**Stollen**

Stollen dates back to 1440, when it was first recorded in Dresden, Germany. A type of special fruit cake, Stollen still plays a major role in the German Christmas tradition, as it is often called “Weihnachtsstollen” (Christmas Stollen). Dresden, Germany is still the home of Stollen – it holds a Stollen festival each December, where each year a giant Stollen is baked. Each year the giant stollen is paraded through the market square, then sliced and sold to the public, with the proceeds supporting local charities. The largest stolen was baked in 2010 and was 70 meters (229 feet) and certified by Guinness book of world records. Although there is a basic recipe for making the original Dresden Christollen, each master baker, each village and each home has its own secret recipe passed down from one generation to the next. There are probably as many recipes for stollen as there are home bakers. The commercial production of Dresden stollen is carefully licensed and regulated to ensure quality and authenticity. Authentic German stollen is usually sprinkled heavily with confectioners' sugar prior to serving.

For the Fruit:

1 cup mixed candied fruit

AND/OR 1 cup raisins

3 Tbsp orange, apple, or white grape juice

For the Sponge:

1/4 cup warm water (about 110 degrees F)

2/3 cup milk

1 Tsp honey 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

1 scant tablespoon or 1 (1/4-ounce) package active dry yeast

For the Dough:

1/3 cup honey ½ tsp ground mace

1 large egg, beaten 1 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter 1 Tbsp finely grated lemon zest

1/2 cup chopped almonds, toasted 3-4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Oil, for coating bowl

For the Filling:

2 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted 3 Tbsp granulated sugar

2 Tsp ground cinnamon

For the Topping:

1/2 cup confectioners or powdered sugar

Prepare Fruit: Combine the mixed fruit, raisins, and juice. Cover and set aside. Shake or stir the mixture every so often to coat the fruit with the juice.

Prepare Sponge: In a large bowl, sprinkle the yeast in the water to soften. Heat the milk 110 degrees F and add it to the yeast along with the honey and 1 cup flour. Cover the sponge with plastic wrap and let rise until light and full of bubbles, about 30 minutes.

By Hand: Add the fruit mixture, honey, egg, butter, zest, salt, mace, almonds, and 2 cups of the flour to the sponge. Beat vigorously for 2 minutes. Gradually add the remaining flour 1/4 cup at a time until the dough begins to pull away from the side of the bowl. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface. Knead, adding flour a little at a time, until the dough is smooth and elastic.

OR

By Mixer: In the mixer bowl, add the fruit mixture, honey, egg, butter, zest, salt, mace, almonds, and 2 cups of the flour to the sponge. Using the paddle, beat the mixture on medium low speed for 2 minutes. Gradually add the remaining flour 1/4 cup at a time until the dough begins to pull away from the side of the bowl. Change to the dough hook. Continue to add flour 1 tablespoon at a time until the dough just begins to clean the bowl. Knead 4 to 5 minutes on medium-low.

First rise: Put the dough in an oiled bowl and turn to coat the entire ball of dough with oil. Cover with a tightly woven towel and let rise until doubled, about 1 hour.

Shape and Fill: Turn the dough out onto a lightly oiled work surface. For 1 large loaf, roll the dough into a 9 by 13-inch oval. For 2 loaves, divided the dough in half and roll each half into a 7 by 9-inch oval. Brush the melted butter over the top of the oval(s). Combine the cinnamon and granulated sugar and sprinkle over one lengthwise half of the oval(s). Fold the dough in half lengthwise and carefully lift the bread(s) onto a parchment-lined or well-greased baking sheet. Press lightly on the folded side to help the loaf keep its shape during rising and baking.

Second rise: Cover with a tightly woven towel and let rise for 45 minutes.

Preheat oven: About 10 minutes before baking, preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Bake and cool: Bake for 25 minutes until the internal temperature of the bread reaches 190 degrees F. Immediately remove from the baking sheet and place on a rack to cool.

To serve: Sprinkle heavily with confectioners' sugar just before serving. Slice into manageable servings.