

Sebastiano's Candied Citrus Peel

Makes about 1 cup | 2 hours (plus overnight rest)

This recipe comes from our friends at Sebastiano's. Owners Daniel and Elise Gold met in culinary school, and after working in other Portland restaurants decided to open their own to honor Elise's Sicilian heritage. Elise bakes the soft, sesame seeded Sicilian-style loaves for their signature sandwich, a Pacific Northwest version of the New Orleans muffaletta as well as a variety of desserts like olive oil cake and the little almond cookies called pasticcini di mandorle.

"At Sebastiano's we love candying citrus peel," she says, "because the flavor is so concentrated, it has a great chewiness, and it's universally loved by kids and adults."

3-4 navel oranges or 4 lemons

3 cups of sugar (divided)

Step 1 Cut the nubby ends off each orange, slice the oranges into four quarters lengthwise, and separate the flesh from the peel (you can eat these or squeeze out the juice).

Step 2 Blanch peels by placing them in a saucepan, covering with water, and boiling for 30 seconds. Drain and repeat, then let cool.

Step 3 Use a spoon to scrape the thick white pith from the inside of the peel, leaving only a very thin sheath of white behind (the more pith you remove, the less bitter and more shelf stable the candied peels will be; aside from the bitterness, the pith retains a lot of water, which you do not want).

Step 4 Slice the peels into thin strips (you can cut length and width to your preference here and make the peel to your unique specs).

Step 5 In a saucepan combine 4 cups of water with 3 cups of sugar, whisk until all of the sugar is dissolved. Add peels and bring to a rolling boil. Reduce heat to a low simmer and cook for about 60 minutes, stirring every 20 minutes or so. Times may vary depending on the size of your peels; however, a good rule of thumb is to cook peels until they're transparent, glossy, and easy to bite through.

Step 6 Line a baking sheet with parchment. Place a cooling rack over the lined sheet pan. Drain the peels and save the sugar syrup (keep in the fridge and add to a number of sweet treats and cocktails/mocktails). Spread the peels out in an even layer. Let dry for at least an hour, ideally leave overnight.

Step 7 Pour ½ cup sugar into a shallow bowl/pan to use for coating. Add peels in batches, turning and coating the peels. This allows for easier storage as the peels do not stick together and for a sweeter finish. Alternatively, you can use the peels as-is and store them in the fridge if you prefer that deeper glossy orange, gel-like texture.