

Authentic Sicilian Ossa di Morto Cookies

Traditional Clove-Spiced Bones of the Dead Cookies (Pasta Garofanata)

Prep: 30 minutes **Bake:** 10-15 minutes **Dry:** 3-4 days

Total: 3-4 days plus 45 minutes **Yield:** About 30 cookies

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups (300 g) cake flour
- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) granulated sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons (6 g) ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 5 tablespoons (75 ml) water
- Additional flour for dusting

Instructions

1. Prepare the sugar mixture

Combine sugar and water in a small saucepan. Warm over low heat, stirring constantly. The sugar will not dissolve completely. Do not let the mixture boil.

2. Make the spiced dough

Mix flour, ground cloves, and cinnamon in a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. While mixing on low, slowly pour in the warm sugar mixture. Mix until a thick dough forms.

3. Briefly warm the dough

Transfer the dough to a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Stir over very low heat for just a few seconds, until soft and workable. Remove promptly; do not cook it.

4. Shape the bones

On a lightly floured work surface, roll the warm dough into ropes about 3/4 inch (2 cm) thick. Cut into 1 1/2- to 2-inch (4-5 cm) pieces, gently widening or pinching the ends into bone shapes.

5. Dry for 3-4 days

Set the cookies on a tray and cover loosely with a clean, light kitchen cloth. Leave in a dry, ventilated place at room temperature for 3-4 days, until the surfaces are firm, dry, and slightly pale. Do not refrigerate.

6. Bake

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper that has been lightly dampened and well wrung out. Space cookies generously apart. Bake 10-15 minutes, watching closely, until the sugar melts into a thin caramelized base while the tops remain pale.

7. Cool

Allow the cookies to cool completely on the baking sheet before attempting to remove them. The caramel base hardens as it cools.

Recipe Notes

- Drying thoroughly is essential for the characteristic two-layer appearance. Humid conditions may require additional drying time.
- Use freshly ground cloves for the characteristic aroma.
- Store cooled cookies in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to 2 weeks.