



Benne Wafers

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Recipe from *Jubilee: Recipes from Two Centuries of African American Cooking* by Toni Tipton-Martin, page 25-26

Ingredients

½ cup white sesame seeds
2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt, plus more for finishing
½ cup shortening or lard, cut into ½-inch dice and chilled, plus more for greasing the baking sheet
6 tablespoons cold whole milk, plus more if necessary

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

Spread the sesame seeds in an even layer in the pan and toast until lightly browned and fragrant, about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching. Watch carefully as the seeds burn easily. (The seeds also smoke as they toast.) Remove from the oven to cool completely, but leave the oven on and reduce the temperature to 350°F.

When the baking sheet has cooked to room temperature, lightly grease it or line with a clean sheet of parchment paper. Grease or line a second sheet for quick baking.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Sprinkle the shortening pieces over the dry ingredients. Using your fingertips, a pastry blender, or two knives, cut the shortening into the dry ingredients, blending until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle the toasted seeds over the mixture. Stir with a fork to distribute evenly. Make a well in the center, add the milk, and use a fork to blend the dry ingredients and milk as needed to make a stiff, rough dough.

Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured board. With floured hands, knead the dough 15 to 20 seconds, until smooth. Divide the dough in half. Using a floured rolling pin, roll it out to slightly thinner than a dime. Cut the dough with a 1-inch biscuit cutter and transfer the rounds to the prepared baking sheets with a spatula. Re-roll the scraps, handling as slightly as possible, and cut out more rounds. Prick each round 2 times with a fork and sprinkle with additional salt, if desired.

Bake 10 minutes, until the dough rises slightly. Rotate the pans and continue to bake until light brown, 5-10 minutes longer. Immediately remove to wire racks to cool. Store the wafers in a tightly covered container for 2-3 weeks. Before serving, reheat the wafers 2-3 minutes in a 250°F oven.

Note: To freeze benne wafer dough, shape it into a log and wrap it in parchment paper. To bake, thaw slightly and slice it into ¼-inch rounds and bake as directed.



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