

Mazurkas—Apricot Squares

From Maida Heatter

Although considered uniquely Polish holiday and celebration dessert, according to some sources, the recipe for Mazurek came to Poland most likely from the East, via the spice trade-route in the early 17th century. It is a favorite of my family.

Apricot Filling

4 ounces ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup) dried apricots
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
2 Tablespoons sugar

Pastry

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unbleached flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed
6 ounces cold butter or margarine, cut into small pieces
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup, firmly packed) unsweetened, flaked coconut
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup regular oatmeal (not instant)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts, cut medium fine

1. Bring the apricots and the water in a boil, uncovered, in a small, heavy saucepan with a tight cover over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pan and simmer until the apricots are very tender, about half an hour. The fruit should be very soft and the water should be partially but not completely absorbed.
2. Press the apricots with a potato masher or stir and mash vigorously with a fork. The mixture should be thick and gooey. Add the sugar and mix until it dissolves. Cool to room temperature. (This filling can be made ahead and refrigerated)
3. Adjust the oven rack one-third up from the bottom and preheat oven to 325 degrees.
4. Place the flour, salt and sugar in a mixing bowl. With a pastry blender cut in the butter or margarine until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in the coconut, oatmeal and walnuts.
5. Place half (about 3 cups) of the mixture into an unbuttered 8-inch square cake pan. Press it evenly with your fingertips. Cover with a piece of waxed paper and with the palm of your hand press against the paper to make a smooth, compact layer. Remove the wax paper.
6. Spread the apricot filling smoothly over the pastry, staying a bit away from the edges. Sprinkle the remaining pastry evenly over the filling and then cover with the wax paper and press smooth. Remove the wax paper.
7. Bake for about 65 minutes until the top is barely semi-firm to the touch. Cool briefly in pan and cut cake into square.

These may be topped with confectioners' sugar pressed through a fine strainer.