

Traditional Springerle Recipe with Detailed Instructions

To make the dough

Be sure to use a major brand of unbleached all-purpose flour. If you're measuring rather than weighing the flour, measure from a canister, not directly from the bag, since the flour will be compacted in the bag. You'll need:

4 level cups unbleached flour (550g)

Note: add 2 more tablespoons flour for the automated method only

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 pound powdered sugar

1 cup eggs (240g)

Note: you'll probably have to use part of an egg to get exactly 1 cup

1 tablespoon grated lemon rind

Note: this typically requires 2 large or 3 small lemons. Using a fine grater, grate all the yellow part but very little of the white. You don't need to pack the tablespoon tightly.

butter (to grease pans)

anise seed

Automated method

As with any stiff dough, the easiest method is to use a heavy-duty mixer or food processor. Thoroughly combine the flour, baking powder, and sugar in the mixer.

Combine the eggs and lemon rind in a small bowl or two-cup liquid measure, and thoroughly whisk with a fork or small whisk. While running the mixer, slowly pour the egg and lemon mix in until a ball of dough forms.

Hand method

It's been so many years since I've made springerle dough without a heavy-duty mixer or food processor, that I'm hesitant to give directions. My thought would be to whisk the dry ingredients together in one bowl, whisk the egg and lemon rind in another, then gradually stir the dry ingredients into the wet, about a cup at a time, kneading on a board if necessary to get all the flour mixed in.

Dough consistency

The above instructions should make a dough that's the right consistency, which is neither sticky nor crumbly, but in between - similar to a big lump of modeling clay. As with any baking, however, unexpected factors can affect this. For instance, if it's very humid where you live and your flour wasn't airtight, the flour may have moisture in it which will make the dough too sticky.

If the dough is very sticky, add a tablespoon of flour and mix it in. If it's crumbly, add a teaspoon of egg or water and mix it in. Do this until you get a dough of **about** the right consistency. If unsure, err on the side of stickiness, since the dough will tend to dry while rolling, plus you can easily add more flour while rolling. **Don't keep adding flour and egg, trying get the perfect dough. It will be good enough.**

Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill for one hour or more. If you want to make the dough one day and roll the cookies the next, that's fine.

When you're ready to roll your cookies, grease two cookie sheets with butter (not margarine) and sprinkle liberally (or lightly if you prefer) with anise seed.

Rolling the dough

Prepare your work area at a comfortably low height (about 30" from floor) with a baking board and rolling pin. If your board tend to slide around, use pieces of grippy shelf liner under it. Place your canister of flour nearby. In the following directions, I'll use the term "mold" for the springerle board, to distinguish it from the baking board.

Flour the baking board lightly, unwrap the chilled dough, and place it on the board. Roll out the dough about 1/2 inch thick, adding more flour to the board if the dough tends to stick. Especially if you're making large cookies, you might want the dough a little thinner, more like 3/8" - that's a personal choice.

Sprinkle flour on the surface of dough, and spread the flour around with your hand to cover the surface, then press with a springerle mold. For a mold of four or more squares, you'll probably need to lean on the mold with all your weight to make the best imprint. Make as many imprints as you have room for on your rolled out dough before you start cutting. **If you have any problem with the dough sticking to the mold, first use a toothpick or knife tip to remove any dough stuck to the mold, then use additional flour on the surface of the dough for your next imprint.**

If you have one, use a short but wide knife to cut straight down between and around the squares. If you prefer a fluted edge, you can use a fluted garnish knife or pastry wheel. If your knife stops cutting cleanly because dough has gradually built up on it, wash and dry it, then continue cutting.

Separate the cookies with a lifter-type spatula and place them at least 1/2 inch apart on the cookie sheet. **Don't try to remove excess flour on the surface of the cookies.**

Reroll the dough and press until all dough is used. If you're making square springerles, you'll probably end up with 32 to 50, depending on the size.

Let unbaked cookies sit 8 to 24 hours (8-12 in dry environment, 12-24 if humid indoors). This will obviously require a place free of roaming pets. It's often convenient to let the cookies sit overnight, then bake them in the morning. My house is about 35-40% humidity and I typically make springerles in the afternoon, then bake them the next morning, which would be about 15-16 hours. The purpose of this step is to harden the upper surface, so the picture will be sharp.

Baking

Bake at 350°F (325°F convection) until slightly browned (they turn pinkish instead of yellowish), about 20-25 minutes. Shortly after removing them from the oven, transfer the cookies to a cooling rack. When cool, use a dry pastry brush to brush off any excess flour.

Note: Sometimes you'll see pictures online of extremely pale springerles. I'm not sure if they're actually soap (molds are used for other purposes) or whether some people prefer them that color. Anyway, it's normal for them to be a little brown.

Store in an airtight container in a cool place for several days before serving. If you eat one right away you'll probably be disappointed in the flavor. I always am!

Will keep for several weeks airtight. If needed, you can rejuvenate their softness by laying a slice of bread or apple on wax paper in the container.

– Janet Dobson (www.schmittsofhaten.com)

Other flavors (omit lemon and anise seed)

I baked and loved springerles for many years before realizing they have only miniscule amounts of two things I normally consider essential for food to taste good - salt and fat. Although I feel rather strongly that butter does not belong in springerles, I don't necessarily feel the same about salt, and have included a little in these non-traditional alternative flavors. We've received rave reviews for the almond version, and even made 150 as favors for a family wedding. Note: if you don't have fine (popcorn) salt, just use granulated.

Almond	add to eggs 1/2t fine salt, 1/2 t vanilla, 1/4t almond oil slightly chop or process some sliced almonds, sprinkle on buttered sheet
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Orange	add to eggs 1/2t fine salt, 1 t vanilla, 1T orange zest
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