

Entry 1: Candy Cane Cookies

Story

I can't believe I'm sharing this recipe! I have guarded it for over 20 years now- ever since my mother handed the reins to me because she was too old to make them. My mother ate these cookies with us last Christmas when she was 93 and she passed a month later. My mother was not a baker by any means. She was a career woman with a very limited repertoire of recipes. She had one pie she was pretty good at and these cookies. That was it. So, the importance of these cookies to my brothers and I was immeasurable! We waited all year for her to make them.

I am also a career woman and I know the meaning of a job deadline. But, in the 1990's when the cookies first became my responsibility, I learned the meaning of pressure. My brothers start reminding me about them around September. Then, they start badgering me for an early release around October. I hold out until November, and then I start mass producing them. Typically, I make at least 6 double batches. I freeze them without the frosting. Then, at the beginning of December, I designate an entire day for frosting them. From that point on, I am expected to serve them on demand and I do mean demand!

I accept the pressure and the awesome responsibility because I love the fun of the whole thing. I tease my brothers by pretending I'm not going to make them. Then I pretend I'm out of them when they beg for them. I may not be much of a baker, but when December comes, I am the Queen of the kitchen.

Candy Cane Cookies Recipe

Makes 20

Ingredients:

1 cup butter
2 teaspoons vanilla
½ cup confectionery sugar
2 tablespoons water
2 cups King Arthur Flour (measure and then sift)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups oats (may be quick or old fashioned but quick is easier to work with)

Frosting:

½ teaspoon vanilla
1 16 oz bag of confectionery sugar
milk or water
red food coloring

Directions:

Beat the butter and vanilla until creamy. Add the sugar and beat until fluffy. Add water. Sift flour & salt and add to creamed mixture. Stir in oats.

Note: The dough should be very dry- just barely moist enough to hold together when you ball it up with your fingers. If it is too dry, add a bit more butter (not water). If it is moist, add flour. Preheat oven to 325F.

Roll up pieces of dough in the palms of your hands and shape to make candy canes.

Bake on ungreased cookie sheets at 325F for 10-15 minutes (until the bottoms are slightly brown). Let cool for a few minutes before transferring to drying rack.

Frosting:

While cookies are cooling, make frosting: Beat water, vanilla and confectionery sugar until it is just thick enough to dip the cookies into.

Dip one side of the cookies in the white frosting and place the cookies on waxed paper. (There should be enough frosting on the cookie to make them somewhat white.) A lot of the frosting will drip off the cookie onto the waxed paper. This is OK and you can scrape off the extra and use it again. When all are done, pick the cookies up, wipe off the sides if you have to and place them on a clean sheet of waxed paper.

When you are finished, there should be frosting left in the bowl. Add enough food coloring to make it red. When the cookies are dry to the touch, drizzle the red frosting to make stripes on the candy canes. Or pipe it on. Again, some of the frosting will drip off, so pick up the candy canes and move them to a fresh sheet of waxed paper. Let the frosting dry before stacking cookies in airtight container.

They won't last long:)

Entry 2: Peanut Cookies

Story

My family loves all things peanut butter, but they really didn't seem to care much for a "traditional" peanut butter cookie! So nearly ten years ago I set out to create a peanut butter cookie they would enjoy more. The basic complaint about a "traditional" peanut butter cookie was about the texture/density: the "traditional" cookies seemed dry, with a texture that was unlike most other cookies. My family said it was like having to "choke down a cookie". After much trial and error and some further tweaking, I settled on this recipe and method.

The recipe incorporates some quick cooking oats and some coarsely chopped peanuts to change-up the texture. These cookies are not overly sweet, but we find them quite satisfying - and they are not dry like a "traditional" peanut butter cookie. The method has evolved to be super easy and quick to prepare, especially if you haven't thought to take the butter out of the icebox! The cleanup is a breeze, too!

I bake these cookies any time of year, and especially for family gatherings...my nieces and nephews just love them! They have shown up at summer beach parties, cool weather bond fires, and numerous cookie swaps! I usually have all the ingredients on hand, so we can whip up a batch anytime we want cookies. The hardest part is waiting for the cookies to cool completely! To make them extra special for the holidays, I sometimes add miniature peanut butter cups (about 12 ounces) or white chocolate chips (or both!) and top with a white chocolate drizzle, which can be tinted to coordinate with any of our festivities!

