

Christmas Cookies—Bring Comfort and Joy
Bon Appetit, December 2003

Rather than giving a wooly scarf or a fuzzy pair of slippers this holiday season, give a gift of time to your family and friends. Baking is a delightful gift of time—a gift of sharing and a gift of caring. Instead of firing up the car engine on a chilly December morning, fire up the oven and turn flour, sugar, butter, and eggs into magically crunchy, sweet presents.

Delight your friends with a pair of oversized coffee cups filled with Christmas Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti. Find a fanciful tin and fill it with chocolate dipped shortbread crescents for an office holiday party. Gather your children and their friends for an afternoon of Christmas cookie baking and decorating. There is nothing more fun than rolling warm coconut-orange cookies over and over in powdered sugar to create sweet snowballs. Warm cookies bring warm memories.

Continue cookie-exchange traditions, or start your own. This is a wonderful time to share recipes lovingly handed down from grandmother to mother to new bride. Mix the old with the new and make this the best-ever Christmas cookie holiday at home.

Holiday Cranberry-Pistachio Biscotti

By Diane Morgan

Bon Appetit Christmas 2003

With speckles of green pistachios and red cranberries, these are my all-time favorite biscotti for the holiday. If you feel indulgent dip one end in melted white.

1/3 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
3/4 cup sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons grated lemon peel
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 ¼ cups all purpose flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup sweetened dried cranberries
3/4 cup shelled natural pistachio nuts
6 ounces white chocolate
½ tablespoon vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 325°F. Using electric mixer, cream butter and sugar in large bowl until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Mix in lemon peel and vanilla. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together in medium bowl. Add to wet ingredients and mix just until blended. Stir in cranberries and nuts.

Turn mixture out onto lightly floured work surface. Dough will be a bit sticky. Divide dough in half. With lightly floured hands, roll each half into log 1½ inches thick and about 15 inches long. Place both logs about 3 inches apart on nonstick or parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until lightly firm to touch, about 25 minutes. Remove from oven and let sit for 10 minutes.

Place one log on cutting board. With serrated knife, and using a sawing motion, carefully cut log on a slight diagonal into ½-inch-thick slices. Place slices on baking sheet. Repeat with second log, using additional baking sheet to arrange biscotti. Bake for 7 minutes. Turn each slice over and bake until lightly golden, 7 minutes longer. Transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

Melt chocolate in top of double boiler over barely simmering water. Stir in vegetable oil until chocolate is smooth. Dip one end of each cookie one-third of the way in melted chocolate. Place on sheets of wax paper until chocolate hardens. (Can be made 5 days ahead. Store cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature.)

Makes about 3 dozen biscotti

Christmas Cut-Out Sugar Cookies with a Powdered Sugar Icing
By Diane Morgan
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Always a holiday favorite, especially when you ice and decorate with food-safe colored writing pens.

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup sugar
1 large egg
2 tablespoons sour cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt

Icing

4 cups sifted powdered sugar
5 to 6 tablespoons (whole or 2%) milk
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
Food-safe writing pens for decorating (optional) (see Note)
Decorations (such as colored sugar crystals)

For Dough: Using electric mixer, beat butter and sugar in large bowl until smooth and creamy. Add egg, sour cream, and vanilla and beat for 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl once or twice. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add to butter mixture, one cup at a time, beating just until flour disappears. Divide dough in half, flatten each into thick disk, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill dough for at least 1 hour. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Keep refrigerated. Soften slightly before rolling out.)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Have ready 2 nonstick, silpat mat lined, or parchment-paper lined baking sheets. Sprinkle work surface and top of dough with sugar. Working with one piece of dough at a time, roll dough into large circle about 1/8-inch thick. Use cookie cutters to cut decorative shapes. Arrange cookies 1-inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Gather unused pieces, lightly dust work surface with sugar, only as needed, then re-roll dough and cut out additional cookies. Refrigerate while rolling second piece of dough. Bake cookies until they just begin to turn light brown at the edges, about 12 minutes. Cool on wire racks before decorating with icing.

