

cookie

Almond-Buttermilk-Chocolate Brownies
(recipe, page 5)

Holiday cookies are rich with tradition. Now, the famed Test Kitchen of Better Homes and Gardens shares their most treasured cookies with you. These 20 recipes are so special, we hope you'll start a new tradition in your family — sharing these delights for generations to come.

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Doubly rich **Double-Fudge Pockets** have trufflelike centers between two layers of chocolate cookie. Melted candy forms the stained-glass centers of **Eggnog Cookies**.



DOUBLE-FUDGE POCKETS

Crave even more chocolate? Top with a drizzle of chocolate frosting or melted chocolate instead of powdered sugar.

- 1 cup butter (no substitutes)
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 teaspoon baking powder
 - 1 egg
 - 1 egg yolk
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 2½ cups all-purpose flour
 - ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- Fudge Filling
Sifted powdered sugar

BEAT butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar and baking powder; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in whole egg, egg yolk, and vanilla till combined. Stir in flour and cocoa powder with a wooden spoon. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill dough for 1 hour or till easy to handle.

ROLL each portion of dough on a lightly floured surface till ⅛ inch thick. Cut into rounds with a floured scalloped 2½-inch cookie cutter. Place half of the rounds 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Spoon a rounded teaspoon of Fudge Filling into the center of each round. Place another round over the filling. Press edges together to seal.

BAKE in a 350° oven for 10 to 12 minutes or till edges are firm. Cool on the cookie sheet for 1 minute. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Place in an airtight container and chill up to 2 days. Before serving, sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes about 30.

FUDGE FILLING: Melt 4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate in a heavy small saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir in ½ cup dairy sour cream and ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts. Mixture will stiffen as it cools.

EGGNOG COOKIES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - ¾ teaspoon baking powder
 - ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 - ⅔ cup butter (no substitutes)
 - 1 slightly beaten egg
 - ¼ cup eggnog
 - ½ cup finely crushed butterscotch or rum-flavor hard candies (about twenty-five 1-inch candies)
- Eggnog Glaze
Yellow colored sugar (optional)

COMBINE flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, nutmeg, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a large mixing bowl. With a pastry blender, cut in butter till pieces are the size of small peas. Make a well in center. Mix egg and eggnog; add all at once. Stir till moistened. Cover and chill for 2 hours or till easy to handle.

LINE a cookie sheet with foil; set aside. Roll dough on a well-floured surface till ¼ inch thick. Cut into desired shapes with floured 2½-inch cookie cutters. Cut smaller shapes out of the centers of the larger shapes; reroll trimmings. Place cutouts 1 inch apart on the prepared cookie sheet. Fill holes with crushed candies.

BAKE in a 375° oven for 6 to 8 minutes or till edges are firm and lightly browned. Cool on the cookie sheet for 5 minutes. Transfer cookies on foil to a wire rack; cool. Reline cookie sheet with foil; bake remaining cutouts.

WHEN cookies are cool, carefully peel foil from bottoms. Drizzle cookies with Eggnog Glaze. If desired, sprinkle with yellow sugar. Makes 24.

EGGNOG GLAZE: Stir together 3 cups sifted powdered sugar, ¼ teaspoon rum extract, and enough eggnog (2 to 3 tablespoons) to make of drizzling consistency.

FAIRY DROPS

A sprinkling of colored sugar accents whatever pattern you press into these crisp cookies.

- 1 cup butter (no substitutes)
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 cup cooking oil
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons almond extract
- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- Colored sugar

BEAT butter in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, powdered sugar, baking soda, cream of tartar, and ½ teaspoon salt; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in oil, eggs, and almond extract till combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can. Stir in remaining flour. Cover and chill dough about 30 minutes or till needed.

TO SHAPE cookies, roll rounded teaspoons of dough into balls (dough will be soft). Arrange balls on an ungreased cookie sheet. With the bottom of a glass or a swirled or patterned cookie stamp, gently flatten the balls till about ¼ inch thick. Sprinkle with colored sugar.