Peanut Cookies Recipe

300°F 15-17 minutes

Approximately 2 1/2 dozen cookies

Equipment needed:

- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wire Whisk
- Wooden spoon
- 1 ounce cookie scoop
- Medium mixing bowl
- Large saucepan (or 4 Quart stockpot)
- Cookie sheets
- Parchment paper or silicone baking mats
- Spatula
- Wire cooling rack

Ingredients:

3/4 cup King Arthur White Whole Wheat Flour (sifted before measuring properly)

3/4 cup King Arthur Unbleached Flour (sifted before measuring properly)

2 cups Quick cooking oats (not Instant Oatmeal)

½ teaspoon sea salt

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 cup light brown sugar, packed firmly

1 cup peanuts

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter

1 cup natural peanut butter

½ cup light corn syrup

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Method:

Preheat oven to 300°F.

Line cookie sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats; set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together first six dry ingredients.

In large saucepan, combine butter, peanut butter and corn syrup. Heat on low, stirring continuously until ingredients are combined and the texture is smooth. Remove from heat.

Coarsely chop peanuts and add to dry ingredients, whisking again to combine.

Add the vanilla extract to the melted peanut butter sauce and stir until well combined.

Add the dry ingredients into the melted peanut butter and stir just until mixed.

Using a one ounce scoop, measure dough and drop onto lined cookie sheets - spacing dough 3 inches apart.

Bake at 300°F for 15-17 minutes, until cookies are golden brown and "set up" - rotating pans halfway through the baking process.

Allow cookies to cool for 5 minutes on the cookie sheet before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Entry 3: Raisin-Filled Cookies

Story

Raisin-filled cookies were one of the traditional family treats made each Christmas in our 1950s household in a tiny enclave in upstate New York. Besides my parents, there were six children of which I was the fifth. This recipe had been made by both my maternal great-grandmother and grandmother. I don't know if the tradition went back further.

Shortly after Thanksgiving, Mom would purchase all the ingredients, and, in early December, would enlist the help of her children to start making various kinds of cookies. At the forefront were the nutritious raisin-filled. Our initial job was to grind the raisins. We fastened the old-fashioned grinder to a table along with protective pieces of wood where the grinder was clamped. We all took turns dropping raisins in the well of the grinder, and each of us had an opportunity to wield the handle, fascinated by the ground raisins that magically gushed forth in a new, more gooey form from the grinder into a glass pan. Mom usually took over from there as the raisins needed to be cooked in a small pan with water and vanilla, and then cooled. She also prepared the dough while we went off to our various activities. The next fun part was the cutting and preparation of the cookies. Mom rolled out the dough and we used cutters shaped like stockings, wreaths, trees, and Santas to create the cookies while music of the season played in the background. When our cut-outs were made, mom placed a teaspoon of the raisin mixture on them, and we cut more dough and laid the matching pieces on top, crimping the sides down lightly. Two trays at a time were popped in the oven where they baked "until done"(an instruction on the cookie recipe hand-written by my grandmother.)

We were not allowed to eat these cookies when they came piping hot out of the oven with their aroma permeating the kitchen, wafting throughout the rest of the house, and warming our hearts on a snowy winter day. Nor were we allowed to eat them any time before Christmas Eve. Mom layered the cookies on sheets of wax paper in large containers. They were then stored away with other containers of cookies until the appointed day. After midnight Mass on Christmas Eve (which truly was at midnight in those days) we were allowed to partake of these and other Christmas foods. The raisin-filled was an all-important cookie as it was the one we left with a glass of milk for Santa before we trundled off for a brief sleep with visions of presents under the tree. Coincidentally, this cookie was also a favorite of my Dad's (a.k.a Santa). As the years have passed and I have carried on this cookie-making tradition, these cookies have become my husband's favorite. He always does the raisin grinding while seasonal music fills the house. I usually make more than one batch in order to carry us into the New Year, and sometimes bring them to a festive event or as a gift for a friend or neighbor.

Carrying on this tradition always gives me a feeling of connection to my departed relatives and to a childhood where life was seemingly carefree. The memories of this 'snow-globe' snapshot in time, and of the aura of that kitchen – all in the bond of a close-knit family performing a simple task together - is a gift I give myself each year.

