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Chuchichäschtli (Kitchen Cupboard)

Änisbrötli/Chräbeli: Aniseed Breads

Änisbrötli/Chräbeli are traditional Swiss Christmas cookies. Being light in colour, these cookies lend themselves as the perfect canvas for a range of beautiful cookie ("Springerle") moulds that are available just for this purpose. Our own Edith Hess has a whole wall of these moulds in her dining room and freely confesses to be an addict!

To make Änisbrötli, take the following ingredients:

- ♥ 4-5 eggs
- ♥ 500g cake flour
- ♥ 500 icing sugar
- ♥ 1Tbsp lightly toasted Aniseed (or 1/4 tsp Anise Oil)
- ♥ 1Tbsp Kirsch (optional)

Beat eggs for approximately 6-8 minutes until they are double their volume and similar to "Latte" foam. Add icing sugar and beat well. Incorporate Aniseed (or sprinkle on baking tray) and Kirsch to mixture, and mix in with cake flour 1/2 cup at a time. Let dough rest for 10 minutes under a damp tea towel.

Turn dough onto a floured surface, knead in enough flour to make a good print without sticking to mold.

Roll dough out to about 1/4" thickness and press the flour-dusted mould into the dough. Gently remove mould and cut around cookie. Place on baking paper and air dry cookies for 8-12 hours, depending on the size of the cookie. This drying time sets the print.

Bake at 150-160° C for 8-10 minutes on bottom rack of the oven. The printed image should stay white and there should be a golden colour on the bottom of the cookie. The cookie will rise up from the base.

Haven't got any moulds? Just make some Änisbrötli without mould impressions. You could also have a go at "Chräbeli", where the same dough is rolled into a slim "sausage", cut into smallish pieces and scored with the knife on one side. You can get the beautiful "Springerle Moulds" from Debra Hrstich in Wellington (027 343 2130). More about this on page 23.

Recipe contributed by Edith Hess/Debra Hrstich



Änisbrötli
www.chraebeli.com



Chräbeli
www.rezeptefinden.de

Garden Diary - Gardening in December

Vege gardens aren't a top priority heading into the festive season, but try to spend some time planting or sowing new crops for a constant summer supply! Weather conditions improve and provide temperatures more ideal for raising the more tender veggies. December is a busy month for raising new plants and harvesting late Winter plantings. Beets, peas, lettuce, leeks and cabbages will be ready for picking. Directly sow beans, beetroot, carrots, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, rocket, radishes, pumpkins and zucchini. Plant grafted capsicums and eggplants to get a head start, as they need a long period of warmth. Fertilise fortnightly after the fruit starts to set.

Watch out for the white cabbage butterflies which lay eggs on the underside of brassicas such as cabbage, cauli, broccoli and kohlrabi plants. Squash, spray or apply derris dust, or use old net curtains to help to keep them off. Trim and tie down new growth on grape vines, control weeds

and water early morning or evening to prevent fungal diseases. If going away, rig up an irrigation system on an automatic timer or ask a friendly neighbour. Mulching helps to reduce water loss, while layering 5-10cm compost on the garden after heavy rain traps moisture.

Dwarf beans planted in October need to be kept well watered, or they will stop flowering and cropping, especially if in raised beds. Feed with liquid fertiliser. Peas are susceptible to fungal disease in summer, but sugar snap or snow peas can still be grown for salads, as they are quicker to crop. Once finished, add to compost heap for added nitrogen. Support with twigs, string and sticks, and anchor down to prevent wind damage.

Asparagus will have finished by now, so stop picking and allow the plants to go to fern to store energy for next year's crop. Weed and apply general fertiliser, sheep pellets or blood and bone, and give a good weekly soak.

Sow annual herbs such as basil, coriander, dill, fennel, and parsley. Protect summer berries from the birds by covering crops with netting or hang out scarers. Check for small early potatoes by digging around the sides of plants once they start flowering, then leave until growth has died back to harvest the rest. Garlic and onions can be lifted once the tops wither. Keep them in a dry place for a few weeks before storing. Root veggies such as beetroot, carrots, kumara, parsnips, swedes and turnips can also go in now for Autumn harvesting, so there is plenty to do! Just keep watering, picking, tying up, feeding and mulching, and enjoy your home grown veggies.

By Melissa Lanz

