Sweet Yuletide specialty with Renaissance spirit

Panettone has been a popular holiday delicacy since it was first baked in Milan in the 15th century. Somehow, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas in Italy without having one or more of these delicious sweet yeast breads on hand to savor at any hour and to share with friends.

SARONNO PANETTONE

1 package (13¾ ounces) hot roll mix, yeast included
½ cup lukewarm Amaretto di Saronno
Grated rind of 1 lemon
6 eggs
⅓ cup sugar
½ cup soft butter or margarine
⅓ cup seedless raisins or currants
½ cup chopped candied orange peel
1½ cups sifted confectioner's sugar
2 tablespoons Amaretto di Saronno

Remove yeast from mix and pour into a large bowl.

Stir in Amaretto di Saronno.

Let stand until yeast is dissolved.

Add lemon rind, eggs, sugar and butter or margarine, and beat with an electric mixer until smooth.

Add flour from hot roll mix and beat until dough is smooth and velvety.

Fold in raisins or currants and orange peel.

Pour dough into a greased and floured 2-pound coffee can.

Let dough rise in a warm place, covered lightly with a piece of wax paper, until it comes to the top of the can.

Bake in a preheated moderate oven (350° F.) for 40 or 45 minutes, or until cake sounds hollow when thumped.

Let cool in can for 10 minutes, then unmold. Cool.

Mix confectioner's sugar with Amaretto di Saronno and spoon over panettone.

Cut into wedges to serve. Makes 1 panettone.

CHRISTMAS IN ITALY without panettone would be unthinkable. This version of that beloved sweet yeast bread is delicately flavored with Amaretto di Saronno, another Italian favorite. A 2-pound coffee can serves as the baking pan for the panettone.