

Reading a biography of St. Francis of Assisi, the only treat he indulged in were some honey almond cakes (or cookies) that a Roman noblewoman would make him. He even asked for these on his deathbed but was too sick to eat them. I'd love to know what these were that he loved so much. One Italian company makes "Cappuci del frate" which they claim are that cookie--but they're made with hazelnuts and dipped in chocolate, and I'm quite sure chocolate hadn't made it to the Old World yet.

I did find a forum discussing the topic and they offered this recipe. Just wondering if anyone out there could tell me how likely this might be to be the real thing:

Mostaccioli - An Italian almond pastry

1 pound blanched almonds

1/2 cup honey

1 teaspoon cinnamon, or 1 teaspoon vanilla

2 egg whites, lightly beaten

Approximately 1 cup of flour

Chop the almonds very fine or coarsely grind in a blender

In a bowl combine the nuts, honey, cinnamon, and egg whites. Mix thoroughly. Gradually stir in enough flour to form a thick paste.

On a lightly floured surface, knead the paste until smooth and stiff. Roll out to about 1/4 inch. Cut into diamond shapes, about 2 1/2 inches long. Place the diamonds on a lightly buttered and floured baking sheet. Let dry for 1 to 2 hours.

Bake in a preheated 250°F oven for 20-30 minutes or until set. Do not let brown.

Yield: about 3 dozen

from A Continual Feast by Evelyn Birge Vitz

The person who posted this recipe added: "I suggest adding a splash of almond extract to punch up the flavor of the almonds in the dough." She also suggested dipping in chocolate--but I want to get the authentic experience of what it may have been that St. Francis enjoyed so much. (I'm also not so sure that it was a cookie. The book I have said that they were little honey almond cakes she made for her children.)