

## Making them beautiful

A holiday cookie has a special obligation to be not just delicious but pretty too, so it's worth taking a few extra measures to be sure each one is perfectly shaped and baked.

- ❖ Sounds boring, but be sure your oven is calibrated correctly. Just 25°F too hot or too cool can make a big difference with something that bakes so quickly.
- ❖ Use rimless baking sheets (not jelly roll pans) for better air flow, which means more even browning.
- ❖ Line your baking sheets with parchment for easy clean-up, for cookies that don't stick, and for speedy "production-line" baking without needing multiple baking sheets: While one batch is in the oven, arrange the next batch on a sheet of parchment. When the first batch is baked, slide the parchment from the baking sheet right onto the cooling rack, then slide the fresh batch of unbaked cookies onto the sheet and back into the oven.
- ❖ For sliced cookies, use a ruler to mark off your slices before cutting.
- ❖ For spreading bar-cookie dough in the pan, use a small offset spatula. It's great for smoothing fillings and icings, too.
- ❖ For evenly shaped drop cookies, use a spring-loaded ice cream scoop; you can find one in any size you need.



## 1994

### Almond Biscotti

*Yields about 3 dozen biscotti.*

**Why we love them:** Unlike so many biscotti, which are downright hard, these are balanced between tender and crunchy, and the citrus zest and aniseed deliver an unexpected flavor lift.

**7 oz. (1 1/3 cups) whole almonds, skin on**  
**11 oz. (2 1/2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**1 2/3 cups granulated sugar**  
**1/2 tsp. table salt**  
**1 tsp. baking powder**  
**1 tsp. aniseed**  
**Grated zest of 1 lemon, 1 lime, and 1 orange**  
**3 large eggs plus 3 large egg yolks**  
**1 tsp. pure vanilla extract**

Heat the oven to 350°F. Toast the almonds on a baking sheet in the oven until they emit a nutty aroma but haven't turned dark brown inside, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), combine the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, aniseed, and grated zests on medium-low speed.

In a separate bowl, lightly beat together the eggs, egg yolks, and va-

nilla extract with a whisk. With the mixer running on medium low, pour the egg mixture into the flour mixture. When the egg mixture is almost completely incorporated, reduce the speed to low, add the almonds and mix just until the dough comes together. Do not overmix. The dough will be stiff and sticky.

Dump the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and knead in by hand any remaining dry ingredients from the bottom of the bowl. Divide the dough into three equal parts. With floured hands, roll each part into a log about 10 inches long and 2 inches in diameter. Place the logs 4 inches apart on greased or parchment-lined baking sheets.

Bake the logs at 350°F until they're light brown but still soft, about 45 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and reduce the temperature to 300°F. Let the logs cool on the baking sheet for at least 10 minutes. Cut the logs on a slight diagonal into 3/4-inch-thick biscotti. Place the biscotti flat on the baking sheet and dry them in the oven until they offer resistance when pressed, but the cut side hasn't begun to darken, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.

—Emily Luchetti, FC#5



## 1995

### Raspberry Bars

*Yields about 4 dozen bars.*

**Why we love them:** When you give a batch of these to an office party, everyone asks you for the recipe. And it's an easy cookie to whip up for a crowd because it takes only a few minutes to assemble, plus the baking time.

**13 oz. (1 1/2 cups plus 2 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature; more for the pan**  
**1 2/3 cups granulated sugar**  
**2 large eggs**  
**1 lb. (3 1/2 cups) all-purpose flour**  
**7 1/2 oz. hazelnuts, toasted and chopped (1 2/3 cups)**  
**2 cups raspberry preserves**

Heat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 9x13-inch baking pan. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), cream the butter and sugar on medium speed until fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the flour and mix just enough to incorporate. Add the nuts and mix a little longer until just blended.

Press about two-thirds of the mixture into the prepared pan. Spread with the raspberry preserves, then crumble the remaining dough on top. Bake until the top is lightly browned, about 1 hour. Put the pan on a rack to cool. Cut the bars into even 1 1/2-inch squares.

