napoletana*. It also calls for candied citron, orange and/or lemon peel, which we found online through [Barry Farms](#). You will also need a tart pan with a 10-13 inch diameter and sides at least 2 inches high. We found a lovely but inexpensive [white porcelain one](#) at [Sur la Table](#). A round cake pan or spring form pan will work, too.

Ingredients

for a 10-13 inch tart

For the *pasta frolla*

200 g (1 and 1/2 cup) flour
80 g (1/3 cup) sugar
80 g (5 and 1/2 Tbsp) unsalted butter, cubed
1/2 pouch of [Pane Angeli lievito per i dolci](#), or 2 tsp. baking powder*
1 egg
Zest of 1 lemon

For the filling

300 grams (1 and 1/2 cup) *grano cotto*, or cooked wheat**
250 grams (1 cup) whole milk
250 grams fresh ricotta***
3 eggs, yolks and whites separated
115 grams (1/2 cup) super-fine sugar
60 grams (1/3 cup) candied citron, lemon and orange peel****
Zest of one lemon
4 tsp. orange extract
Pinch of salt

*You can substitute *pane degli angeli* with 2 tsp. baking powder. So many Italian baked goods call for *pane degli angeli*, however, that we do encourage you to pick up a package of it.

**You can prepare your own *grano cotto* by cooking bulgur wheat for 20 minutes in boiling water, and then letting it cool in its own water. You can also substitute pearl barley, cooked according to instructions.

*** Sheep's milk ricotta is preferred. Sadly, we are no longer able to find it locally, and we substituted with cow's milk ricotta, which works just fine. Make the effort to find fresh ricotta, not the supermarket tubs of ricotta.

*** Candied citron, lemon and/or orange peel will work fine. It can be left out if needed, but it is worth the effort to find it. If you want to make your own, see fellow blogger Paola's recipe [here](#).

Directions

Prepare the *pasta frolla* by placing the flour onto a firm, smooth work surface. Add the sugar and *pane angeli* or baking powder, and mix. Gather the dry ingredients into a mound and form a well in the middle. Add the egg, cubes of butter and lemon zest, and working quickly with your fingers, work the wet ingredients into the flour mixture. Mix by hand until the dough forms a homogenous, smooth ball. Cover in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Place the *grano cotto*, milk and 15 grams (1 Tbsp) of the sugar into a saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-low heat. Set aside to cool. In a separate bowl, mix together the ricotta, egg yolks, the rest of the sugar, candied peel, lemon zest, orange extract and a pinch of salt. When the *grano cotto* mixture is cool, stir it into the ricotta mixture. Beat 2 of the 3 egg whites until stiff. Fold the egg white mixture into the rest of the filling, and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 180° C, 355° F. Brush your tart pan with melted butter.

Remove the *pasta frolla* from the refrigerator, and separate it into two pieces - one piece made up of about 2/3 of the dough, and the second piece made up of the remaining 1/3. Sprinkle flour onto a smooth surface and roll out the larger piece of dough until it is big enough to fill the base and sides of your tart pan. Line the tart pan with the rolled out dough, pressing it in so that it is equal thickness on the bottom and on the sides. Trim any excess dough around the rim of the pan. Roll out the second piece of dough and cut 6-8 strips for the tart's lattice, using a pastry cutter to make a pretty fluted edge if you have one.

Pour the filling into the shell, and arrange the strips of dough in a lattice pattern across the top of the tart, taking care to seal the edges of the lattice with the crust.

Bake for 1 hour, and then turn the oven down to 120° C, 250° F and let it bake for 20 more minutes. Turn the oven off, open the oven door a crack, and let the *pastiera* rest in the oven until cool.

Happy Easter!

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