

Monday Round-up: Cookies and Question

This month's Kosher Connection challenge asked us to make 'something that you'd put in a mishloach manot bag. I mean, what popped in my head was cookiecookie, cookie COOKIE! Now look, e'rybody has a hamentaschen recipe so I wasn't going to attempt to reinvent the wheel plus, this past week was super stressful and there are no signs of stopping. After parent/teacher conferences, a larger amount than usual of 6th grade girls coming to my office to ~~sob-like-a-babies~~ talk things out, and a few heart-breaking conversations with parents dealing with divorce, I wasn't really in a creative frame of mind. I couldn't tap into that part of me that gets jazzed for some cooking/baking and it was getting frustrating but more on that later.



Siona will eventually get Uncle Dave's nose

The biggest thing on my mind over this shabbat was connection. As you know if you've read this blog before, I'm a school counselor for a Jewish day school. I love my job and I take it seriously. The biggest part of my job that I wish I had more time to cultivate is my work with connecting girls with Judaism. I'm getting really frustrated (oy, apparently I need a vacay. I'm getting frustrated a lot this week) with the lack of opportunities for connection for our girls. If I

hear one more girls program on tzniut I might scream. It's nice that there are programs for Jewish girls to connect via challah-baking and mikveh-visiting but this can't be the only way we offer our girls connection, right? But what is that within the Orthodox community? What does that connection and the subsequent programming look like? I feel very strongly that the message we're sending our girls is that their place within our community lies solely in home-making and child-rearing and sometimes educating but even that education is within a box. We don't invest the time and energy in educating our girls about how to daven and why we daven like we do with our boys. I want to inspire girls to love their culture, community, and religion but I'm not sure how to do that. When I think back about what inspired me so much of it was self-directed but of course, came from the home. My mom was very involved within our Reform synagogue and I was involved with our area youth group but what brought me to being more observant and more appreciative and knowledgeable about Judaism as an adult was education, inspiring female educators and a partner who loves his religion. So what does that inspiration look like for middle and high school girls? What inspires/d you? I'm truly looking for help and guidance and would love your opinion.



I had to bake with Siona attached to me, which meant that sneaky little foot kept getting into the pictures.

Anyway, ok, so back to cookies. COOKIES! We had a dear friend of my husband come and visit this weekend. He lives in LA and is doing the struggling actor thing. I'm convinced that he will be famous one day but in the meantime he's doing whatever he can to make a paycheck. One thing he's doing to make ends meet is a 'before and after' muscle-building program complete

with protein shake powder that smells like hot chocolate powder. The bag of it sat on our counter all weekend, which meant all weekend I was craving anything with cocoa powder thus, the double chocolate chip oatmeal cookies. So when someone asked me to make something I'd want in my mishloach manot bag that answer will always be cookies . . . cookies and cash but you know, I can't really 'make' cash.



Cocoa and flour in harmony

How! ?

1. 1/2 c unsalted butter, softened
2. 3/4 c granulated sugar
3. 1/2 c packed dark brown sugar
4. 1 large egg
5. 1 tsp vanilla extract
6. 3/4 c all-purpose flour
7. 1/4 c unsweetened cocoa powder
8. 1/2 tsp baking soda
9. 1/4 tsp salt
10. 2 c old-fashioned oats
11. 1/2 c semi-sweet chocolate chips

How's That Now!?

1. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together dry ingredients (flour, cocoa powder, soda and salt). Set aside.
2. Place butter and both sugars in a large mixing bowl of a stand mixer or hand-mixer and cream until light and fluffy.
3. Add egg and vanilla and mix just until combined.
4. With mixer on low speed, add dry ingredients and mix just until combined. Fold in chocolate chips.
5. When ready to bake, preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Line your cookies sheet with parchment paper. Scoop out the dough into a tablespoon size balls and place on prepared sheet, leaving at least 2 inches of space between cookie balls. They will spread!
6. Bake 9 to 11 minutes. Cool on a sheet for 3 minutes, then transfer onto a cooling rack.



A li'l something special for your mishloach manot this year



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It's Cookie Time, It's Cookie Time, It's Cookie Ti-iiiime

\$1 to the person who can name the AWESOME 80s movie this post's title derives from. We'll give you a hint—it's actually a song in the glorious movie.



Filling Planning

Ok, moving on—we're less than a week from Purim so clearly, Jewhungry spent some time baking hamantaschen on Sunday. Now, for those who don't know, hamantaschen are a triangle-shaped cookies with delicious fillings (usually jelly-filled but can be anything from poppy-seed to prunes). The name hamantaschen comes from the hat worn by the villan Haman as found in the

Book of Esther (one of five megillot). Purim is a fun holiday yes—one is supposed to drink until he/she cannot tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys—however, it also has a really great story to it that folks can relate to and some of this jewhungry writer's fondest memories from Israel come from dancing in the streets of Nachla'ot at Purim time. But I digress—hamantaschen are good y'all, real real good. It seems that most Jewish cooks don't have one set hamantaschen recipe unless they inherited one from their mother that just sticks with them. I've got an adorable mother-in-law who changes hanukah cookie recipes every year so I have to assume it's the same for the hamantaschen. Now, the challenge with hamantaschen is keeping those bad boys sealed at the triangle points. Our advice is to use water. Water on raw cookie dough is like Elmer's glue—it sticks. Just keep a little dish of water by your side while forming the cookies and you'll be all good. Oh, and remember, a little goes a long way with the filling. It's a natural inclination to want to shove that delicious cookie pocket with as much jelly-love as possible but you got to SLOW YOUR ROLL. That cookie will explode and become pizzataschen if you don't tread lightly with your fillings. Trust us, we know.



This year's hamantaschen recipe is brought to you by Smitten Kitchen. Now, most folks like to enjoy a parve hamantaschen but Smitten Kitchen had a recipe involving cream cheese so that was DEFINITELY going to happen.**

Ingredients:

Yield: About 22 2-inch cookies

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
3 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
3 tablespoons sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon orange zest
1 1/3 cups plus 4 teaspoons flour
1/4 teaspoon salt

Various jams or preserves (we used strawberry and raspberry to which we added white chocolate chips for a nice raspberry/white chocolate mix) or prepared fillings (such as poppy seed or prune pastry or, if you're SUPER healthy, you can go with Heath bar crunch filling like we did).

How??

Cream butter and cream cheese together until smooth. Add sugar and mix for one minute longer, then egg, vanilla extract, orange zest and salt, mixing until combined. Finally, add the flour. The mixture should come together and be a tad sticky. If it feels too wet, add an additional tablespoon of flour.

Form dough into a disc, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least an hour.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

To form the hamantaschen, roll out the dough on a well-floured surface until it is about 1/4-inch thick. Using a round cookie cutter (3 inches is traditional, but very large; I used one that was 2 1/2 inches), cut the dough into circles. Spoon a teaspoon of your filling of choice in the center. Fold the dough in from three sides and firmly crimp the corners and give them a little twist to ensure they stay closed. Bake on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes.

If you are new to baking and you don't have cookie cutters, find the widest-rimmed drinking glass you have and use that. If the dough is super sticky you will need to add a bit more flour along the way. Super sticky dough will not stay together when baked.



Guest chef Marissa in the Miami kitchen!



Ready for the oven



Pizzataschen - a.k.a.
exploded hamantaschen that
look like pizzas

****Side note:** If you visit the recipe on the Smitten Kitchen blog, you'll notice she comments on the cookies not being kosher if they include butter. Butter in a cookie doesn't make it treif (or non-kosher), it just means that they are dairy and therefore not parve and cannot be eaten after meat.