—Patricia Ann Heyman, FC#10



1996

**Cocoa Walnut Butter Cookies**

*Yields about 4 dozen cookies.*

**Why we love them:** The texture of these simple-to-bake cookies is like the fudgiest brownie but a touch more delicate, and the flavor's seriously chocolate. Who knew you could get that from cocoa powder?

- 4½ oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup natural or Dutch-processed cocoa
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. table salt
- 3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 oz. (2 Tbs.) vegetable shortening
- ½ cup packed brown sugar, sifted free of lumps
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- About 4 oz. (¾ cup) chopped walnuts

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment or foil. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Mix thoroughly with a wire whisk. Set aside.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat the butter and shortening on medium speed until creamy. Add the sugars, beating until well combined. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Turn the mixer to low speed and mix in the flour mixture just until incorporated. Mix in the nuts.

Drop heaping teaspoonfuls of batter about 1½ inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. (After 5 minutes, swap the position of the baking sheets and rotate them 180 degrees for even baking.) The cookies will puff up and then settle down slightly when done. Cool on the baking sheets for a few minutes. With a metal spatula, transfer the cookies to a rack to cool completely.

—Alice Medrich, FC#17



1997

**Coffee Thins**

*Yields about 28 cookies.*

**Why we love them:** The brown sugar and espresso flavor is as sophisticated as it gets, so these are a treat for the grown-ups. You can keep a log of dough in the fridge for up to three days, baking just a few when friends drop by.

- 5½ oz. (1¼ cups) all-purpose flour
- Pinch ground cinnamon
- Pinch table salt
- 4 oz. (½ cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ⅓ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. instant coffee or espresso powder, dissolved in 2 tsp. coffee-flavored liqueur or water

Combine the flour, cinnamon, and salt in a small bowl. In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar with a wooden spoon or an electric mixer until well blended; stir in the dissolved coffee. Add the flour mixture; mix until the dough is blended and begins to clump together (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on low speed). Pile the dough onto a large piece of plastic wrap. Using the wrap to help shape the dough, form it into a squared-off log 7 inches long. Chill until quite firm, at least 6 hours and up to 3 days.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Cut the dough in ¼-inch slices; set them 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake until the tops look dry and the edges are slightly browned, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool completely.

—Abigail Johnson Dodge, FC#24



1998

**Toasted Almond Butter Thins**

*Yields about 12 dozen cookies.*

**Why we love them:** Here's your chance to have a Parisian Christmas, since these delicate, sophisticated cookies taste like they're straight from la pâtisserie.

- 9 oz. (2 cups) slivered almonds, toasted
- 4½ oz. (1 cup plus 2 Tbs.) cake flour
- 4½ oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour
- 8 oz. (1 cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¾ tsp. table salt
- 10 oz. (2½ cups) confectioners' sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature

Combine the almonds and both flours in a bowl; set aside. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), cream the butter on medium speed until soft and creamy. Add the salt and confectioners' sugar; mix on medium-low speed until thoroughly combined, about 5 minutes, scraping the bowl as needed. Reduce the speed to low, add the egg, and mix until blended. Add the flour mixture; as soon as the dough comes together, stop the mixer.

Scrape the dough onto a large sheet of plastic wrap. Using the wrap to help shape and protect the dough, gently press it into a rectangle that's about 4½ by 8 inches and about 1½ inches thick. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate until dough is firm enough to slice, at least 3 hours.

Heat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Unwrap the dough, trim the edges, and slice it into three 1½-inch-square logs. Slice each log into square cookies between ⅛ and ¼ inch thick. Lay the squares ½ inch apart on the baking sheet. Bake until lightly browned around the edges, about 8 minutes, rotating the sheet halfway through. Leave the cookies on the baking sheet until they're cool enough to handle (about 10 minutes), then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

—Joanne Chang, FC#30

Alan Richardson



## 1999

### Blondies

*Yields sixteen 2-inch squares.*

**Why we love them:** These are some of the chewiest blondies we know, with a mellow, toasted pecan-praline flavor. A scoop of vanilla ice cream on the plate turns one of these from a cookie into a full-fledged dessert.