BAKE in a 350° oven for 10 to 12 minutes or till edges are lightly browned. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Makes 55 to 60.

Add pattern to Fairy Drops with kitchen gadgets, the base of a glass, or cookie stamps.





GREEK HONEY-NUT WEDGES

Seal the edges of the pastry with a fork so none of the sweet filling seeps out.

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup butter (no substitutes), softened
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 cups finely chopped walnuts
- Milk
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

BEAT cream cheese and butter in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Beat in 2 tablespoons sugar and 2 tablespoons milk. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir or knead in remaining flour. Divide dough into four portions. If necessary, cover and chill for 1 to 2 hours or till easy to handle.

MEANWHILE, combine 2/3 cup sugar, 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon, the honey, and lemon juice in a mixing bowl. Stir in walnuts; set aside.

ROLL one portion of dough on a lightly floured surface into an 8-inch circle. Carefully transfer to an ungreased cookie sheet. Spread *half* of the nut mixture to within 1/2 inch of edges. Roll another portion of dough into an 8-inch circle. Place over the nut-topped circle. Seal edges with a fork. Brush with milk; sprinkle with a mixture of 1 tablespoon sugar and 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.

BAKE in a 350° oven for 15 to 20 minutes or till edges start to brown. Cool on cookie sheet for 10 minutes. Cut each round into 12 wedges. Transfer to wire racks; cool completely. Makes 24.

Greek Honey-Nut Wedges are flavored with
that country's classic combination of cinnamon, walnuts, and honey.



ITALIAN FRUIT-FILLED COOKIES

To make quick work of chopping the figs and dates, use a food processor. Place 1 cup halved dates and 1 cup halved figs in the bowl. Add the 2 tablespoons granulated sugar called for in the filling and process with on/off turns till the fruit is finely chopped.

- 1/2 cup butter (no substitutes)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 apples, peeled and finely chopped (2 1/2 cups)
- 1 cup finely chopped dried figs
- 1 cup finely chopped pitted dates
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon finely shredded orange peel
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup finely chopped almonds
- Lemon Glaze

BEAT butter in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add 1/4 cup granulated sugar, the brown sugar, and baking soda; beat till combined, scraping

The filling of **Italian Fruit-Filled Cookies** will remind you of fig bars, but our new take on the fruit filling makes them taste even better.



sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour with a wooden spoon. Divide dough in half. If necessary, cover and chill dough for 30 minutes or till easy to handle.

MEANWHILE, combine apples, figs, dates, 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, the cinnamon, orange peel, and orange juice in a saucepan. Bring to boiling. Reduce heat, cover, and cook about 10 minutes or till apples are tender and mixture is thick. Stir in almonds. Cool to room temperature.

ROLL each half of dough on a floured cloth into a 10x8-inch rectangle. Cut lengthwise into two 10x4-inch strips. Spoon *one-fourth* of filling (about 1/2 cup) lengthwise down center in a 1-inch-wide strip. Using the cloth, lift one side of dough, then the other to cover filling and meet in the center. Pinch edges to seal. Transfer roll to an ungreased cookie sheet. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.

BAKE in a 375° oven for 10 to 12 minutes or till lightly browned. While rolls are warm, cut diagonally into 1-inch slices. Drizzle with Lemon Glaze. Makes about 40.

LEMON GLAZE: Stir together 3/4 cup sifted powdered sugar and 2 to 3 teaspoons lemon juice to make a glaze of drizzling consistency.

ALMOND-BUTTERMILK-CHOCOLATE BROWNIES

To make sour milk, place 3/4 teaspoon lemon juice in a measuring cup, then add enough milk to make 1/4 cup.

- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1/4 cup buttermilk or sour milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup finely chopped toasted almonds
- 5 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Chocolate Glaze
- Colored decorating candies

MELT butter or margarine in a medium saucepan over low heat. Cool slightly. Stir in granulated sugar and brown sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating by hand just till combined. Stir in buttermilk or sour milk and vanilla.

