CHRISTMAS · DECEMBER 25

Struffoli, Italian Christmas honey balls

Prep 50 min **Cook** 30 min **Rest and set** 1 hr **Total** 2 hr 20 min **Makes** One ring, about 12 servings
Level Medium

ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED

Cooking is for children and grown-ups together. An adult should supervise at all times and handle the oven, stovetop, knives, and anything hot. A grown-up does all the frying and heats the honey. Hot oil and hot honey cause bad burns, so children stay well back from the stove, and pot handles turn inward. Never give honey to a baby under 12 months. Sprinkles and candied fruit can be choking hazards for children under 4.

ALLERGY INFORMATION

Contains wheat (gluten), egg, and milk. Sprinkles and candied fruit vary, and some contain soy, milk, or artificial colors, so check the labels. Always read ingredient labels, since brands vary, and ask about food allergies before you cook or share.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 2 cups (250 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 2 tablespoons (25 g) sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Grated zest of 1 lemon or orange
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons (30 g) butter, softened
- Vegetable oil for frying, about 6 cups (1.5 liters)

Honey and decorations

- 1 cup (340 g) honey
- 2 tablespoons (25 g) sugar
- 2 tablespoons rainbow nonpareils or sprinkles
- Candied cherries or candied orange peel, chopped (optional)

METHOD

1. Mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and zest in a bowl. Add the eggs and butter and stir, then knead on the counter for 3 to 5 minutes, until smooth and soft, adding a little flour if it is sticky. Cover and rest 30 minutes.
2. Cut the dough into 8 pieces. Roll each piece into a rope about ½ inch (1 cm) thick, then cut it into ½-inch (1 cm) pieces with a butter knife. Toss the pieces with a little flour on a tray so they do not stick.
3. Grown-up only: heat 2 inches (5 cm) of oil in a heavy pot to 350°F (175°C). Shake the extra flour off a handful of pieces in a sieve and fry them for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring, until puffed and golden. Lift them out with a slotted spoon onto paper towels. Repeat in small batches.
4. Grown-up only: in a large, wide pan, warm the honey and sugar over medium-low heat, stirring, until the sugar dissolves and the honey is thin and foamy, about 3 minutes. Turn off the heat.
5. Add the fried struffoli and stir gently with a wooden spoon until every piece is shiny with honey. Let them cool for 10 minutes.
6. Spoon them onto a platter around an oiled glass to make a ring. When the honey is cool enough to touch, firm up the ring with lightly oiled hands, and scatter the sprinkles and candied fruit over the top.
7. Let it set for 30 minutes, then lift out the glass. Serve with a spoon, breaking off small clusters.

LITTLE HELPERS CAN (WITH A GROWN-UP)

- Roll the dough into long ropes
- Cut the ropes into tiny pillows with a butter knife
- Toss the pieces in flour on the tray
- Shake on the sprinkles once the honey has cooled

GOOD TO KNOW

- Keep the pieces small: they puff to about twice their size in the oil. For a dairy-free batch, use 2 tablespoons olive oil instead of the butter.
- Struffoli keep, loosely covered, at room temperature for up to 1 week, so you can make them days ahead. Do not refrigerate them, since the honey turns hard.

A BLESSING BEFORE WE EAT

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Lord Jesus, Word made flesh, make our hearts sweet with your love, and help us share it with our neighbors.