**4 oz. (½ cup) unsalted butter; more for the pan**  
**1½ cups firmly packed dark brown sugar**  
**1 large egg plus 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature**  
**1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**5 oz. (1 cup plus 2 Tbs.) all-purpose flour**  
**Scant ¼ tsp. table salt**  
**2 oz. pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped (¾ cup)**

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat the butter and brown sugar, stirring frequently, until the sugar has dissolved. Cook, stirring, about 1 minute longer—the mixture will bubble but should not boil. Set the pan aside to cool for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, butter an 8-inch square pan, line the pan bottom with parchment (or waxed paper), then butter the parchment.

Stir the egg, egg yolk, and vanilla into the cooled sugar mixture. Add the flour, salt, and nuts, stirring just until blended. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake until the center is springy when touched (the top may still look doughy) and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean or with a few moist crumbs clinging to it, 25 to 35 minutes.

Set the pan on a rack until it's cool enough to handle. Run a paring knife around the inside edge of the pan, then invert the pan onto a flat surface and peel off the parchment. Flip the baked blondie back onto the rack to cool completely. Cut into squares with a sharp knife.

—Cindy Mitchell, FC#34



## 2000

### Sugar Cookies

*Yields about 4 dozen 2½-inch cookies.*

**Why we love them:** The generous amount of butter and the bright hit of lemon zest in these versatile cookies takes them far above your standard sugar cookie. We love them layered with jam for a pretty “stained glass” look.

**14 oz. (1¾ cups) unsalted butter, at room temperature**  
**¾ cup granulated sugar**  
**1½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest**  
**½ tsp. table salt**  
**1 large egg**  
**1 tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**1 lb. 5 oz. (4⅔ cups) all-purpose flour**

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), combine the butter, sugar, zest, and salt. Beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until well blended. With the mixer on low speed, mix in the flour in three additions until blended.

Spread the dough about 1 inch thick on a baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and

chill until firm, about 1 hour. You can refrigerate the dough, wrapped well, for up to a week.

When ready to roll, heat the oven to 350°F and line two baking sheets with parchment. Cut the sheet of dough in half; keep half in the refrigerator and let the other half soften just slightly.

Generously flour your work surface. Roll the dough to an even ¼-inch thickness. Dust off excess flour with a clean, dry pastry brush. With a cookie cutter that's about 2½ inches in diameter, cut out shapes and transfer them to the baking sheets, setting them about 1 inch apart. Carefully press the scraps together, reroll, and cut. Repeat with the other half of the dough.

Bake until the edges turn golden, 15 to 20 minutes (you will need to bake the cookies in two batches). Leave to cool on the baking sheet.

**Stained Glass cookie variation,** pictured above (yields about 2 dozen sandwich cookies): When cutting out the dough, use a smaller (about 1-inch diameter) cookie cutter to cut out the centers of half of the cookies (you can reroll those scraps, too, or just bake them as cookie “buttons”). Bake as directed above.

When cool, turn the solid cookies bottom-side up and evenly spread 1½ to 2 teaspoons of colorful fruit preserves over each (you'll need about ¾ cup preserves total). Top each solid cookie with a cut-out cookie and press lightly to join. Dust lightly with confectioners' sugar, if using.

You can make the cookies several days ahead, but don't fill them until the day you're going to serve them, because they'll soften.

—Melissa Murphy Hagenbart, FC#42

[Download](#) a cookie troubleshooting guide at [finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com)



## 2001

### Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookies

*Yields eighteen 2½-inch sandwiches.*

**Why we love them:** Ordinary peanut butter cookies can be a snooze, frankly, but these are more like a dream, with their creamy-crunchy peanut and chocolate filling.