For Icing: Mix powdered sugar, 5 tablespoons of milk, and vanilla until smooth. If too thick to spread, add up to 1 tablespoon of milk, a little at a time, until icing is smooth and spreadable. Using small icing spatula or table knife, spread thin layer of icing on top of each cookie. If decorating with markers, let cookies stand until icing is dry. Without pressing too hard, draw lines, make dots, sign and decorate cookies. If decorating with colored sugar crystals, sprinkle before icing sets. (Can be made 3 days ahead. Store

cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature. Cookies can be frozen for up to 2 weeks.)

Makes 4 to 5 dozen cookies, depending on the size of the cookie cutter

Note: Food-safe colored markers, called, Foodoodler pens, contain FDA approved edible food coloring and can be used to decorate just like using colored markers. Look for Foodoodler pens at Sur La Table stores, or mail order from King Arthur Flour at 800-827-6836 or online at www.bakerscatalogue.com

Cinnamon, Brown Sugar, and Walnut Shortbread Crescents Dipped in Chocolate
By Diane Morgan
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$\frac{3}{4}$ cup finely diced walnuts
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (packed) golden brown sugar
2 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread walnuts on rimmed baking sheet and bake until toasty brown, about 5 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Have ready 2 nonstick, silpat mat lined, or parchment-paper lined baking sheets. Using electric mixer, beat butter and sugar in large bowl until smooth and creamy. Combine flour, cinnamon, and salt in medium bowl; whisk to combine. Add flour mixture and beat for 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl once or twice. Stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts. Flatten and shape dough into thick disk, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill dough for at least 2 hours. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Keep refrigerated. Soften slightly before rolling out.)

Have ready 2 nonstick, silpat mat lined, or parchment-paper lined baking sheets. Sprinkle work surface and top of dough lightly with flour. Roll dough into large circle about $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick. Use 3-inch long, crescent-shaped cookie cutter to cut cookies. Arrange cookies 1-inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Gather unused pieces, lightly dust work surface with flour, only as needed, then re-roll dough and cut out additional cookies. Refrigerate cut cookies for 20 minutes.

Preheat oven to 300°F. Bake cookies until they feel firm and are golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool on wire racks before dipping in chocolate.

Melt 5 ounces chocolate in top of double boiler over barely simmering water. Stir in remaining chocolate until smooth and no chunks of chocolate remain. Dip one end of each cookie one-third of the way in melted chocolate. Place on sheets of wax paper. Using remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup toasted walnuts, sprinkle a few walnut pieces over dipped part of cookies. Let sit until chocolate hardens. (Can be made 5 days ahead. Store cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature. Undipped shortbreads can be frozen up to 2 weeks. Thaw before dipping in chocolate.)

Makes about 4 dozen shortbreads

Spiced Puff Pastry Pinwheels with Candied Fruit
By Diane Morgan
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For these crisp pinwheel cookies, buy mixed candied fruit that is sold for making fruitcakes. For beautiful color make sure the fruitcake blend includes, cherries, pineapple (colored green), orange peel, citron, and lemon peel.

½ cup sugar, plus more for dusting
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
2 sheets frozen puff pastry (one 17.3-ounce package), thawed
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, melted
2 cups mixed candied fruit, including candied cherries, diced (see Note)
1 egg, beaten to blend

Mix sugar, cinnamon, allspice, ginger, and nutmeg in small bowl until well blended. Working with one pastry sheet at a time, unfold pastry sheet and place on work surface sprinkled generously with sugar. Cut in half, forming two 9 ½ -inch rectangles. Brush each half generously with butter, leaving ½-inch border along 1 long side. Sprinkle each piece generously with some of spiced-sugar mixture. Scatter ½ cup of candied fruit on each rectangle. Brush plain border with egg glaze. Starting at long side opposite border, roll up each pastry sheet, tightly, jelly-roll style, pressing firmly to seal long edges and ends of the logs. Wrap each separately in plastic. Repeat with remaining pastry, butter, spiced sugar, and egg to form 2 more logs. Refrigerate until firm, about 3 hours or up to 8 hours.

