

Gingerbread Cookies

Ingredients:

- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup dark (not light or blackstrap) molasses
- 1 tablespoon water

Directions:

Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves in a medium mixing bowl.

Cream the butter and brown sugar together in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium high speed until fluffy. Add the egg, molasses, and water and beat until incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl, as necessary. Add the flour mixture all at once and mix on low speed until the dough comes together in a ball.

Divide the dough into 3 equal balls. Wrap each ball in plastic and refrigerate it for at least 3 hours and for up to 2 days.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

With a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out a ball of dough 1/8-inch thick on a lightly floured work surface. Cut the dough into any desired shapes and place the cookies on the prepared baking sheet. Space cookies 1 1/2-inches apart. You can use raisins, red hots, small gumdrops, and/or chocolate chips for decorating. Refrigerate the scraps.

Bake the cookies until they are firm, about 8 minutes. If you want the cookies softer, then bake less time. Remove cookie sheet from oven and allow the cookies to stand until the cookies are firm enough to move to a wire rack and then let the cookies cool completely. Repeat with the remaining balls and then with the chilled scraps. Decorate with icing as desired.

These cookies will keep in an airtight container for several days. Makes about 40 medium size cookies.

Grandma's Italian Cookie Gems

Ingredients:

- ½ cup margarine
- ¼ cup white shortening
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs
- 3 to 4 cups flour
- 5 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Directions:

Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Melt margarine and shortening together. Add sugar, then add eggs one a time, beating well after each addition. Add flour mixture, starting with 3 cups, then add the remaining cup gradually. Sometimes you will only use half of the fourth cup, other times you will use almost the whole cup, depending upon the size of the eggs you choose.

Mix thoroughly until dough is soft and still a little sticky. Add the vanilla. Do not make a stiff, dry dough because the cookies will be hard. You can

refrigerate the dough for a few hours or use right away. Now, with floured fingers, break off small pieces of dough, a little smaller than a walnut. Roll pieces between palms of hands to form small balls. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. The cookies must not brown on top. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Frosting:

Mix 1 cups of confectioner's sugar, ½ teaspoon vanilla, and enough milk to make the right consistency to spread. With butter knife, spread frosting on top and sides of cookies and then decorate with colored sprinkles. These cookies will be soft and delicate to the bite, if done correctly.

Make about 6 dozen cookies.