Raisin-Filled Cookies Recipe

The dough

½ cup shortening
1 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
½ cup milk
2 ½ cups King Arthur Flour
1tsp soda
2 tsp cream of tartar
1 tsp vanilla

The filling

1box seeded raisins (dates or figs may be used)
Sugar to taste
½ cup water
1 tsp. vanilla

Grind the raisins and add sugar. Cook them in the water until thick. Stir so they won't stick. Mix the shortening, sugar and egg together. Add the milk and vanilla. Then gradually mix in the sifted flour, soda, and cream of tartar.

Roll the dough very thin and use a cookie cutter to cut shaped pieces.

Put one teaspoon of the filling on the dough and cover with another piece of cutout dough of the same shape. Press down the sides. Bake on greased cookie sheets. Cook about 10 minutes at 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Entry 4: Aunt Elsie's World War II G.I.'s Favorite Cookies

Story

This recipe for *Aunt Elsie's G.I.'s Favorite Cookie* was given to me by a dear family friend, Harvey Dickinson (1923-2006). Harvey and his wife, Doris (1925-2015), were married for 62 years, raising five daughters in Belchertown. Harvey and Doris were very active volunteers in local historical societies. Harvey was born and lived in Greenwich, MA one of the four towns destroyed to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir. Harvey served on the Board of the Swift River Historical Society and was active in the Belchertown Historical Association (BHA).

In 2004, when I volunteered to compile a fundraising cookbook of old-fashioned recipes for the BHA, Harvey gave me a photocopied, spiral-bound booklet of his Aunt Elsie's hand-typed recipes. He regaled me for hours with stories of the times he spent as a child and teenager with his Aunt Elsie, who was famous for her baking skills in Greenwich. Harvey served in the Navy in World War II and his wife Doris ran the USO chapter in Belchertown. (Doris was also a "Rosie the Riveter" working in an airplane manufacturing plant in her native Oklahoma before marrying Harvey.) Harvey shared with me that his Aunt's cookies were loved by his fellow Navy men and they looked forward to receiving packages of them.

I have made these cookies for summer picnic outings and fall and winter holidays. They are simple, crunchy and sweet; they freeze and travel well. Since they need to be chilled in advance, you can keep a log or two in the freezer and bake them as needed. When I bake them, although I never met Aunt Elsie, I imagine her in a 1940's-style kitchen making batches of them to feed hungry soldiers and it keeps the memories of Harvey and Doris alive for me.

Aunt Elsie's World War II G.I.'s Favorite Cookies Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup vegetable shortening (like Crisco)
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup white sugar
2 eggs, well-beaten 1 teaspoon vanilla
1 ½ cups King Arthur All-purpose, unbleached flour 1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
3 cups oats (can be quick-cooking or rolled)
½ cup chopped walnuts

Directions

Cream the shortening and white and brown sugars together. Add the beaten eggs and vanilla. Sift flour, salt, and baking soda together and add to sugar/shortening mixture. Mix thoroughly with a wooden spoon. Add the oats and nuts and mix them in well. Divide dough into 3 log-shaped portions. The logs should be about 2 ½ to 3 inches in diameter and about 8 to 10 inches long. Wrap the logs in wax paper and chill in the fridge overnight.

When ready to bake the cookies, pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.

Slice the cookies very thin and place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 20 minutes until done. Let cool on the cookie sheet for about 2 or 3 minutes

Entry 5: Shortbread Cream Cheese Chocolate Cookies

Story

When I met my husband more than 40 years ago, I joined a family with a legendary Christmas cookie tradition. He was from Minnesota and as soon as the Thanksgiving turkey was consumed, Christmas cookie baking began. I had grown up in Southampton, Massachusetts and our special Christmas deserts included steamed suet pudding with hard sauce, mince pie, and Danish apple cake. We made a few cookies, but they were not the focus of our holiday baking.

In an effort to join the ranks of my new Christmas cookie baking family, I scoured magazines and cookbooks for recipes I could add to the Christmas cookie repertoire. This recipe came from *Yankee Magazine* and I have modified it slightly over the years. The tattered page from *Yankee Magazine* has long ago disappeared from my recipe box so I cannot be sure of my modifications. I do know that I changed it to measures that could be easily multiplied as I often double and triple the recipe.

