

My Best Friend's Mom's Kiffles Recipe

Submitted by Carol Murphy (PMANC Executive Director)



One of my fondest childhood memories is the sweet smell of cookies baking when I picked my girlfriend up to walk to school together. My friend Sandy's mom, Rita, was Hungarian and loved to bake. She would start her holiday baking early in November to freeze cookies to send to friends and family. She baked all kinds of Hungarian pastries, but my favorite was her Kiffles (kee-flees). The cookies are made with a cream cheese dough, cut into small squares and filled with various flavors of jam or nut fillings. My favorite was the apricot and nut fillings. After school she would invite me in to have some of the slightly warm cookies with a big glass of milk.

The cookies take a bit of work to prepare but after one bite you'll be convinced it was worth the effort. Both my friend and her mom have passed away but I honor them each year with a few dozen homemade kiffles. I hope you enjoy this delicacy as much as I do.

It's very important that you use a filling specifically made for pastries. I've tried to use jams in the past and the filling oozed out onto the baking sheet. I have the most success with Solo brand Cake & pastry fillings. They have a variety of flavors in 12-oz cans. You can usually find them in the baking aisle by the candied cherries and nuts for holiday baking.

Ingredients (Makes 12 dozen cookies)

- 2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour (plus more for rolling)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup (1/2 lb) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 to 2-1/2 cups cake and pastry filling (about two 12-ounce cans)

Instructions

PREPARE THE DOUGH

1. Whisk the flour and salt together in a medium bowl and set aside.
2. Beat the cream cheese and butter with an electric mixer on medium speed until very smooth and creamy, 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Reduce the mixer speed to low and add the flour mixture, 1/4 cup at a time, mixing just until combined. The dough will be quite moist, but not sticky.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and flatten into a square approximately 1/2-inch thick. Cut into 4 equal pieces and wrap each separately in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, a minimum of 2 hours.

Roll & Cut the Dough

Preheat the oven to 375°F and position a rack in the center of the oven. Line a large cookie sheet with parchment paper.

1. Remove one portion of the dough from the refrigerator and place it on a liberally floured surface.
2. Dust the top of the dough with flour and cover with a sheet of wax or parchment paper. Working from the center toward the corners, roll the dough out to a 1/8-inch-thick square. It should measure about 9 inches.
3. Using a pastry wheel or a sharp knife, cut your dough both lengthwise and crosswise into small squares.
4. Your total yield will depend on how large you make them. If you cut them into 1-1/2" squares, you should get about 36 kiffles per square of dough or about 12 dozen total. Yes, it's a lot of cookies, but you'll have plenty to share and they freeze well.

Fill & Seal the Kiffles

1. Working as quickly as possible, place a small mound of filling (about 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon) in the center of each square. If the filling flavor you're using is smooth you can spoon it into a small freezer bag, snip off a tiny bottom corner and squeeze the filling onto the squares. This works well with the poppy and almond flavors.
2. Lift two opposite corners of the dough over the filling and gently pinch them together. Moisten the tip of your finger with a bit of water and and fold the point over while gently pushing down to seal the edges. This will help keep the filling inside the cookie.

Bake the Kiffles

1. Arrange the kiffles 1 inch apart on the parchment lined cookie sheet. Bake until barely golden, 12 to 14 minutes. Cool on the baking sheet for 1 minute, then carefully transfer the kiffles to cooling racks.
2. Repeat the process with the remaining 3 portions of dough, using different filling flavors if desired.
3. If you are not freezing the cookies for gifts, you might consider giving the cookies es a light dusting of confectioner's sugar to make them look amazing.

How To Store Kiffles

1. Store kiffles between layers of waxed paper in a tightly closed container and refrigerate. Bring them to room temperature (30 minutes out of the fridge), arrange on a plate and dust lightly with powdered sugar just before serving. It's not advisable to top them with powdered sugar before storing.