sharing our Greek culinary heritage

# KO's Koulourakia
# (Easter Cookies)

## For the Koulourakia you will need...

250g unsalted butter (room temperature)

1 cup caster sugar

2 large eggs (room temperature)

Zest of 2 oranges

¼ cup fresh orange juice (half an orange)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon frozen mastiha resin

2 teaspoons baking powder, sifted

1/8 teaspoon bicarbonate soda, sifted

1/8 teaspoon salt

4 cups plain flour, sifted

1 egg yolk and 1 tablespoon milk for egg-wash

Sesame seeds for topping

## Preparing the Koulourakia

- Beat the softened butter and the sugar with a hand-held mixer in a medium-sized bowl, until the mixture resembles thickened cream
- Add the eggs, one at a time and mix well into the batter
- Add the orange zest, orange juice and vanilla extract and mix well
- Place the frozen mastiha resin pieces between two layers of baking paper and crush them into a fine powder by tapping them with a rolling pin
- Add the mastiha powder to the batter
- Add the baking powder, bicarbonate soda and salt, mixing them in well

- Add the flour in small amounts and mix through, initially with the hand-held mixer or a whisk and finally with your hands
- When the dough is soft, but not sticky, form it into a large ball, place it in a bowl and cover it with cling wrap
- Leave the dough to rest for no less than 30 minutes
- Line your baking sheets with baking paper
- Using a soup-spoon, scoop some of the dough, roll it into a ball between your hands and then into a thick sausage shape
- Place it on a clean work surface and roll it into an 18cm log that can be shaped in many ways – see photograph for ideas and video for demonstration
- Whisk the egg yolk with the milk and baste the koulourakia well
- Sprinkle generously with sesame seeds
- Bake in an oven pre-heated to 170°C for 20 minutes or until golden brown
- Allow the koulourakia to cool, remove them from the trays and store them in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks

## Serving the Koulourakia

- Serve the koulourakia on Easter Sunday after midnight mass or during your celebrations on the day. Enjoy your koulourakia beyond Easter with your preferred beverage – coffee, tea or milk and don't forget to dunk them
- Recipe makes 30-35

## Key Points

- Mastiha resin is available at most Greek delicatessens or online. There are different types of mastiha resin, some with a more intense flavour than others. You may need to trial different amounts in your koulourakia mixture to find the perfect amount for you
- It is very important to allow the dough to sit for no less than 30 minutes. This resting time allows the raising agent to activate the dough, which in turns helps the cookies to rise during baking. If you do not allow the dough to rest adequately, the first koulourakia batch will not rise properly, but the second and third batches will rise more
- If you're not sure how much dough to use for each koulouraki, or you find it hard to scoop a consistent amount, use a scale to weigh the dough. I used 30-35 grams of dough for each koulouraki
- When rolling out the dough into a long log, do not press on the ends of the log, otherwise they will thin out. You want the entire length of the log to have an even thickness. If you're shaping of the dough doesn't work out, roll it back into a ball and start again