STIR together flour and baking soda. Add flour mixture to egg mixture; stir just till combined. Divide batter in half (about 1 3/4 cups each). Stir almonds into one portion; spread nut batter in a greased 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Bake in a 350° oven for 10 minutes. Stir melted chocolate and cinnamon into remaining batter till well combined. Spread chocolate batter over partially baked layer. Continue baking about 20 minutes more or till a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean; cool.

CUT with letter-shape cookie cutters. Frost with Chocolate Glaze. Sprinkle with decorating candies. Makes 36.

CHOCOLATE GLAZE: Combine 1/4 cup butter (no substitutes), 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder, and 3 tablespoons buttermilk or milk in a medium saucepan. Bring to boiling. Remove from heat. Add 2 1/4 cups sifted powdered sugar and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla; beat till smooth. Evenly spread warm frosting over cutouts.

KRIS KRINGLES

As these buttery cookies bake, the chopped pecan coating toasts, adding even richer flavor.

- 1/2 cup butter (no substitutes)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel (set aside)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon finely shredded orange peel
- 1 slightly beaten egg white
- 2/3 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup red candied cherries

BEAT butter in a medium mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar and dash salt; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in egg yolk and lemon juice till combined.

Stir in flour, lemon peel, and orange peel with a wooden spoon. Cover and chill 1 hour or till easy to handle.

SHAPE dough into 1-inch balls. Dip balls in egg white; roll in nuts. Place 2 inches apart on a greased cookie sheet. Cut each cherry into six wedges. Place five wedges on top of each ball to form a flower pattern; press lightly. Bake in a 325° oven for 20 minutes or till lightly browned. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Makes about 26.

LIME AND LEMON PINWHEELS

Use paste food coloring; it produces brighter colors, giving more contrast between the stripes of dough.

- 1/2 cup butter (no substitutes), softened
- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
- Yellow paste food coloring
- 1 teaspoon finely shredded lime peel
- Green paste food coloring

BEAT butter and cream cheese in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar and baking powder; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in egg and vanilla till combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour with a wooden spoon.

DIVIDE dough in half. Stir lemon peel and yellow food coloring into one half of dough; stir lime peel and green food coloring into other half. Cover and chill at least 1 hour or till easy to handle.

ROLL each half of dough between two sheets of waxed paper into a 12x10-inch rectangle. Place lime dough on a cookie sheet. Place in the freezer for 15 to 20 minutes or till firm. Remove from freezer. Remove top sheets of waxed paper from lemon dough and lime dough. Carefully invert lime dough on top of lemon dough. Remove top sheet of waxed paper. Let stand about 5 minutes or till dough is easy to roll.

ROLL UP, starting from one of the long sides, removing bottom sheet of waxed paper as you roll. Pinch to seal. Cut roll in half crosswise. Wrap each half in waxed paper or plastic wrap. Chill about 4 hours or till firm.

REMOVE one roll from the refrigerator. Unwrap and reshape, if necessary. Cut dough into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Place slices 1 inch apart on a lightly greased cookie sheet.

BAKE in a 375° oven about 10 minutes or till edges are firm and bottoms just start to brown. Cool on cookie sheet for 1 minute.

Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely. Repeat with remaining roll. Makes about 40.

Round and round the green and yellow stripes whirl in **Lime and Lemon Pinwheels**.





A little cinnamon accents the flavor of powdered sugar-topped **Mexican Chocolate Cookies**. Old-fashioned **Nutmeg Softies** are big and thick with soft centers.

MEXICAN CHOCOLATE COOKIES

The dough may seem a bit dry as you start to shape the balls, but the heat of your hands will soften it just enough.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter (no substitutes)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3 ounces unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- Powdered sugar

BEAT butter in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add brown sugar and cinnamon; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in chocolate and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour and the nuts with a wooden spoon. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.

BAKE in a 350° oven for 8 to 10 minutes or till set. Let cool on cookie sheet for 5 minutes. Remove from cookie sheet and roll in powdered sugar. Transfer to wire racks and cool completely. Just

before serving, sprinkle with additional powdered sugar. Makes 48.