This cookie has been at our family gatherings, as a favorite, now for 40 years. These gatherings have included the neighborhood children's Christmas party (with Santa) that we hosted 10 years, Christmas Sunday coffee hour at church, and special events at the Dedham Historical Society. Gifts of cookies for the girls' teachers also featured these cookies prominently at the center of the plate.

Like my mother-in-law, I will begin baking Christmas cookies the day after Thanksgiving. But unlike my mother-in-law, my cookies will be baked with King Arthur rather than Pillsbury (Minnesota) flour.

Shortbread/Cream Cheese/Chocolate Cookies Recipe

Our favorite Christmas cookie is an adaptation of a recipe that I found in *Yankee Magazine* about 40 years ago. It is a three-part cookie that is best assembled and eaten the same day; an assignment that my family and Christmas guests have never found a burden.

Cookie Base:

1 cup butter
2 cups King Arthur Flour
2/3 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Mix together and roll into 1-inch balls. At the center of the ball form a hole to receive the cream cheese filling. Bake the bases at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes, until they are golden brown. Remove from the oven and cool.

Cream Cheese and Nut Filling

1 package of cream cheese (8oz.)
1 cup powdered sugar
1 cup of walnuts
1 tsp. vanilla

Place the nuts in a food processor and grind until coarsely ground; add powdered sugar, cream cheese and vanilla. Process slightly to make a crunchy paste.

Fill cooled bases with roughly a teaspoon of this filling.

Chocolate Glaze

Melt 5 oz. of semi sweet chocolate. Melt over low heat adding a little cream or half and half to keep it a smooth consistency. Drizzle the chocolate over the cookies. Let stand to about an hour, allowing the chocolate to set.

Serve with tea or coffee.

Entry 6: Date Pinwheel Cookies

Story

I first baked my Pinwheel Date Cookies in the 1950s, when my husband Ronald and I began going steady. I knew he loved dates (both the fruits and the evenings with me) and so I thought he would enjoy these special treats. And boy, did he! Soon, I was making these cookies on all sorts of special occasions: for his birthday, for Christmas, and for our anniversary.

This newfound tradition of ours continued until some years later, when we had children. I grew so busy with diaper changes, play dates, and making clothing for them that the hours it took to make the Pinwheel Date Cookies were whittled away with other endeavors. It wasn't until our kids were safely off to college that I dug out my old recipe and began mixing, layering, and rolling these delightful desserts. The return of our empty nest brought the return of the Pinwheel Date Cookies, and Ronald rejoiced.

Eventually, my daughter had a child of her own, who, as it turned out, inherited her grandfather's love of dates. Because they are such soft cookies, the pinwheels became one of her favorite holiday treats from a young age, and became one of her favorite parts of Christmas. When I baked them for Ronald's birthday, she thought they were presents for her! I soon began to bake them for her birthday as well, and when it was her turn to head off to university, I sent a tin of them with her. Now, we bake them together for all sorts of reasons – some traditional, and some spontaneous, just because it's lovely to have an afternoon to bake together. It has been my pleasure to watch these cookies grow from a special gift for my boyfriend to a tradition with my husband that carries on through my granddaughter. I hope you will enjoy them as much as we do.

Date Pinwheel Cookies Recipe

Makes 5 dozen.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup pitted, diced dates (5 ounces)
6 tablespoons granulated sugar
6 tablespoons water
2 teaspoons lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated lemon rind
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped nuts
2 cups sifted enriched flour (King Arthur's Flour)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup butter or margarine
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups firmly packed brown sugar
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons grated orange rind
1 egg
1 tablespoon vinegar

Combine dates, granulated sugar, and water in heavy saucepan. Cook until thickened, about 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Blend in lemon juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon lemon rind, and nuts. Cool.

Sift together flour, soda, and salt.

Cream together butter or margarine, brown sugar, and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons orange rind. Beat in egg and vinegar. Blend in dry ingredients. Chill dough several hours or overnight.

Roll dough into 15x10-inch rectangle. Spread with date mixture. Starting from a long side, roll as for jelly roll. Chill 1 hour.

Slice into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Place slices on cookie sheet.

Bake in moderate oven (375 degrees F) 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned.

