Recipe. Sweet “Coal” ... Befana is Coming!

I. I. (January 03, 2021)

On January 6th, children and adults across Italy celebrate the epiphany by stuffing their stockings (and their faces) with various sweet treats, supposedly gifts from “La Befana,” a mythical old lady who comes down the chimney to bring candy to those who have been good and coal to those who misbehaved. But sometimes what looks like a punishment can reveal to be a tasty treat in disguise. That’s exactly the case with “carbone dolce” or sweet coal, for which you will find a recipe below.

Here is what you need to make sweet coal:

Black food dye (in gel or paste form)

250 grams or 1 cup of sugar

75 ml. or 2.5 oz. of water

50 grams or ¼ cup of powdered sugar

A few drops of lemon juice

1 egg white

1 tblsp of vodka

Start by making the icing:

Whisk the egg white until stiff then add 100 grams (½ cup) of sugar, a few drops of lemon juice and a tablespoon of pure vodka. Add 50 grams (¼ cup) of powdered sugar and the food dye (choose the quantity based on how dark you want your coal to be).

Mix everything with a wooden spoon with an upward motion.

Then make the caramel:

Pour 150 grams (¾ cup) of sugar in a high-bottomed steel non-stick pan, covering it with about 75 ml (2.5 oz.) of cold water. Careful not to add too much though, the coal’s consitency will depend on how much water you pour!

As soon as the caramel turns blonde, pour the icing into the same pan and mix with a wooden spoon. Stop and wait for the mixture to grow in volume without touching it! Pour everything into a plumcake mold covered with baking paper and let it cool to room temperature. Sprinkle it with plenty of powdered sugar.

And now you can hang your candy-filled stocking by the chimney, sit back and enjoy your treats. Who knows, the Befana might still come down to pay you a visit!

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