NUTMEG SOFTIES

These whoppers taste so good with a glass of milk.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup dairy sour cream
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- Colored coarse sugar

BEAT butter or margarine and shortening in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking soda, nutmeg, and salt; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in sour cream, egg, and vanilla till combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour with a wooden spoon (dough will be sticky). Divide dough into thirds. Cover and chill for 2 hours or till easy to handle.

ROLL each portion of dough on a lightly floured surface till $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Cut into rounds with a floured 3-inch cookie cutter. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Sprinkle with colored sugar.

BAKE in a 350° oven about 10 minutes or till edges of cookies are firm and bottoms are golden. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Makes about 32.

ORANGE SNOWDROPS

Cookies will absorb moisture from soft frosting, so store frosted cookies in a tightly covered container only for 1 day.

For longer storage, pack and freeze unfrosted cookies; thaw and frost just before serving.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter (no substitutes)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ of a 6-ounce can ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- Orange Frosting
- Finely shredded orange peel (optional)

BEAT butter and shortening in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add powdered sugar and baking soda; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in egg, orange juice concentrate, and vanilla till combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour with a wooden spoon.

DROP dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 375° oven for 8 minutes or till edges are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheet for 1 minute. Transfer to wire racks and cool completely. Frost cookies with Orange Frosting. If desired, sprinkle with finely shredded orange peel. Makes about 36.

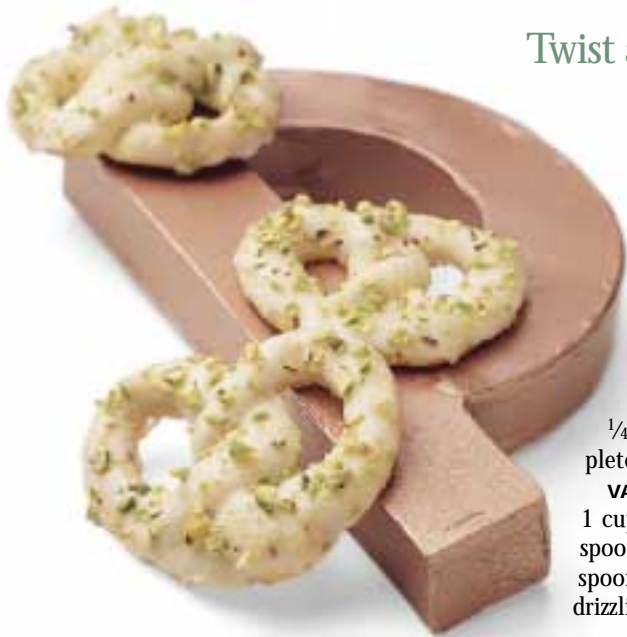
ORANGE FROSTING: Stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ of a 6-ounce can ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) *frozen orange juice concentrate*, thawed; $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon finely shredded *orange peel*; and 3 cups sifted *powdered sugar* till smooth.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Bake cookies as directed; cool completely. Do not frost. Place unfrosted cookies in a freezer container or bag and freeze up to 1 month. Before serving, thaw for 15 minutes. Frost with Orange Frosting.

For a special occasion, sprinkle Orange Snowdrops with thin shreds of orange peel.



Twist and bake a batch of Pistachio Pretzels for great food gifts.



PISTACHIO PRETZELS

Although its adaptation to sweets is recent, the traditional looped and twisted shape dates back more than 1,000 years.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter (no substitutes)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped pistachios
- Vanilla Glaze
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped pistachios

BEAT butter in a medium mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar and nutmeg; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pistachios with a wooden spoon. Cover dough and chill 1 to 2 hours or till easy to handle.

PINCH off about 1 tablespoon of dough. Roll into a 9-inch-long rope. To shape, form a circle, crossing one end over the other, with 1 inch of each end left free. Twist ends and lift across circle; press to seal. Place pretzels 1 inch apart on

an ungreased cookie sheet.