FOR THE COOKIES:

**6 oz. (1⅓ cups) all-purpose flour**  
**2 oz. (½ cup) cake flour**  
**½ tsp. baking soda**  
**¼ tsp. table salt**  
**6 oz. (¾ cup) unsalted butter, completely softened at room temperature**  
**¾ cup smooth peanut butter**  
**½ cup granulated sugar**  
**½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar**  
**1 tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**1 large egg**

FOR THE FILLING:

**1½ cups confectioners' sugar**  
**3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature**  
**¾ cup smooth peanut butter**  
**3 Tbs. heavy cream**  
**¼ cup coarsely chopped unsalted peanuts**  
**¼ cup coarsely chopped semisweet chocolate, or mini semisweet chocolate chips**

**Make the cookies:** Heat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment. In a medium bowl, sift together the two flours, baking soda, and salt. In a stand mixer fitted

with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), cream the butter, peanut butter, and sugars on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla and egg; continue beating until smooth and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Stir in the flour mixture by hand just until it's incorporated; don't overmix or the cookies will be tough.

Drop heaping tablespoonfuls of batter, spaced about 2 inches apart, onto the lined baking sheets. With floured fingers, flatten each dab of batter into a 2-inch round. Bake until the cookies are puffed and golden, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating the baking sheets if necessary for even baking. Transfer the cookies to a rack to cool.

**Make the filling while the cookies cool:** In a small bowl, cream the confectioners' sugar, butter, and peanut butter until smooth. Add the heavy cream; continue creaming until smooth and fluffy. Stir in the chopped peanuts and chocolate.

**Assemble:** Transfer the cooled cookies to a work surface, flipping half of them over. With an offset spatula or a butter knife, spread a scant teaspoon of filling onto each turned-over cookie. Set another wafer on top of each filled cookie, pressing gently to spread the filling.

—Linda Weber, FC#43



## 2002

### Chewy Cranberry-Oatmeal Cookies

*Yields about forty-six 3-inch cookies.*

**Why we love them:** "Chewy" is an apt description of these cookies (a touch of honey adds moistness), made more interesting by the tangy ruby-red nuggets of cranberry that replace the traditional raisin.

**6¾ oz. (1½ cups) all-purpose flour**  
**1 tsp. baking soda**  
**½ tsp. table salt**  
**½ tsp. ground cinnamon**  
**2½ cups old-fashioned oats**  
**8 oz. (1 cup) unsalted butter, slightly softened**  
**1 cup packed light brown sugar**  
**½ cup granulated sugar**  
**2 large eggs**  
**1 Tbs. honey**  
**2 tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**6 oz. (1⅓ cups) dried cranberries**  
**5 oz. (about 1 cup) chopped walnuts**

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease two cookie sheets or line them with parchment. In a medium bowl, mix the flour, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon; stir in the oats.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat the butter and both sugars on medium speed until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then scrape down the sides of the bowl; add the honey and vanilla and beat until blended. Add the flour mixture in two additions, beating until well combined. Stir in the cranberries and walnuts.

Drop the dough by heaping tablespoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto the cookie sheets until the sheets are full (you'll need to bake the cookies in two batches). Bake until the centers of the cookies are soft and no longer look wet, 9 to 11 minutes, rotating the sheets if necessary for even browning. Repeat with the remaining dough. Let the cookies cool on the sheets for 5 minutes; transfer to a rack to cool completely.

—Elaine Khosrova, FC#54



# 2003

## Orange-Hazelnut Shortbread Cookies

*Yields about 3 dozen 2-inch cookies.*

**Why we love them:** The combination of a buttery-sandy texture and zingy orange-zest flavor is addictive. And the cookies get even better after a day or two in a tin, so they're great to bake for gifts.

