



Hazelnut Hearts: A Little Treat for Valentines

When I was trying to come up with something to bake for the “big day,” what came to mind was how much we love chocolates with a hazelnut filling, enrobed in dark chocolate (in moderation of course!) And how raspberries and chocolate are so amazing together...For goodness sake keep the trimmings after cutting out the hearts, they may not look wonderful but hey! They will freeze well too.

Makes Either an 8 x 8” or 9 x 9” Pan For 4 Hazelnut Hearts

For The Bottom Crust:

1/3 cup icing sugar
1 ½ cups unbleached flour
¼ tsp. salt

For The Filling:

½ cup granulated sugar
1 cup whole hazelnuts, toasted & ground (see below)
½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 large egg
2 tsp. finely grated lemon rind
1 Tbsp. unbleached flour

To Decorate the Hearts:

1 oz. dark chocolate
1 oz. white chocolate
Light cooking oil for thinning the chocolate

Raspberry Sauce:

This will make more than what you will need, not to worry it’s fantastic over ice-cream or even with lemon tart. By all means make this a couple of days ahead if you wish.

2 cups fresh raspberries, or 2 (10 oz. packages) unsweetened frozen berries
½ cup red currant jelly
¼ cup granulated sugar or to taste
1 Tbsp. Kirsch

To toast the hazelnuts:

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place the hazelnuts on a cookie sheet & roast for 6 – 8 minutes until the nuts smell toasted. Remove nuts from the oven & pour onto a clean kitchen towel; fold towel over the hazelnuts & rub them together to remove the brown papery skins. Let stand 10 minutes then rub them together again. Don't worry, all the skins will not come off. Unwrap & cool to room temperature, then place in a food processor with ½ cup sugar; process until the nuts are finely ground, being careful not to over process. The nuts can be toasted the day before.

Make the Crust:

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Combine the icing sugar, flour & salt in a food processor or by hand; blend in the butter until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. Spray very lightly with non-stick cooking spray either an 8 or 9" square pan; cut a piece of baking parchment to fit the bottom of the pan & press into place. Press the crust mixture into it firmly to make an even crust. Place in the oven & bake for approximately 25 minutes or until golden. If using a 9" pan, the timing may vary a bit. Set aside to cool while you make the filling.

Make the Filling:

Blend the ground hazelnuts & butter with an electric mixer until the mixture is well combined. Add the egg & beat the mixture until it's light & fluffy. Stir in the lemon rind & flour. Spread the mixture over the cooled crust with a spatula (a small offset spatula works great for this). Bake for 25 – 30 minutes or until set & golden at the edges. Again, if using a 9" pan, the timing may vary a bit. Cool to room temperature.

Cut Out the Hearts:

Take a heart shaped cookie cutter & press down through the filling until you reach the top of the crust then using a small sharp knife, gently saw around the edges to complete cutting out the hearts. I tried pushing the cutter all the way down but the crust tended to shatter. Very gently, remove the hearts from the cutter & lace them on a cookie rack set over a large plate.

Place the white & dark in separate small bowls; add approximately ½ tsp. oil & melt the chocolate. (I really like to do this in the microwave). The chocolate needs to be thin enough to drizzle but not too thin. Dip a fork into the dark chocolate & "wave" it quickly across each heart. Repeat the process with the white chocolate & then again just a bit more dark chocolate.

Serve the hazelnut hearts with the raspberry sauce.

Phyllis