BAKE in a 375° oven for 6 to 8 minutes or till edges are firm. Remove to wire racks set over waxed paper. Brush warm pretzels with Vanilla Glaze; sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pistachios. Cool completely. Makes about 36.

VANILLA GLAZE: Stir together 1 cup sifted powdered sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and 1 to 2 tablespoons milk to make a glaze of drizzling consistency.

QUICKER CHIPPERS

Only standard-size food processors (not the mini ones) have enough power to mix the dough for this recipe.

- 1 cup pecan pieces or walnut halves
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup butter or margarine, cut up
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 12-ounce package (2 cups) semisweet chocolate pieces

PLACE the steel blade in the work bowl of a food processor. Add nuts. Chop coarsely with several on-off turns; remove and set aside. Add granulated sugar, brown sugar, butter or margarine, eggs, and vanilla to work bowl. Process till creamy. Add flour and baking soda; process just till mixed in. Stir in nuts and chocolate pieces.

DROP dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 375° oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Cool on cookie sheet for 1 minute. Transfer to wire racks and cool completely. Makes about 48.

ROSEMARY BISCOTTI

Don't skimp on the 1-hour cooling time; it's necessary for good slicing without crumbling.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter (no substitutes)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons snipped fresh rosemary or 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons dried rosemary, crushed
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 beaten egg yolk (optional)
- 1 tablespoon water (optional)


BEAT butter and olive oil in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar, rosemary, baking powder, and pepper; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in eggs till combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour and the nuts with a wooden spoon. Divide dough in half.

SHAPE each portion into a 6-inch-long log. Place logs about 4 inches apart on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Flatten slightly. For a shinier surface, stir together the egg yolk and water and brush onto the logs.

BAKE in a 375° oven for 25 minutes. Cool on the cookie sheet on a wire rack for 1 hour. With a serrated knife, cut each log diagonally into $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick slices.

PLACE slices, cut side down, on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 325° oven for 12 minutes. Turn slices over; bake for 8 to 10 minutes more or till dry and crisp. Transfer to wire racks and cool completely.

STORE in an airtight container at room temperature up to 2 weeks or freeze up to 6 months. Makes 16 to 20.



Quicker Chippers are just like your all-time favorite but come together in a fraction of the usual time so you can enjoy them more often. Originally from Italy, crunchy **Rosemary Biscotti** make a perfect snack.

STAR TARTS

These tiny tart shells bake on the outside of muffin cups, not on the inside.

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup cold butter (no substitutes)
- 1 beaten egg yolk
- ⅓ cup cold water
- 1 beaten egg
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ⅓ cup canned pumpkin
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1 tablespoon rum or milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¾ cup chopped pecans
- Whipped cream (optional)

STIR together flour and granulated sugar in a medium mixing bowl. Cut in cold butter till pieces are the size of small peas. Stir together egg yolk and water; gradually stir into flour mixture (mixture may be crumbly). Use your hands to gently knead the dough just till a ball forms. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill for 1 hour.

ROLL each half of dough on a lightly floured surface till ⅛ inch thick. Cut with a 3½-inch star-shape cutter to make 24 stars total. (Reroll scraps as necessary.) Invert a 1¾-inch muffin pan. Place star cutouts over the bottoms of the ungreased cups, alternating cups to avoid crowding the dough. Press and pleat dough as necessary to obtain the cup shape. Bake in a 325° oven for 10 minutes or till edges just start to brown. Cool 5 minutes and carefully remove from pans. Invert star cups and place on a cookie sheet.

COMBINE egg, brown sugar, pumpkin, melted butter or margarine, rum or milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Stir in pecans. Spoon about 1 tablespoon filling into each star cup.

BAKE in a 325° oven for 12 to 14 minutes or till filling is set and pastry is golden. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Cover with foil and refrigerate till serving time or overnight. To serve, if desired, dollop each tart with whipped cream. Makes 24.

ULTIMATE CHOCOLATE COOKIES

These superlative cookies have fudgy centers, chocolate pieces, and nuts—plus a chocolate topping. No wonder this recipe got our test panel's vote as the best chocolate cookie we've ever published.