- 8 oz. (1 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- ½ cup granulated sugar**
- ½ tsp. table salt**
- 10 oz. (2¼ cups) all-purpose flour**
- 2½ oz. (½ cup) blanched hazelnuts, toasted and ground very finely in a food processor**
- 2 tsp. (loosely packed) finely grated orange zest (from 1 orange)**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), combine the butter, sugar, and salt; mix on low speed until the butter combines with the sugar but isn't perfectly smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the flour, ground hazelnuts, and zest; mix on low speed, scraping the bowl frequently, until the dough has just about pulled together, about 3 minutes; don't overmix.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough evenly to about ¼ inch thick. Cut the dough into bars or squares with a sharp knife or, using cookie cutters, cut out shapes as close to one another as possible. Press the scraps together, roll them out, and cut out more cookies. If the dough becomes sticky, refrigerate it briefly. Arrange the cookies on the parchment-lined baking sheets and refrigerate until chilled, at least 20 minutes.

Bake the cookies until golden on the bottom and edges and pale to golden on top, 30 minutes to 1 hour. (After 15 minutes, swap the position of the baking sheets and rotate them 180 degrees for even baking.) If the cookies are done before 30 minutes, reduce the oven temperature to 275°F for the remaining batches; if they take longer than 1 hour, increase the temperature to 325°F. Transfer the cookies to a rack and cool completely.

—Carolyn Weil, FC#61

# 2004

## Chocolate Chunk Cookies

*Yields about 40 cookies.*

**Why we love them:** This recipe may become your permanent chocolate chip cookie recipe. We love the double hit of chocolate chunks—milk for richness, bittersweet for sophistication.

- 9½ oz. (2 cups plus 2 Tbs.) unbleached all-purpose flour**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- ½ tsp. table salt**
- 8 oz. (1 cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- ¾ cup granulated sugar**
- ¾ cup plus 2 Tbs. very firmly packed light brown sugar**
- 2 large eggs**
- ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract**
- 9 oz. bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped (about 2 cups)**
- 2½ oz. milk chocolate, coarsely chopped (about ¾ cup)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking soda, and salt to blend. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat the butter, sugar, and brown sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes. Scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula. Beat in the eggs and vanilla until thoroughly combined, about 2 minutes. Scrape the bowl again. With the mixer on low speed, slowly blend in the flour until incorporated, about 30 seconds. Fold in the chopped chocolate by hand with the spatula, making sure all the flour and butter are thoroughly combined.

Drop the dough by rounded tablespoonfuls about 3 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake until the cookies are golden brown on the edges and slightly soft in the center, about 15 minutes. Let the cookies cool on the sheet for 1 minute before transferring them to a rack to cool completely.

—Joanne Chang, FC#68

# 2005

## Double-Ginger Crackles

*Yields about 4 dozen cookies.*

**Why we love them:** These are the essence of a holiday ginger cookie: beautifully crackled sugary surface, moist and chewy center, and the warming zing of ginger. Cheers!

- 10 oz. (2¼ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**
- 2¾ tsp. ground ginger**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- ¼ tsp. table salt**
- 6 oz. (¾ cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 1½ cups granulated sugar**
- 1 large egg, at room temperature**
- ¼ cup molasses**
- 3 Tbs. finely chopped crystallized ginger**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line two large cookie sheets with parchment or nonstick baking liners.

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, ground ginger, baking soda, and salt. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large mixing bowl with a hand mixer), beat the butter and 1 cup of the sugar on medium-high speed until well blended. Add the egg, molasses, and crystallized ginger; beat well. Add the dry ingredients and mix on low speed until well blended.

Pour the remaining ½ cup sugar into a shallow bowl. Using a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, a small ice cream scoop, or two tablespoons, shape the dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the sugar to coat. Set the balls 1½ to 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets.

Bake, rotating the sheets halfway through baking, until the cookies are puffed and the bottoms are lightly browned, 12 to 14 minutes. If you touch a cookie, it should feel dry on the surface but soft inside. The surface cracks will look a bit wet. Let the cookies sit on the cookie sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

—Abigail Johnson Dodge, FC#75