Cool on cake rack.

Entry 7: The Joseph Family and Portuguese Trutas

Story

It was in the mid 1970's during the Christmas holiday season, when family came to the Berkshires to visit from Cape Cod. My sister-in-law brought a box of Portuguese, called *Trutas*, from a bakery in Provincetown. They were an immediate hit with us all.

A few years passed and, as our children began to get older, I wanted to establish a Christmas "sweet" that they would fondly remember from their childhood and, perhaps, continue the tradition on their own. It began with a few years of a filled breakfast bread that was diligently made on Christmas Eve day in preparation for Christmas breakfast. To my dismay, no one cared it for but me. It was a disappointment, but I certainly did not want to create the memory of a traditional Christmas bread that no one would eat but Mom! However, I did not give up on my idea of a fondly remember Christmas "sweet." While on the Cape during the summer, I came across my mother-in-law's Peter Hunt's Cape Cod Cookbook. It contained many Portuguese recipes including one for Trutas. Now I was all set. The following Christmas I made them for our family and they were as much a hit then as they were the first time we tasted them.

It has been nearly forty years since the first Trutas were made in our household. They are definitely a *well established* tradition in the family. Christmas breakfast would not be the same without them and my hope for a "sweet" that would be a *well established* memory has been realized.

Trutas Recipe

(A Portuguese Pastry Filled With Sweet Potato)

Filling:

- 15 oz can sweet potatoes or yams
- 1 C brown sugar
- 1 tsp dried orange peel
- ½ tsp cinnamon

Blend ingredients with an electric mixer or potato masher (if desired, use an emulsifier for smoothness).

Dough:

- 5 C King Arthur Flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 1/3 C orange juice
- ½ lb butter
- 2/3 C shortening
- 1/3 C brandy or whiskey

Have butter and shortening at room temperature. Proceed as for pie crust, using brandy and orange juice (mixed) instead of water. Roll out very thin and cut as for turnovers (3 inch diameter-cookie size), using a pastry cutter (or fork) to help seal crust.

Place approximately ½ tsp of filling in center of cut dough, stretch to a slightly to an oval shape and seal.

Fry in deep fat until golden brown. Do not have heat too high to allow pastry to cook through, otherwise the inside may be too “doughy.” Drain on brown paper. When cold, roll in powdered sugar.

Makes approximately 8 dozen (amount can vary, depending upon diameter size of pastry).

Entry 8: Date Bars

Story

I fell in love with the love of my life 40 years ago when I met him on Valentine's Day in 1975! But it took us many years ago to reunite and have been together now for 16 years helping raise his three children since they were toddlers. My husband has had much tragedy in his life. His mother died when he was only 10 years old and his father had a very difficult time keeping their family of five intact. After getting married I would ask him about his memories of his mother, to which he consistently would give me little information. I decided to take a different approach and ask him about food memories. Much of what he divulged was about food he didn't like, or how his father's mother, was a wonderful woman, but a terrible cook!! But I still wasn't getting much information about what his mother prepared. I had also asked him about his birthdays and he said was sure he had a cake, but gave no details. Then one day, out of the blue he said very excitedly, "Date bars, my mother use to make me date bars, and they were my favorite."

I was incredibly surprised with this revelation and immediately looked for recipes, searching cookbooks primarily from the 1950's. I kept seeing the same recipe for "Classic Date Bars." After making it, my husband said it was very good, and then said, "It has cinnamon! The ones my mother made definitely did not have any cinnamon!!" I was so happy he had such an intense memory (finally) and have made them without cinnamon every Christmas and for his birthday in May as well as other times when he needs an emotional boost. His children also love these date bars, and I am so glad that they have been able to have something that their grandmother made for their father, a little something they can experience from her, having created a family tradition for them to keep.

Date Bars as made by Margaret “Peggy” Flaherty Keegan, 1921-1966, Recipe

1 ½ cups water
1 ½ cups chopped pitted dates (I prefer Med-jool dates , if available)
1 tsp vanilla extract

1 ½ cups King Arthur flour
1 cup dark brown sugar (packed)
1 cup old fashioned oats
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
¾ cup unsalted butter, diced, room temperature

Preheat oven to 350

Butter 8x8 baking pan. Bring 1 ½ cups water to simmer in medium saucepan and add dates. Simmer until soft and thick, stirring occasionally for 10-15 minutes. Cool to room temperature. Stir in vanilla.