Position rack in center and upper third of oven and preheat to 400°F. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper or silpat mats. Cut 2 logs crosswise into ½-inch-thick rounds. (Keep other 2 logs refrigerated while these bake.) Arrange rounds on prepared sheets, spacing 1 inch apart. Bake 12 minutes and then switch position of baking sheets. Continue baking until cookies are golden brown, about 12 minutes longer. Remove pans to racks and let cookies cool in pan for 5 minutes. Using metal spatula, transfer cookies to racks, turning them bottom side up. (The beautifully bronzed sugared bottom of these cookies becomes the top.) Cool completely and then break off any excess sugar that has hardened and run. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Store cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature.)

Makes about 60 pinwheel cookies

Hazelnut Butter and Miniature Chocolate Chip Buttons
By Diane Morgan
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Rather than the traditional peanut butter cookie, hazelnut butter gives these cookies a deep, rich flavor. Because these cookies are petite, mini chocolate chips, rather than regular-sized chips, are the perfect proportion for these cookies. Look for hazelnut butter at natural food stores. Kettle Foods makes a creamy and delicious hazelnut butter. Once you open the jar, use a table fork to gently stir the oil that has separated and is floating on top back into the hazelnut butter.

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup hazelnut butter
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup (packed) golden brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 large egg
1 ½ cups all purpose flour
¾ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 cups (12 ounces) mini semisweet chocolate chips

Using electric mixer, beat butter, hazelnut butter, and both sugars in large bowl until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and egg and beat for 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl once or twice. Sift together flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Add to butter mixture, beating just until flour disappears. Stir in chocolate chips. Gather dough into ball, cover and chill for 2 hours. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Keep refrigerated. Soften slightly before rolling into balls.)

Preheat oven to 375°F. Have ready 2 nonstick, silpat mat lined, or parchment-paper lined baking sheets. For each cookie, measure a level tablespoon of dough and roll into a ball. Arrange cookies 1-inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake until cookies are nicely browned, about 14 minutes. Using round skewer or stem of an instant-read thermometer, poke 4 buttonholes equidistance apart in middle of each cookie. Twirl skewer around to define each hole. Transfer to racks; cool cookies completely. (Can be made 5 days ahead. Store cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature. Cookies can be frozen for up to 2 weeks.)

Makes 5 dozen cookies

Coconut Orange Snowballs
By Diane Morgan
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These are perfect cookies to make with children. My mother taught me to make these cookies when I was about 8 years old. I called them snowballs because I enjoyed rolling and rolling them in powdered sugar—I still do!

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
2 ¼ cups sifted powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 ¼ cups all purpose flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup (packed) sweetened flaked coconut (about 3 ounces)
1 ½ tablespoons grated orange peel

Using electric mixer, beat butter, ½ cup powdered sugar, and vanilla in large bowl until smooth and creamy. Add flour, salt, coconut, and orange peel and beat just until combined. Cover dough and chill for 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Have ready 2 nonstick, silpat mat lined, or parchment-paper lined baking sheets. Roll dough into 1-inch diameter balls, then arrange on prepared baking sheets, spacing 1-inch apart. Bake until light brown on bottom, about 12 minutes. Place 1¾ cups powdered sugar in medium bowl. While cookies are hot roll them in powdered sugar. Transfer to wire rack to cool. Roll cookies again in remaining powdered sugar. (Can be made 5 days ahead. Store cookies airtight between sheets of waxed paper at room temperature. Cookies can be frozen for up to 2 weeks. Roll again in powdered sugar once thawed.)

Makes about 36 cookies