

SWEET TREATS

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Photograph by Bill Farrington

By Jennifer Perkin

Home cooking is having a moment. Although many *Gazette* readers and PSFC members are of course already prolific home chefs, going by posts on the internet, a lot of people are taking this time to really spread their culinary wings. We are all baking those sourdough loaves, fermenting that kimchi, and making pasta from scratch. (Well, maybe not all.) People are also being creative with items that have been sitting in their pantry unused.

One of those people who has long been creative in the kitchen is Camille Scuria, who you might know best as the Membership Coordinator at the PSFC. She is also a trained chef, and has been keeping a blog of her cooking adventures for over 10 years now. Although she mostly sticks to other people's recipes, she sometimes goes off-script and make her own creations.

Two she has recently shared with us are desserts—one is more of an involved weekend project, and the other is something you could throw together on a weeknight. Pinnulata (sometimes also spelled Pignolata) are a type of festival Sicilian donut, and while her soda pop popsicle recipe only has two ingredients, it does require that you have popsicle molds.

Pinnulata



Photograph by David Herman

“Pinnulata evokes my sweet, innocent childhood. I would be a youngster sitting at Aunt Rose’s long, crowded Christmas dinner table in the Bronx. There would be so many platters of pasta and vegetables and meats, I could never fit samplings of everything on my one dish. It was the same with the desserts. I knew to expect the platter of Pinnulata. It’s probably one of my earliest food memories. I treasured the sticky fingers that would result from my pulling the finger-like, fried dough pieces from the mountain of glistening honey. The pieces seemed to giggle in a covering of colored

sprinkles and toasted almonds.

“These were handmade by my grandmother Carmela, and we completely took them for granted. When she died in 1980, I had the clarity of mind to interview my Aunt Rose about the nuances of this recipe. And like a handmade pasta recipe, this one turns out to be more about ‘feel’ than it does about measurable ‘ingredients.’ Here’s what I do:

- Beat two eggs for each patty, mixing in as much white all-purpose flour as necessary to make a hard dough.
- Knead it until smooth, then cut into patties (determined by the number of eggs used) and knead separately.
- Wet hands with vegetable oil and flatten the dough patties.
- Set the patties in a bowl, separated by wax paper, in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 hours. Do not chill them for longer than this, or you will have dough bricks to deal with.
- Remove one dough patty from the refrigerator and roll it out to 1/8-inch thickness with a rolling pin. Cover your flattened dough with plastic wrap to keep it from drying out.
- Cut a strip from it (about an inch or so wide), then roll this by hand on the board until you have a long thin “noodle.” The thinner it is, the better it is, because these will puff up when they fry. You want to keep slender strips, if possible.
- Cut the long noodle into 3-inch strips. Pile these strips on a plate kept covered with plastic wrap.
- To fry, add all the strips from one patty to 2 inches of cold vegetable oil, then add the heat. Do not let them get too brown. Keep the fried strips in a strainer. Let the oil cool before adding the strips of the next patty.
- After frying all the dough, add some organic orange zest and toasted almonds and enough honey to coat all the strips in one big pot. 7 oz. of honey is a good amount for a single patty of dough. Heat the honey (to thin it) and add the strips. When all strips are coated, pour the mixture onto plates sprinkled with cinnamon. Then, add candy sprinkles on top.

“Your result with this recipe should always be the wide-eyed adulation of the children at your table. My own toddler has just enjoyed his first-ever taste. He’s determined that the sticky fingers are worth the bother.

RECIPE: A magical tradition that’ll never grow tiresome.

PREP TIME: A sensual experience of rolling and frying and honeying dough; allow an afternoon.

TASTE: Orange-scented honey envelops simply fried dough sticks.

The Pop-Up Popsicle: Soda Pop



Photograph by David Herman

“I’ve made the best popsicle ever, according to my ten-year-old taste tester. And, it’s a cheaters delight.

“Inspired by memories of last year’s ‘Root Beer Float’ popsicle, where I froze a combination of soda and pre-made ice cream into my creation, I intensified the results.

“For a bigger flavor impact, I used more than a can and a half of flattened San Pellegrino’s Aranciata Rossa soda. I mixed this in my blender with a softened pint of Brooklyn Bell White Vanilla ice cream. I poured this into 10 popsicles, plus had an extra pint to freeze alone.

“What do you get? It’s an icy ice cream. It’s a fantasy pop. Too easy!”

You can find these and other recipes at: <http://camillecooks.com/>.■