

Karen's Cookies

Cookie Decorating Recipes

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Basic Rolled Sugar Cookies

This is my favorite all-around cookie recipe and the one I use most often.

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup superfine sugar, or granulated sugar, processed in blender or food processor for 30 seconds
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tsp. Vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. Almond extract or emulsion, optional
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour.

Cream butter, sugar and salt until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes with mixer set at medium speed (see Dough Preparation and Baking tutorial for more information on creaming times). Add yolk, beat well. Add whole egg, vanilla and optional almond extract and beat until well-incorporated. Add flour; beat at low speed just until flour is mixed in; do not overmix. Divide dough in halves or thirds and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, at least one hour and up to 2 days.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Dust work surface and rolling pin with flour. Roll dough to ¼" thick, sprinkling with additional flour as needed to prevent sticking. Cut into desired shapes and place on parchment or silicone-lined pans. Bake in preheated oven until cookies appear dry on the surface and are light golden brown on the edges, about 10 minutes (very large cookies may take up to 12 or 13 minutes). Remove from cookie sheets to cooling racks and cool completely before decorating.

Mom's Cut-out Cookies

I can't have a cut-out cookie recipe section without including my Mom's recipe. This is the very first cut-out recipe I ever tried making, and I have many fond memories of decorating these cookies at Christmas time with my family. It is a tasty recipe, but doesn't quite hold its shape as well as I like. Below this recipe you will find my altered version that is easier to handle and holds its shape a little better.

- 1 C. shortening
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups sifted flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 T. milk

Cream shortening, sugar and vanilla. Add eggs, beat well. Sift flour, salt, and baking powder; Stir into creamed mixture along with milk. Chill for several hours or overnight. Roll on lightly floured board to 1/4" thickness. Cut into desired shapes.

Place on parchment lined cookie sheets and bake at 375° for 10-12 minutes.

My Version of Mom's Cut-outs:

Substitute half of the shortening for butter (If using salted butter, omit 1/2 tsp. of the salt) Decrease the baking powder to 3/4 tsp.

Cream Cheese Cookie Cut-outs

If you happen to have some cream cheese around, give these cookies a try. YUM! They have baking powder in them but still hold their shape very well.

- 1 cup butter
- 1 8-oz package cream cheese
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. almond extract

- 3 ½ cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder

Beat butter and cream cheese until well combined. Add sugar; beat until fluffy. Add egg, vanilla and almond extract; beat well. In a small bowl, combine flour and baking powder. Add dry ingredients to cream cheese mixture; beat until well mixed. Divide dough in half. Wrap each half in plastic wrap and refrigerate several hours.

Preheat oven to 375°. Roll dough to ¼ inch thickness. Into desired shapes and place on parchment lined cookie sheets. Bake 8-10 minutes, or until edges are lightly browned. (very large cookies may take longer to bake)

White Chocolate Sugar Cookies

- 2 ¼ cup all purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 6 oz. white chocolate

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In small saucepan over low heat, melt the white chocolate and set aside. In small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt (so they're well combined) and set aside.

In large mixer bowl beat butter and sugar until creamy. Blend in egg and vanilla extract. Beat in melted white chocolate. Gradually beat in flour mixture until soft dough forms. Shape dough in ball; flatten to 3/4" thickness. Wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate 15 minutes* until firm.

On lightly floured surface, roll out dough to desired thickness. Bake until edges are golden. Let stand 2 minutes. Remove from cookie sheets and cool completely.

***Note:** *You MUST be able to roll and cut the dough after the 15 minute refrigeration time, or it will set up too much and won't roll out well. This dough is a dream to work with. You'll love it.*

The Best Sugar Cookie

I found this recipe online years ago. There's no doubt it is a very good recipe! BUT... I don't recommend them if you need to ship the cookies or if they need to be stacked and handled a lot. Since they are so light and tender they are very fragile. The cookies also spread a lot because of the large amount of leavening.

- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 ½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar

Mix butter, sugar, egg and extract. Then, gradually add baking soda, flour and cream of tartar. Chill for at least two hours. Roll out on lightly floured surface and use cutters. Place cutouts on baking sheet and bake for six to eight minutes at 375 degrees. Cool and then decorate.

Cinnamon Spice Cookies

- 1 ½ cup butter
- 2 cups packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. cloves
- 1 tsp. ginger
- ¼ tsp. baking soda

Cream butter and sugar. Add egg. Beat until light and fluffy. Stir flour with spices and soda; add to creamed mixture. Mix well. This is a stiff dough. Divide dough in half. Flatten each half into a disk and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate several hours or overnight. Roll out to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into shapes. Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes.

Gingerbread Cookies

This is a great recipe that holds its shape really well, despite the addition of baking soda. I always make at least one batch of these at Christmas time.

- 3 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup (packed) brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup unsulfurized molasses

Combine flour, soda, salt and spices. Whisk well to combine. In another large bowl, cream butter and sugar with electric mixer on medium speed for about 3 minutes. Scrape down sides of bowl and add egg and molasses. Beat on medium speed until smooth. Scrape down sides again and then add flour mixture. Mix on low speed just until combined. Separate dough into halves or thirds, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least one hour, or up to 2 days.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Dust work surface and rolling pin with flour, and roll dough to ¼ inch thickness, sprinkling with extra flour as needed to prevent sticking. Cut into desired shapes and place on parchment or silicone-lined baking sheets. Bake for 12-14 minutes, depending on size of cookies.

Chocolate Chip Cut-Out Cookies

Here's something a little different from the usual rolled sugar cookies if you know a chocolate lover.

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed light-brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 C semisweet chocolate mini chips

In a large bowl cream the butter, sugars and salt until creamy (about 3 minutes with an electric mixer on medium speed). Add vanilla and egg yolk and beat well. Gradually add the flour and beat just until combined. Stir in the chips. Divide dough in halves or thirds and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly flour the work surface and rolling pin and roll dough to 1/4" thickness. Cut into desired shapes and place on parchment parchment or silicone-lined baking sheets. Bake 10-12 min. or till golden brown. Cool on sheet for 5 min. and then transfer to wire rack. The cookies will harden and become firm enough to decorate as soon as the warm chocolate has cooled and hardened; about 30 min.

Meringue Powder Buttercream

- 1/3 cup water
- 3 T. meringue powder
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 4 1/2 cups powdered sugar (1 lb. 3 oz. If you have a scale)
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (use clear vanilla if you want a pure white icing)
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract

Place half of the powdered sugar and the meringue powder in the bowl of an electric mixer. Whisk together well. Turn on mixer (use whip attachment) and, while motor is running, slowly stream in the water. Mix until everything is incorporated. Turn mixer to high speed and whip until stiff peaks form. Add flavorings and mix well. Change to paddle attachment (for stand mixer) or dough hook (for Bosch). If using a hand mixer, use the same beaters you were using before. Add remaining powdered sugar and shortening and whip for 2-3 minutes more.

Note: Don't skimp on the whipping time after adding the shortening. You really need to whip it well to prevent separation later.

Royal Icing

- 3 T. meringue powder
- 4 cups (1 pound) powdered sugar
- 6 T. water
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract (use clear vanilla if you want a pure white icing)
- ¼ tsp. almond extract

Beat all ingredients together until stiff peaks form (about 10 minutes). To vary the consistency, add water to thin and add powdered sugar to thicken.

Powdered Sugar Glaze

- 2 lb. powdered sugar
- ¾ cup less 2 T. water
- 1 T. Vanilla (use clear vanilla for pure-white icing)
- ½ tsp. almond extract
- ¼ tsp. salt

Put powdered sugar into large bowl. Mix water, flavorings and salt. Add to powdered sugar and stir until smooth. Add water at tsp. at a time until desired consistency. You can thicken up with additional powdered sugar to make simple outlines in a pinch.