

Forget Fruitcake: Mexico's Rosca de Reyes

By Karen Catchpole - December 13, 2012



Colegio Gastronomico Internacional

Christmas, as you might expect, is a big deal in **Mexico**, where the season stretches all the way to January 6, also known as Three Kings Day or *Días de los Reyes*. A second Christmas, when children unwrap presents and the *fiestas* pick up swing, *Día de Reyes* is also celebrated with its own special cake called *rosca de reyes*, or kings cake.

Bakeries across Mexico shift into high gear to keep up with demand for this seasonal treat. The iconic La Ideal bakery in Mexico City churns out thousands of *rosca de reyes* cakes every year, and they're all gobbled up by the masses who pack the bakery's enormous store in the *Centro Historico* desperate to get their quota before the bakery is sold out. It's not uncommon to see people navigating the sidewalks of central Mexico City carrying a tower of La Ideal's *rosca de reyes* boxes tied up with string, triumphant looks on their faces.

The *rosca de reyes* tradition is believed to have started in Spain many centuries ago, and the cake is full of royal symbolism. Its oval shape represents the crowns worn by the Three Kings and the colorful candied fruit decoration represents the jewels with which they would have been encrusted.

Since 2009, the **Colegio Gastronomico Internacional** has used the country's passion for *rosca de reyes* as a teaching opportunity. More than 250 budding chefs are put in charge of baking a *rosca de reyes* that measures more than a quarter of a mile in length. Presented in a series of three foot long sections, the cake is sliced and served to anyone who wanders by the school on January 6. More than 5,000 slices are served every year along with the traditional mug of hot chocolate, the perfect accompaniment to the sweet, slightly bready cake.

This annual sidewalk party in front of the culinary school is festive and well-attended, but be warned: *rosca de reyes* cakes are the Trojan horse of baked goods. Each cake harbors a baby Jesus figurine, symbolizing the holy infant's escape from King Herod's crusade to kill all male babies that might be the Messiah.



If your slice contains the baby figure, you become its godparent. As such, you're responsible for throwing a party on February 2, *Candlemas*, the day on which Jesus was presented at the temple, complete with *tamales* and *atole* (a hot drink made from finely ground corn) for everyone who attends.

In celebration of this wonderful tradition and Mexican dessert, *Colegio Gastronomico Internacional* has shared the recipe for

their *rosca de reyes* cake with TLK.

Rosca de Reyes (Kings Cake)

For the Decorative Paste & Toppings

- 1.6 cups flour
- 1 cup margarine
- 1/2 cup icing sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups candied fruit strips

For the Cake

- 3 tablespoons margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2.5 cups flour
- 1.7 tablespoon yeast (activated in warm milk)
- 1 cup lard
- 1/4 stick unsalted butter
- 2 small ceramic baby Jesus figures

[Get the full recipe.](#)

