

## Torta Veneziana al Pistacchio– version Sixteen



Torta Veneziana in the window of Pasticceria Bar Giovanni Pitteri in the Strada Nuova, near the Ca D'Oro, Venezia. October 20, 2012

My research indicates that in Venice this nut cake is made with commercially available pistachio paste which is similar in consistency to marzipan. On-line recipes for making this paste at home suggest a ratio of 500 grams pistachio flour, 125 grams almond flour, 250 grams sugar, 50 grams corn syrup cooked into 70ml hot water and boiled, just enough to make a paste. Some recipes add green colouring. I don't think this is necessary as the greenish colour of the torta comes from good quality olive oil and pistachios. Feel free to add colour if you prefer.

To make a Torta Veneziana the nut paste gets dissolved in olive oil. I have chosen to re-design this recipe using the basic ingredients which are available in most North American groceries and thus dispense with the tricky process of cooking the nut paste into a candy.

The first step is to procure good quality raw pistachios without shells and preferably with a fair amount of green colour showing. If they have an excessive quantity of the papers or bits of shell still attached you will want to blanch the nuts in boiling water, let cool and slip the papers and debris off. Warm the nuts in the oven to dry them thoroughly before grinding, but avoid toasting them. Good, clean, blanched raw almonds are generally available. You may also find good powdered almonds available that do not need further grinding. To grind the pistachios and almonds I first chop them to a meal in an electric nut chopper and then grind them to flour in small batches in a cheap bladed coffee grinder that we also use to grind spices.

**Ingredients:**

310 grams of prepared polenta – I used Italissima brand which contains some salt.

100 grams ( ½ cup) of olive oil

½ tsp. salt

200 grams (1 ½ cup moderately packed) of pistachio flour

100 grams ( ¾ cup moderately packed) of almond flour

300 grams ( 1 ½ cup) of white sugar

1 tsp. of almond extract

100 grams (¾ cup) of large dark Thompson raisins

½ to ¾ cup of flour

1 Tbsp of Bob's Red Mill Potato Flour (quite optional - experimenting with different flours here...By adjusting your choices here you can easily make a gluten-free version, but texture will vary.)

**Glaze:**

2 Tbsp Apricot spread or jam or similar

½ tsp. almond extract

50 grams (¼ cup) or a little more of whole raw almonds

Icing sugar to dust the finished torta

**Method:**

1. Measure the first eight ingredients into a mixing bowl, breaking the polenta up into smaller chunks. Then beat everything until it is a frothy batter. The moisture of the polenta and the oil will dissolve the sugar after a few minutes. Give it a bit of time and you will see.
2. Mix in the raisins.
3. Fold the flour into the mixture bit by bit until it will form a ball the consistency of a soft dough. Let rest for five minutes or more to allow the flour and raisins to absorb the moisture. It should be just firm enough to hold its shape, even when you jiggle the pan.
4. Form into a round about 2 1/4" thick and place on a sheet lined with baking parchment.
5. For the glaze, warm the Apricot spread, thin it with the almond extract and carefully spread the mixture on top of the torta. Decorate with the almonds.
6. Bake at 275 degrees F for about 90 to 120 minutes. The torta will hardly change shape in the baking. It is done when the almonds on top start to brown slightly. This is how the Venetians bake torte of varying sizes in variable ovens and still get even results. I find that as the torta approaches doneness cracks sometimes appear in the torta. This is a second indicator of doneness. (If this happens take it out of the oven and when it has cooled enough to handle a bit you can massage the cracks mostly closed.)
7. Dust with icing sugar when completely cool.
8. This keeps well on the shelf or shop window. Best when a day or two or three old.

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Finished weight was about 1.1 Kg or about 2.4 lbs.

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**Fresh Torta - August 17, 2013 (half recipe – 600 grams)**



**Comparing toasted almonds to raw ones**



**After applying the icing sugar**



**Showing the interior texture**

<http://www.kingarthurflour.com/shop/items/all-natural-pistachio-paste-11-oz>

[brontepistacchio.it/shop/en/198-crema.html](http://brontepistacchio.it/shop/en/198-crema.html)

[http://www.amazon.com/Pistachio-Flavoring-Paste-can-4-6/dp/B004XZHK9W/ref=pd\\_sim\\_sbs\\_gro\\_4](http://www.amazon.com/Pistachio-Flavoring-Paste-can-4-6/dp/B004XZHK9W/ref=pd_sim_sbs_gro_4)

[www.pregelamerica.com/en/products/detail.asp?ID=650](http://www.pregelamerica.com/en/products/detail.asp?ID=650)