- 1 12-ounce package (2 cups) semisweet chocolate pieces
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 2 tablespoons butter (no substitutes)
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- Dash salt
- 2 eggs
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 4 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted

HEAT 1 cup of the chocolate pieces, the unsweetened chocolate, and butter in a heavy medium saucepan till melted, stirring constantly. Transfer to a large mixing bowl to cool slightly. Stir together flour, baking powder, and salt.

ADD eggs, sugar, and vanilla to chocolate mixture; beat well. Add flour mixture and beat till combined. Stir in remaining chocolate pieces and the nuts.

DROP by heaping teaspoons onto a lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake in a 350° oven for 8 to 10 minutes or till edges are firm and surface is dull and cracked. Cool on cookie sheet for 1 minute. Transfer to wire racks and cool completely. Drizzle with melted chocolate. Makes about 36.

VIOLA SHORTBREAD

Containers of organically grown edible flowers are available year-round in most supermarkets, and Just Whites brand dried egg whites are available in the baking products section.

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ cup butter (no substitutes)
- 1 tablespoon dried egg whites
- 2 tablespoons water
- 12 or 16 edible violas or other edible flowers
- Fine sanding sugar

Star Tarts combine pumpkin and pecans for a special holiday flavor combination. Chocoholics won't be able to get enough **Ultimate Chocolate Cookies**; they're the best chocolate cookies ever.





COMBINE flour and granulated sugar in a medium mixing bowl. Using a pastry cutter, cut in butter till mixture resembles fine crumbs and starts to cling. Form the mixture into a ball and knead till smooth.

PAT or roll dough into an 8-inch circle on an ungreased cookie sheet. Using your fingers, press to make a scalloped edge. Cut circle into 12 or 16 wedges; do not separate.

BAKE in a 325° oven for 25 to 30 minutes or till bottom just starts to brown and center is set. Cut circle into wedges again while warm. Cool on cookie sheet on a wire rack.

COMBINE dried egg whites and water. Brush tops of wedges with egg white mixture. Place violas on top; brush with more egg white mixture. Sprinkle with fine sanding sugar. Bake in a 325° oven for 5 minutes. Transfer to wire racks and cool. Makes 12 or 16.

Dainty Viola Shortbread wedges are topped with the real flowers they're named for.



cookie ABCs



Whoopie Pies are cookie sandwiches like no other—bigger, gooier, creamier, and tastier.

WHOOPIE PIES

These cookies probably got their name from the exclamation of a child offered one of these treats. Try making them with your kids or grandchildren, and we'll bet you get the same response.

- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk or sour milk
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 cups sifted powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Chocolate Butter Frosting

BEAT shortening with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking soda, and 1/8 teaspoon salt. Beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in buttermilk or sour milk, egg, and vanilla till combined. Stir together flour and cocoa powder. Beat or stir flour mixture into buttermilk or sour milk mixture.

DROP by rounded tablespoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake in a 350° oven for 8 to 10 minutes or till the edges are firm. Transfer to wire racks and cool.

FOR FILLING, combine milk and the 1/4 cup flour in a small saucepan. Cook and stir till thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir 2 minutes more. Remove from heat; cool.

BEAT butter or margarine in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add powdered sugar; beat till fluffy. Add 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat milk mixture, 1 large spoonful at a time, into butter mixture. Beat on high for 1 minute or till filling is smooth and fluffy. Frost the tops of *half* the cookies with Chocolate Butter Frosting; set aside. Spread about 2 tablespoons filling on the flat side of the remaining cookies. Top with frosted cookies, flat side down. Makes 14.

CHOCOLATE BUTTER FROSTING: Beat together 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder and 3 tablespoons butter or margarine. Gradually beat in 1 cup sifted powdered sugar. Slowly beat in 2 tablespoons milk and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla. Gradually beat in another 1 cup sifted powdered sugar. Beat in milk, if necessary, to make of spreading consistency.