Combine flour, sugar, oats, baking soda and salt in large bowl, stir to blend. Add butter. With fingers press until clumps form. Press half of the oat mixture on bottom of pan. Spread date mixture over. Then sprinkle remaining oat mixture and press gently. Bake until brown at edges and golden brown and is set in center, about 40 minutes. Cool completely, cut into bars. Makes about 16 bars.

Entry 9: Old Fashioned Pepparkakor

Story

As I have grown older, I have become more conscious of family history, and I love the idea of connecting with my ancestors through recipes that have been handed down from one mother to the next. I got this recipe from my mother, Nancy Louise Stebbins Hagen, a Deerfield resident from age six until marriage. My grandmother, Natalie May Ashley Stebbins, a Deerfield native, died when I was three. Therefore, I do not know if this recipe was also used by her; Mom never mentioned from where she got the recipe. I just know that Old Fashioned Pepparkakor was *always* made at Christmas time when I was growing up and my brothers and I took a large part in the cookie decorating. Mom didn't really bake much except at Christmas and then it was quick-breads and cookies galore! The Pepparkakors were the favorites, hands down!

These cookies are meant to be thin and I remember that at least one was always broken in the attempt to frost it to just the right degree. We loved decorating the larger sized cookies; more than one tree, holly leaf, or Santa was covered with *everything* made available to us for the decorating. Once I started making these cookies, my own children would try for top honors in the cookie-decorating department.

I feel very connected to my mother with this recipe. I am my mother's daughter: I don't really bake much except at Christmas. Connectedness has extended backwards to my great-grandmother, Gertrude Porter Ashley. Both my grandmother and great-grandmother were Deerfield natives who were very involved in the Deerfield Arts and Crafts activities; it seems reasonable that they would also be involved in Christmas-time baking. I genuinely feel a connection every time I bake Old Fashioned Pepparkakor, and I really like them best frosted.

Old Fashioned Pepparkakor Recipe

(Swedish spice cookies made at Christmas)

(makes 7-10 dozen, depending on size)

3 ½ C sifted King Arthur All Purpose Unbleached Flour

1 ½ tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cloves

1 tsp baking soda

1 ½ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp ground cardamom (optional)

½ C unsalted butter

¾ C granulated sugar

1 unbeaten egg

2 tsp grated orange peel

¾ C molasses*

cookie sheets

assorted cookie cutters

Pam or other spray shortening to grease cookie sheets **OR** parchment paper to line cookie sheets

*I prefer Brer Rabbit New Orleans Molasses because it seems to make for a “less sticky” dough, but any brand will do.

1. Sift together the first 6 ingredients in a bowl and set aside.
2. Cream the butter; gradually add the sugar, creaming together until light and fluffy.
3. Add the egg, molasses, and orange rind to the creamed mixture, blending well.
4. Add the dry ingredients gradually, mixing well until thoroughly blended.
5. Cover dough - either in the bowl, or wrapped in plastic wrap or wax paper; chill overnight. (Dough may be used in small amounts, if desired; will keep 1 week in the refrigerator.)

When ready to bake:

1. Turn oven on to 350° and allow it come to temperature.
2. Grease cookie sheets, or parchment paper to line cookie sheets.
3. Roll out a portion of the dough on a well-floured pastry cloth or board to 1/8” thickness.
4. Use your choice of cookie cutters to cut cookies, dipping cutter into flour to prevent sticking.
5. Place cut cookies on greased or parchment-lined cookie sheets without crowding.
6. Bake in moderate oven 8-10 minutes, until lightly browned.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6, immediately above, until all the dough is used.
8. Remove cookies from cookie sheets as they are baked and let cool on wire rack.
9. If desired, when completely cool, decorate with confectioners’ sugar frosting. (Mix confectioners’ sugar with cream, half & half, or milk to desired consistency; tint small amounts with various food colorings, if desired. Add sprinkles, etc., to frosted cookies, if desired.)

