Brutti Ma Buoni

From Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking by Marcella Hazan

This is a Piedmontese Almond Cookies. The name translates to “ugly but good” and indeed they are delicious.

Ingredients:

- 11 ounces of blanched and skinned almonds
- 1 1/4 cup of sugar
- 4 egg whites
- salt
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract

Procedure:

1. Preheat the oven to 300F
2. Pulverize the almonds
   - Mix the almonds with 1/4 cup of sugar in the bowl of a food processor.
   - Process until you obtain a fine mixture, do not overprocess or you will end up with almond butter.
3. Prepare the merengue
   - Bring with about 2 inches of water to a boil.
   - Place the egg whites and 1/2 a cup of sugar in the bowl of a mixer.
   - Reduce the fire to keep the water at a fast simmer.
   - Place the bowl over the water, stir constantly until you place your clean finger on the egg white and sugar mixture and feel that it is definitely warm.
   - Beat the mixture in the mixer until you obtain firm peaks.
   - Add the vanilla extract and the final 1/2 cup of sugar and beat for another 30 seconds.
4. Fold the almonds
   - Fold the pulverized almonds into the merengue with a rubber spatula.
5. Bake the cookies
   - Grease and lightly dust with flour a cookie sheet.
   - Place a piping bag, without the tip, over a large glass, folding the large end backwards around the glass rim.
   - Feel the bag with the merengue batter.
   - Pipe small round cookies in the baking sheet.
• If the cookies have a little tip, fold a clean kitchen towel, wet it and press it with your hands to remove excess water.
• Holding both ends of the folded towel, gently touch the top of the cookies to flatten the tips.
• Bake for about 30 minutes (or longer), until they acquire a very light brown color.
• Remove from the stove and let them cool for a minute or two.
• Gently remove them from the baking sheet and spread them over cooling racks.
• After they are completely cool, store in air-tight containers.