XYZ SPRITZ

- 1 cup butter (no substitutes), softened
- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon almond or rum extract
- 6 drops yellow food coloring
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- Edible glitter

BEAT butter and cream cheese in a large mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar, vanilla, extract, and food coloring; beat till combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat or stir in flour. Cover and chill dough for 30 minutes or till easy to handle.

PACK dough into a cookie press or a decorating bag fitted with a large star tip. Form dough into 4-inch letter shapes or ribbons on an ungreased cookie sheet.

BAKE in a 375° oven for 8 to 10 minutes or till edges are firm but not browned. Transfer to wire racks; sprinkle at once with edible glitter. Cool completely. Makes about 24. □



Last but not least in our alphabet collection, XYZ Spritz are rich with cream cheese and almonds.

why, what, HOW?

Cookie-baking questions may not be the high-ticket kind asked on TV quiz shows, but they're important to a baker with a problem. Here are some of the questions we hear most often, along with our final answers.

Photographer: Mike Dieter. Food stylist: Dianna Nolin.



WHY does it make a difference what kind of fat I use in cookies?

Butter is the gold standard for cookie baking, and some recipes have scrumptious flavor and correct texture only when butter is used. In this magazine, we've indicated those recipes by specifying "butter (no substitutes)." Butter is necessary in most of our recipes for cutouts and slice-and-bake cookies, and in a few other recipes.

Our recipes that call for either butter or margarine produce good results with either fat, as long as you use a margarine that contains 80 percent vegetable oil. If the fat percentage is not clear from the front of the box, check the nutrition label; the margarine should have 100 calories per tablespoon. You may have to read a lot of labels until you find one that works. Brands of margarine that contain 80 percent vegetable oil include Land O' Lakes, Mazola, Nucoa, and some store brands. Be aware that these companies also produce lower-fat margarines, so check labels carefully.

Margarines with less than 80 percent vegetable oil are high in water. Using them can result in cookies that are tough, spread too much, stick to the pan, or don't brown well.

WHY do so many of your recipes call for nuts? Some people are allergic to nuts and others don't like them.

To be honest, we're nuts about nuts. We like the added flavor and chewy texture they give cookies. You're right that we haven't paid enough attention to the needs of bakers who don't like nuts or who have a family member who is allergic or won't touch a cookie containing nuts.

Think of nuts as an optional ingredient. In most cases, you can simply leave them out. There are a couple of exceptions. First, if a recipe calls for ground nuts, the nuts take the place of some of the flour and some of the fat, so they can't be omitted without drastically changing the structure of the cookies. Second, if nuts are a primary ingredient, as in the Mixed Nut Bars on page 29, omitting them would leave a bland, unappealing cookie.



What makes cookies spread too much? Hot cookie sheets may be the cause. Always let cookie sheets cool between batches.

HOW should I adjust my cookie recipes for baking at high altitude?

Cookie recipes need little adjustment for high altitude. Increase the oven temperature by 25 degrees and decrease the baking time by a minute or two. If further adjustment is necessary, reduce the sugar by just a couple of tablespoons. If a recipe calls for baking powder or baking soda, you may need to reduce the amount by $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon. Make just one change to the recipe at a time.

what, why, HOW?



WHAT makes cookies too dry?

The cookies probably contain too much flour. Maybe the measuring didn't measure up. When you measure flour, stir it in the canister to lighten it (you don't need to sift). Gently spoon flour into a dry measuring cup then level the top with the straight edge of a metal spatula or knife. Don't pack the flour into the cup or tap it with the spatula or on the counter to level.

Measure flour and other dry ingredients, such as sugar, in nested metal or plastic measuring cups. Glass or plastic cups with a spout are meant only for liquids. If you use a liquid-measuring cup for flour, you'll get an extra tablespoon or more of flour per cup, enough to make cookies dry and hard.

HOW should cookies be stored? Can I freeze dough?

Most cookie doughs can be refrigerated or frozen for baking later. The exceptions are thin batters, such as bar cookie batters, and meringue or macaroon mixtures.