Entry 10: Spicy Mumbai Cookies

Story

My mother-in-law, Rose Marie Stanton, was one of those amazing German women who could make a gourmet meal out of a few limp vegetables and a stale rind of cheese. A whiz in the kitchen, she explored international cooking with zeal and wasn't afraid to try new combinations, especially with herbs and spices. I'll never know if the curry in her curry cookies came about as an experiment or an accident, but its unusual combination with a sweet cookie dough makes these memorable.

I updated her basic recipe for the Historic Deerfield contest with the addition of extra curry, apricots, currants, walnuts, and chocolate chips. My goal was to create a delicious cookie with a wholly unexpected and lasting taste.

Recipe Spicy Mumbai Cookies

Wet Ingredients

1 cup butter or margarine, softened to room temperature
2 cups light brown sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs, lightly beaten with fork or whisk

Dry Ingredients

1 ½ cups King Arthur unbleached all purpose flour
1 ½ cups King Arthur whole wheat pastry flour
½ teaspoon baking sold
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking power
6 teaspoons good quality curry powder – I prefer Penzey's Balti seasoning

Extras

2 cups walnut halves, lightly broken or chopped
2 cups dried apricots, quartered
1 cup dried currants
1 cup (6 oz) chocolate chips, semi-sweet or dark to include in batter

Directions:

Place all wet ingredients in a mixing bowl and cream together with electric mixer. In a separate, large bowl, using a hand whisk, whisk all dry ingredients together until well mixed (30-60 seconds). Stir the "Extras" into the dry ingredients, mixing well. In three batches, add the dry ingredients into the mixing bowl of wet ingredients, blending with the electric mixer for 30 seconds or so between batches and scraping the sides of the bowl and beaters between additions as well. Remove dough from mixing bowl, form into ball. Wrap in wax paper and chill in refrigerator for at least two hours or up to 24+ hours.

Baking

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Remove dough ball from wax paper, cut in half with a large knife. Roll each half into a log, approximately 1 ½ to 2 inches in diameter. Using a sharp knife, cut the roll into ¾"-1" thick slices. Slightly flatten each slice with your fingers until it is ½"-¾" thick. Place on ungreased cookie sheet leaving 2"-3" inches between cookies. Bake for 8-10 minutes. Remove from oven while just slightly brown, with some pale color remaining. Let cool on cookie sheet, for 1-2 minutes, then remove to plate. Repeat until all dough is baked. Makes approximately 3 dozen cookies.

Entry 11: Italian Toto Cookies

Story

Christmastime was always a special time for my family. It was all about which cookies to make this year. My Mom loved to bake and growing up would bake about fifteen different batches of cookies for Christmas. We would look for new recipes and consider old favorites. My Mom would make a large tray of cookies for my Dad to bring into work each and every year. This was a special tradition that continued for years. As the years passed and my Dad passed away, we still continued the tradition of baking cookies but, now we would give the cookies out to friends and family for the holidays.

One of our favorite cookies comes from my Father's Sicilian side of the family. The TOTO cookie, a rich chocolate cookie that consists of a mixture of different spices that make a unique cookie. Anytime there was any big occasion (wedding, bridal or baby shower) these cookies were made. Since this was a very old recipe, it was originally measured in pounds instead of cup measurements. One year my Mom and I weighed the ingredients and converted them into cup measurements to make it easier. So now if we wanted to make a half batch or make a full batch, we can.

Last year after Thanksgiving my Mom passed away. When Christmas came around, I had no desire to bake any cookies. As the year has gone on, little by little I have started to bake again. Sometimes trying new recipes or using tried and true old ones. When I bake it brings back so many memories of all my Mom has taught me. I remember sitting in the kitchen helping her scoop cookies out or frosting a batch of cookies. I continue to keep the tradition alive with the cookies I was taught to bake as a child by my Mom.

Italian Toto Cookies Recipe

4 cups King Arthur all purpose unbleached flour
1 ½ cups granulated sugar
2 tablespoons dutch-process cocoa
2 tablespoons baking powder
¾ cup dark raisins
½ cup walnuts, chopped

¼ teaspoon of each:
Ground cloves
Ground Vietnamese Cinnamon
Ground allspice
Ground ginger
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¾ cup Crisco, melted
¾ to 1 cup warm water

In a bowl mix together flour, sugar, baking powder and spices. Grind up in food processor raisins and nuts. Add to dry ingredients. Melt Crisco, let cool before adding vanilla extract and add to bowl. Mix in enough warm water until dough comes together to form balls. Make balls about 1". Place balls on parchment paper lined cookie sheets.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and bake for 8-10 minutes. Let cool on rack for 5 minutes before putting on cooling rack.

