

Easy, Elegant Cookie Creations

(NAPSA)—An attractive treat for the holidays or at any time, Florentine Cookies are thin, crunchy confections containing nuts and fruit held together with honey or sugar.

After they're baked, the cookies are usually dipped in or drizzled with chocolate. Almonds, hazelnuts and pecans are commonly used, as are cherries.

Though the name would suggest that the Florentine cookie is from Florence, Italy, it was allegedly invented at the Palace of Versailles, Paris, France, around the turn of the 18th century.

"Aside from being divinely decadent, this is a naturally gluten-free recipe, pretty quick and simple to make, and all the ingredients are easy to keep on hand to make for gifts or to bring to a party. In fact, I usually have a jar or two of maraschino cherries in my pantry at all times to add color and flavor to desserts and other dishes," said Carol Kicinski, food writer, TV chef and recipe developer.

"With their burnished brown and copper tones studded with bright pops of ruby-red cherries, they remind me of an antique jewelry box filled with precious jewels. They are, for the most part, quite lovely to look at," she added, and created this recipe for you to try:

Florentine Cookies

24 Cookies

- 4 tablespoons butter or butter substitute**
- ½ cup honey**
- 12 maraschino cherries, stems removed, patted dry and quartered**
- ¼ cup pine nuts**
- 1 cup sliced almonds**



Photo by Carol Kicinski

Jewellike Florentine cookies are easy to make.

Zest of 1 large orange, finely grated

2 tablespoons milk (or rice milk)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Heat butter over low heat in large saucepan. Add honey; increase the heat to medium-high and add the cherries, pine nuts, almonds and orange zest. Bring to a boil, stirring to coat all the ingredients. Add milk. Continue to boil, stirring, until liquid has reduced and the mixture starts to hold together. Place well-spaced tablespoons of the mixture on prepared baking sheets. Bake 8 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from oven. Let cool in a dry place on baking sheets until crisp. Carefully peel cookies off the paper. Store in a cool, dry place—humidity will make them sticky.

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