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NEWS

Springerle and Gingerbread Baking Resurgence Noted By House on the Hill, Leading U.S. Hand-Crafted Replica Cookie Press and Mold Maker

Men, Younger Bakers Join Ranks of Springerle and Gingerbread Enthusiasts

(Elmhurst, IL: April 13, 2010) [House on the Hill](http://www.houseonthehill.net), the premier U.S. maker of hand-crafted museum and private collection replica cookie presses and molds, is enjoying a renaissance of interest in the centuries-old German and Bavarian craft form. The company offers over 500 individually hand-cast and hand-finished presses and molds, each depicting exquisite, meticulously reproduced etches of life cycle, farming, seasonal, religious, romance, flower, folklore scenes and more. In addition to presses and molds, House on the Hill also offers hard-to-source ingredients specific to springerle, gingerbread and speculaas baking through its website, www.houseonthehill.net and specialty gourmet and crafts retailers such as Sur La Table. The molds can also be used to create castings in paper, paperclay and beeswax. House on the Hill's ornate and intricate molds range from \$19.50 to \$98.00, depending on size and detail.

Traditionally enjoyed during the winter holiday season, springerle baking has extended to a year-round art as presses are used to create elegant cookies along with fondant, moldable chocolate and marzipan cake and cupcake toppers for bridal showers, weddings, baby showers and other memorable occasions. "We have seen an uptick in sales from men and younger bakers and a renewed interest in both springerle and gingerbread," said Connie Meisinger, House on the Hill owner and springerle and gingerbread baking instructor. "More people are finding that baking serves as an artistic outlet, a vehicle to connect with multiple generations and a means of creating a delicious reward. Molded cookies are an age old craft that combines skill, patience and a return to basics that is enormously appealing to time-strapped people who want to slow down and savor life. The beauty of baking is that it is a full sensory experience, offering a comfort through its aroma, craftsmanship, beauty and taste."

"Springerle baking is a family tradition that was passed on to me from my grandmother. I have taken my love for this baking specialty and sought out lovely molds from museums and private collections the world over to create replicas made in the US. We have created multiple uses for our molds and developed recipes for moldable chocolate and fondants so our exquisite images can grace the tops of cupcakes and cakes, making for a spectacular edible gift," said Ms. Meisinger.

The traditional springerle is a dense, dry, cake-like anise flavored cookie with an embossed design on its top light colored surface. Today's bakers experiment with a variety of other flavors such as lemon, giving the traditional cookie a modern edge. Springerle dough is quite stiff thanks to it being low in fat and sugar with a high proportion of egg, the latter beaten for a long time to aid in a lighter texture. Small amounts of leavening keep the cookie from bursting through the top surface. House on the Hill's products have been featured in *Martha Stewart Living* and other holiday baking publications.



An assortment of springerle cookies

"House on the Hill has created a magnificent array of replica presses and molds that are simply unsurpassed in terms of quality and variety," said [Queen City Cookies'](#) owner Peggy Shannon, an internet site offering customized gourmet springerle cookies created with House on the Hill presses. "Connie Meisinger is truly the "Queen of Springerle," along with a great private teacher and inspiration."

Traditional *molded* gingerbread, created in the 1400s after the spice routes between Europe and Asia were established, uses liquid sweeteners such as honey and molasses resulting in a *dense and* easily transported cookie. With most of the European community unable to read or write until the 1800s, bakers were required to be expert wood carvers and created molds and presses to imprint their cookies with detailed images to commemorate special occasions such as births, military victories and weddings. According to Ms. Meisinger, "Gingerbread heart shaped cookies are a favorite throughout Europe and particularly in Germany, where gingerbread houses are also enjoyed year round."



Heart-shaped gingerbread cookies and molds



Windmill speculaas mold

Speculaas or *Speculaitus*, a holiday tradition in Holland, Belgium, northern Germany and Scandinavia, are made with an egg-flour-butter-brown sugar-ground almond-spice-cocoa dough. Speculaas bake to a golden brown and have a delicate spiciness reminiscent of the holiday season.

History of Springerle and Speculaas

Springerle baking is a tradition dating back to 14th century Germany. According to What's Cooking America (whatscookingamerican.net), the cookies were created as sacrifices to pagan gods by the poor who could not afford to sacrifice their animals. During this celebration of pagan tribes, Julfest, people offered sacrifices in hopes they would lead to a mild winter and an early spring. The tradition carried on as cookies that told a story in a time when most people did not read or write. Remnants of these practices have survived hundreds of years and have become a form of art and baking today, especially during the Christmas season.

Speculaas, believed to have originated in the Netherlands in the late 1800s, are traditionally baked in early December in celebration of St. Nicholas' Eve. *Specerij*, the Dutch word for spice, may have influenced the name of the cookie. *Speculum*, the Latin word for mirror, offers another possible explanation for the spicy bas-relief cookie's name.

[House on the Hill](http://www.houseonthehill.net) creates molds, carvings, rolling pins, cutters and hard-to-source ingredients for springerle, gingerbread and speculaas cookie baking. The House on the Hill website, www.houseonthehill.net, offers a step-by-step video instruction on springerle baking with owner Connie Meisinger. Ms. Meisinger's blog, <http://www.springerlecookies.com/>, offers expert insights on springerle history, lore, dough preparation and baking. Springerle cookies have been baked in Ms. Meisinger's family for four generations and she travels the country offering springerle and gingerbread baking classes to keep the tradition alive (visit www.houseonthehill.net for a complete list of classes Connie will be teaching at House on the Hill in Elmhurst, IL and around the country.) House on the Hill offers the broadest array of baking supplies for springerle and speculaas bakers in the U.S. Custom molds, carvings, cutters, time saving tools and hard-to-source ingredients such as luster dust, decorator paints, and baker's ammonia (Hartshorn) provides bakers with a large selection of baking supplies to create the beautiful cookies.



Cakes adorned with embossed marzipan