Mix 1 ½ cups confectionery sugar to 1 teaspoon milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla, almond or lemon extract. Let cookies cool before frosting them and then top with sprinkles.

Entry 12: Chocolate Mint Cookies

Story

I chose to submit this recipe for several reasons. The primary reason is that my mother, my two sisters and I used to make these cookies frequently in the 60's for special occasions. They were always a big hit with my Father and three younger brothers. We were big into 4-H then (I was a member for ten years in a club that focused on baking and sewing) and always entered baked goods into the County Fair. So one year I entered these Chocolate Mint Cookies. I don't remember the judges exact comments, but they had obviously not tasted a cookie (we had to submit 5 cookies) nor read the recipe, because they gave me a very low score and wanted to know where the chocolate and mint were. I was crushed (I was probably 10 years old at the time) and really annoyed that they hadn't actually tasted a cookie or taken the time to read the recipe. Grrrrr, my first disillusionment by an authority figure.

Another reason I entered this cookie recipe is because I recently read KAF's article on getting ready for the Holiday baking season by preparing muffins, cookies, scones and biscuits and freezing them prior to baking and then baking them as needed. What a brilliant idea. I think these Chocolate Mint Cookies are a perfect candidate for this idea. Who doesn't love a freshly baked warm cookie. I hope you enjoy them. They bring back many warm fuzzy childhood memories for me. Cheers and Bon Appétit!

Chocolate Mint Cookies Recipe

Sift together and set aside:

3 Cups King Arthur flour

1 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp salt

Cream together:

1 Cup unsalted butter

1 Cup white sugar

1/2 Cup Brown Sugar

Add:

2 eggs

1 Tbsp. Water

1 tsp vanilla

Gradually add dry ingredients to creamed mixture and beat well. Cover and chill dough thoroughly (1-2 hrs). Scoop 1Tbsp dough and roll into a ball and place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Press mint candy (I use 1/2 of a Andes Creme De Menthe Thins candy) into the dough. Press the dough up and over the mint to cover it. Bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 min.

Note: We used to be able to buy small round solid chocolate mint candies by the box. They are no longer available so I have substituted the Andes candies.

Entry 13: Mint Brownies

Story

I met my husband in June of 1975 and that Christmas had the amazing opportunity to taste his mom's Mint Brownies. I remember mom having to go through the garage and down the cellar stairs to a shelf where she kept the baked brownies cool/cold along with her other Christmas delights. They didn't have an extra freezer to store the cookies in 1975.

My husband and our children (and probably soon our grandchildren) LOVE these right out of the freezer. They don't actually freeze but are *very* cold and firm! (and *very* moist)

About 12 years ago my daughter and I began making cookie trays at the holidays to sell to friends and acquaintances. THIS brownie became the all-time favorite on the trays and I've made as many as 6-8 trays at a time.

They are THE family favorite and the recipe has generally not been shared until now. No one in the family bakes these cookies at any other time of the year - only at CHRISTMAS!

Mom is 88 now and no longer bakes these herself. She leaves it up to her daughters, granddaughters and her daughter-in-law who will all continue on with this Christmas tradition.

Mom Tafel's Mint Brownies

1 1/3 cup shortening

2 cups granulated sugar

4 eggs

2 Tablespoons corn syrup

2 teaspoons peppermint extract

Mix the above 5 ingredients well (can be done by hand or mixer)

In a separate bowl mix together:

1 1/2 cups King Arthur flour

1 cup cocoa

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 1/4 teaspoon salt

Add the dry ingredients into the moist ingredients and spread into an ungreased jelly roll pan (cookie sheet)

Bake for 17 minutes – DO NOT OVERBAKE. (The recipe calls for 20 minutes but I have adjusted to 17 minutes per our new convection oven).

Cool

Frost with a XXXX sugar frosting (powdered sugar, butter, milk and 1tsp. peppermint extract)

Drizzle with 2 squares of melted semi-sweet baker's chocolate.

Depending on the size of the brownie you can get anywhere from 40-80 cookies from this recipe.