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BULGARIAN MASLENKI

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This recipe makes a beautifully pliable dough that doesn't spread while baking, so you can place the cookies very close together on the baking sheet. Maslenki can be stored and enjoyed for up to a month (that is, if they last that long). The longer they stand, the softer they become.

- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup lard
- 4 cups white flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- *your favorite jam

Beat the eggs well and then add sugar; beat until light and foamy (about 5 minutes). Melt the lard, and when slightly cooled (so as not to cook the eggs), slowly add the lard to the egg/sugar mixture.

Combine the dry ingredients. Slowly add the flour mixture to the egg and lard mixture to create a firm dough. Divide into 3 balls. Roll out each ball until it is 1/4-inch thick. With a small glass or cookie cutter, cut circles. In half of the circles, punch a 3/8-inch hole in the center.

Bake in an oven preheated to 375°F for 8-10 minutes. Remove and when completely cooled, spread the whole halves with jam. Top with the halves with holes. Dust with powdered sugar, if desired. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

*I prefer a tart jam like red raspberry or apricot. Plum or rose jam is good, too.

Note: When I started making these cookies, I used the ring from a baby bottle (the piece that holds the nipple in place) to cut out the cookies. For the hole in the center, I used the top of a Crayola marker. After a while, I found some marvelous cookie cutters in an antique store that are perfect for the job.