

From Puglia  
to Venice,  
recipes from  
Italy's Adriatic  
Coast

Paola  
Bacchia





Is it a gubana, a presnitz, or a putizza? These three typical cakes of Friuli-Venezia Giulia have many similarities in their fillings (nuts and dried fruit) and their shape (more or less spiral). Their differences relate to their town of origin and the pastry used. Getting them mixed up is a clear giveaway that you aren't a local.

Presnitz was first made in Trieste in honour of Sissi, the beloved Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary. Buttery puff pastry encases a filling of boozy sultanas, ground nuts, chocolate, honey and orange zest. The filling is so delicious, I've been known to eat a good many spoonfuls while preparing it!

# WALNUT AND RAISIN SPIRAL

## PRESNITZ

### MAKES 2 SMALL SPIRAL CAKES

375 g (13 oz) store-bought frozen puff pastry

2 eggs, separated

plain (all-purpose) flour for dusting

splash of milk

#### Filling

160 g (1 cup) sultanas (golden raisins), soaked in white rum for at least 2 hours

30 g (1 oz) pine nuts

150 g (5½ oz) hazelnuts, roasted and ground

100 g (3½ oz) walnuts, ground

40 g (1½ oz) almonds, roasted and ground

50 g (1¾ oz) sweet plain biscuits, crushed

40 g (1½ oz) granulated sugar

70 g (2½ oz) dark chocolate (40% cocoa solids), grated

2 tablespoons honey

finely grated zest of 1 orange

¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

Thaw your puff pastry, following the packet instructions.

Drain the sultanas and place in a large bowl with the remaining filling ingredients. Add the egg whites (reserving the egg yolks for the egg wash) and mix well – you should have a thick, but spreadable, delicious-smelling filling. Cover the bowl and leave to rest in the fridge for 1 hour to firm up.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) conventional. Line a large baking tray with baking paper.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out your thawed pastry to about 40 cm × 30 cm (16 in × 12 in). Cut it in half lengthways, so you have two long pastry strips.

Divide the filling in half. Place one long compact log of filling along the length of one pastry strip, leaving a gap of about 4 cm (1½ in) at each end. Using floured hands, carefully roll up the pastry to completely enclose the filling, then fold down the two ends. Shape the log into a circle, with the ends slightly overlapping, and carefully lift onto the baking tray. Repeat with the remaining pastry strip and filling. (If your kitchen is particularly hot, you may like to loosely cover the two cakes and pop the tray in the fridge to chill for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven just before baking.)

Whisk the milk and egg yolks, then brush the egg wash generously over the pastry. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 170°C (340°F) and bake for a further 20–25 minutes, until the pastry is deep golden and cooked through.

Allow to cool completely, then cut into slices to serve. The cakes will keep in an airtight container in a cool spot for up to 3 days.