Store cookie dough in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator up to three days, or freeze up to six months. To freeze cookie dough, pack it into freezer containers, or shape slice-and-bake dough into rolls and wrap in foil. Or go one step further with drop cookie dough. Use a small ice cream scoop to form balls of dough and freeze them on a cookie sheet; after they freeze, transfer them to a plastic freezer bag.

Before baking, thaw frozen dough in the container in the refrigerator. If the thawed dough is too stiff to work with, let it stand at room temperature for a few minutes till it is easy to handle.

To store baked cookies, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure the cookies have completely cooled on a wire rack before storing. If they are still warm, they're likely to stick together.
- Place cookies in plastic bags or containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Store cookies unfrosted; frosting may cause cookies to stick together. Royal Icing tends to separate from the cookies, and colored icing sometimes develops light spots when frozen. Also, stored cookies tend to absorb moisture from the frosting and lose their crispness.

Can I make cookies with a portable mixer? Yes, all recipes in this magazine were tested with both handheld and standard mixers with good results.

For short-term storage, cookies keep at room temperature up to three days. Pack crisp and soft cookies separately. Stored together, they all become soft. Store bar cookies in a tightly covered container or store them uncut in their own baking pan, tightly covered with plastic wrap or foil.

Any cookies with a frosting or filling that contains cream cheese or yogurt must be stored in the refrigerator. Our recipes indicate if cookies require refrigeration.

HOW can I tell if my oven is running at the right temperature?

You'll notice in a hurry if your oven is running hotter than the temperature you set because the cookies will brown too fast. A temperature that is too low causes less change in the appearance but lengthens the baking time, causing cookies to be coarse-textured and dry by the time the edges are brown.

It's a good idea to check your oven temperature occasionally, especially before a heavy round of holiday baking. You can buy an oven thermometer at a hardware store. Set the oven at 350° and let it heat at least 10 minutes. Place the thermometer in the oven. Close the door and let it heat at least 5 minutes.

If the thermometer reads higher than 350°, reduce the setting by the number of degrees difference each time you bake. If the thermometer reads lower than 350°, increase the setting by the number of degrees difference. If your oven is more than 50 degrees off, have a service person adjust the thermostat.

HOW can I use fruit-base fat substitutes in cookies?

If you want to experiment with fruit puree as a substitutes for fat in drop or bar cookie recipes, replace no more than half of the butter or margarine with the fruit product. The cookies will be moist and cakelike because the fruit absorbs and holds moisture. Fruit puree won't work in cutout or slice-and-bake cookies because it makes the dough too soft to hold its shape. □



COOKIE SHEETS

Before you begin your holiday cookie baking, take a look at the cookie sheets stashed in your cupboard. If they're thin and warped or dark with baked-on grease, or if you have nothing but pans with 1-inch sides, it's time to head to the store for new pans.

Look for shiny, heavy-gauge sheets with very low or no sides. Avoid dark cookie sheets, which may cause cookie bottoms to overbrown.

Use jelly-roll pans (15x10x1-inch baking pans) only for bar cookies. Other types of cookies won't bake evenly in a pan with sides. If you must use this type of pan for other cookies, turn it over and bake on the bottom.

Nonstick cookie sheets let you skip the greasing step. However, the dough may not spread as much, resulting in thicker, more cakelike cookies.

Insulated cookie sheets slow baking and tend to yield pale cookies with soft centers. You may have trouble when using insulated sheets for cookies that contain a large proportion of butter, such as sugar-cookie cutouts, because the butter may melt out before the dough is set. Don't bake cookies on insulated cookie sheets long enough to brown the bottoms because the other parts of the cookies will be too dry. On the other hand, if your oven runs a bit hot or browns cookies rapidly, insulated cookie sheets may improve results.

Greasing cookie sheets makes it easier to remove the cookies and to wash the cookie sheet after baking. A light greasing with shortening or a quick spray with nonstick cooking spray is adequate for most recipes. Using too much fat, or greasing when a recipe doesn't call for it, causes cookies to spread excessively, have very thin edges, and brown too quickly around the edges.