

Pheffernusse Cookies

John Perry, e-mail message to Michael Miller

Here is a cookie recipe that we make every Christmas. It comes from the Schleswig-Holstein area. We call the cookies Pheffernusse, but I suspect that is not the correct name. They are an incredibly crisp, delicious, and light version of a sugar cookie.

The Baker's Ammonia can be hard to find. Sometimes the best place to look it is at a pharmacy. It is actually ammonium carbonate and if bought in "chunks", it must be ground finely with a pestle and mortar. Other names for it include Horn of Salts, Hartshorn Salt, and Hirschhornsalz. The Ostmann company in Bielefeld Germany sells 15 gram packages of it.

For those concerned or amused by the use of ammonia for leavening, the long baking time evaporates all the ammonia and leaves the kitchen smelling very "clean".

Pheffernusse

(From the kitchen of Jennifer Perry, Gambrills, Maryland)

4-1/3 Cups sugar

1 lb melted butter

5 Cups flour

4 eggs, beaten

1-1/4 oz Baker's ammonia, finely ground

Sift sugar, flour, and Baker's Ammonia. Mix butter and eggs - then add sifted mixture and mix together. Cover bowl of dough with plastic wrap and keep at room temperature for 1 week. Then make into long rolls about 3/4 inches in diameter. Slice 1/2 inch lengths. Bake in slow oven (200 to 225 degrees F for about one hour).

We have another version of the recipe from Luverna Hogan (Durant, Iowa) that omits the eggs, uses half the sugar, and uses only 1 tsp. of Baker's Ammonia. We have not tried this version, because the other recipe is just too good to mess with.

To roll it (it will keep for a week or so if you don't get around to baking them). I also find greasing my hands help because it can be very sticky.

Roll into walnut size balls but don't squish them. Bake at 375 for 15-20 minutes, remove from oven and shake in powdered sugar while still warm. And enjoy!!!! This recipe makes about 450 cookies.