

Hamantaschen

(About 40 small pastries)

Fillings

Poppy seed - recipe below

Marmalades or jellies of your choice

Chocolate candy bar minis - milky way,
snickers, reeses cups

Nutella

Marshmallows and chocolate

Anything you can imagine

Dough

11 tablespoons (1 stick plus 3 tablespoons) unsalted butter or margarine, softened

½ cup sugar

1 large egg

3 tablespoons fresh orange juice or water (or 2 tablespoons water and 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon salt

About 2 ¾ cups all-purpose flour

1. Beat the butter or margarine until smooth, about 1 minute. Gradually add the sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Beat in the egg. Blend in the juice, vanilla, and salt. Stir in enough of the flour to make a soft dough. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill until firm, at least 1 hour or up to 3 days.
2. Make and/or organize your fillings. (See recipe below for poppy seed filling recipe.)
3. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
4. If the dough is too hard to roll out, let it stand at room temperature until malleable but not soft. For easy handling, divide the dough into 4 pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll out each piece ⅛ thick. Using a 2 ½ - 3 in cookie cutter or glass, cut out rounds. Reroll and cut the scraps. You can use a larger cookie cutter or glass, keep in mind you'll make fewer cookies.
5. Place 1 teaspoon of the filling in the center of each round. Do not overfill or your hamantaschen will open and leak.

There are two ways that you can close your hamantaschen (see diagram below):

PINCH: Pinch the bottom edge of the dough round to form a point. Continue pressing the edges together partway over the filling. Fold down the top of the dough round and pinch the corners together to form the other two points of a triangle. Press the edges of the dough together over the filling, leaving some filling exposed in the center.

FOLD: Fold one side of the circle over the middle. Fold the second side over the first. Fold the last side up and tuck under one of the corners, creating a pinwheel effect.

The hamantaschen can be frozen at this point for several months. Thaw before baking.

6. Place hamantaschen 1 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, about 13 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Poppy Seed Filling

1 ½ cups (about 7 ounces) poppy seeds, ground in a food grinder or processor

¾ cup water or milk

⅔ cup sugar or honey (or ⅓ cup each)

1 tablespoon fresh lemon or orange juice or ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon unsalted butter or margarine

Pinch of salt

1 ½ teaspoons grated lemon or orange zest (optional)

⅓ cup raisins

¼ cup finely chopped almonds, walnuts, or pecans (optional)

Combine the poppy seeds, water, and sugar and simmer over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until the mixture thickens, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and then add the remaining ingredients. Let cool. (The filling can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.)

