

Cleo Coyle's Italian Bow Tie Cookies

Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

*I hope these cookies, widely known as Angel Wings, bring back fond memories for some of you. Many cultures have a version of these crunchy-sweet fried cookies whether they're dusted with powdered sugar or finished with a drizzle of warm honey. While these cookies are traditionally enjoyed during Carnevale in Italy, here in the USA, my family and many other Italian-Americans enjoy them at Christmas and Easter. We also make them for weddings, like the spectacular wedding my amateur sleuth (Clare Cosi) caters in my Coffeehouse Mystery [Espresso Shot](#). If you've ever been to an old-school Italian wedding, then I don't have to tell you about the mountains of cookies on trays provided by cousins, aunts, and grandmothers. As a little girl, I felt very special when my beloved aunt **Mary Capaccio** allowed me to help her with the "bow tie" making in our family basement. Aunt Mary is gone now, and I miss her greatly, but I think of her often, especially when I make these cookies. The smells, tastes, even the sounds bring back our time together in that chilly basement and the warmth of her spirit as she lovingly taught me how to fry up these festive treats. And so this recipe is for her...and you. May you cook with love and eat with joy! ~ Cleo*

Makes about 4 dozen cookies

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour (+ 1/2 cup more for kneading and rolling)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt (or 1/8 teaspoon table salt)
- 2 large eggs
- 4 tablespoons water (*see my note below)
- 6 tablespoons butter melted and cooled
(the melted butter must cool a bit or you'll cook the eggs)
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract (or 2 teaspoons lemon zest)
- 1 egg white for "gluing" the bows

**Note on the water: My family uses water in the recipe, but others sometimes replace all or part of the 4 T. of water with alcohol. Options include grappa, wine, brandy, Marsala, rum, anisette, and whiskey.*



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Page 1 of 17
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Directions:

Step 1 – Make the dough: Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl and set aside. In a separate mixing bowl, whisk the eggs and water very well. Add the melted (and cooled!) butter and whisk again. Finally whisk in the pure vanilla extract and lemon extract. (The lemon extract may curdle your mixture a bit, but continue whisking and you should be able to blend it smooth.) Now stir in the flour mixture that you set aside, a little at a time until a dough forms.

Step 2 – Knead the dough: At this point, the dough should be formed but very wet and sticky. Using your hands, knead in the remaining ½ cup of flour, a little at a time, to rid the dough of stickiness. You want the dough to be soft and smooth and relatively dry, but be careful not to over-knead it. After a minute or two of kneading, you should be ready to roll—literally! *(Note: I find a short resting period for the dough makes it easier to work with. If you have the time, allow it to rest at room temperature for about 30 minutes. You can use the time to clean up your kitchen. :))*

Step 3 – Roll out the dough: On a well-floured surface, with a floured rolling pin, roll out the dough to a thin layer—the thinner your layer, the crispier your cookies! You can even use a pasta rolling machine to do this job if you have one.





Step 4 – Slice dough into ribbons: After the dough is rolled flat, you're ready to cut. A fluted roller is traditional, and although I have one, I'm using a pizza cutter in my photos because most US kitchen have one. First neatens up the edges of the ragged dough by creating a large rectangle. Then slice the dough into long strips 1-1/2 to 2-inches wide. Slice these strips crosswise to get ribbons of about 4-inches in length.



Step 5 – Form ribbons into bows: Place a bit of egg white in the center of each small strip—this will act as glue. Pinch the centers together to form a bow. To really secure it, I fold that pinch over one more time; otherwise, it may release during frying.

Step 6 - Fry the bows in hot oil (*see a few tips below*). Use a slotted spoon to scoop them out and allow them to drain on paper towels. While still warm, generously dust the cookies with confectioners' sugar on both sides, or drizzle with warm honey.



Cleo's Tips for Frying

* Rather than a deep pot, I like to use a large skillet for frying the cookies. I fill it with only about 1-1/2 to 2 inches of oil, and this works wonderfully (see my photos). Using the smaller amount of oil allows me to change the oil more often during the cooking process. Keeping the oil clean is important to the taste and look of the final cookies.

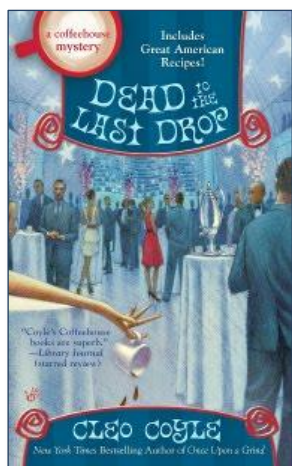
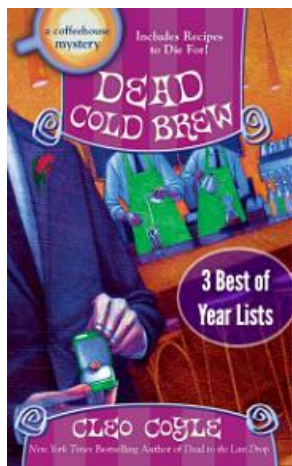
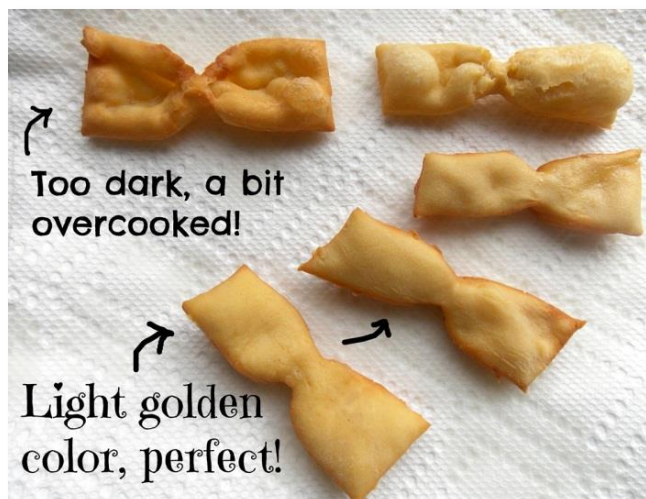
* Be sure the oil is hot enough before you begin frying. A small drop or two of water should sizzle and dance on the oil. If it doesn't, keep heating.

* Test the oil with a small piece of the cookie dough. The dough should not sink for more than a few seconds. It should very quickly inflate in the oil and rise to the top. If it does not, again, your oil is not hot enough. Continue heating or turn up the heat a bit.

* You are watching for the cookies to puff up, float to the top of the oil, and fry up to a light golden brown and not dark brown. This distinction makes a big difference in taste and texture. Flip them once or twice. Don't overcook them.

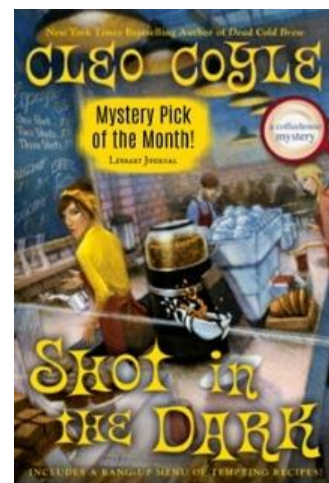
* When the oil begins to turn brown and shows lots of sediment, it's time to change it. Dispose of all the oil, wipe out the pan, begin a new batch with completely fresh oil and...

Eat with joy! ~ Cleo



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