

To form each cookie, use a small offset spatula to spread 2 Tbs. of the uncolored dough on the prepared sheets into a 3½-by-4½-inch rectangle about ⅛ inch thick. Pipe a diagonal line of red dough over the rectangle from one side to the opposite side. Continue to pipe lines, using different colors of red and varying the width of the lines; space the lines ¾ inch apart.

Bake until the edges are firm to the touch but have not yet taken on any golden color, 15 to 17 minutes. Immediately use a metal spatula to remove each cookie from the sheets and invert it onto a work surface. Roll the cookie around a chopstick, then remove the chopstick. Transfer to wire racks and let cool completely, about 15 minutes. If the cookies become too cool and fragile, return them to the oven for 1 minute to soften. Store the cookies in an airtight container for up to 2 days. Makes about 24 cookies.

Adapted from *The Art of the Cookie*, by Shelly Kaldunski (Weldon Owen Inc., 2010).

## Jolly Cookie Jar

*This one-of-a-kind, do-it-yourself layered glass cookie jar comes with all the necessary dry ingredients already measured out. It is a “just add butter, eggs and vanilla” kind of gift, which will delight grown-ups and kids alike. Any favorite cookie recipe will do; however, we chose a recipe with walnuts, dried cherries and chocolate chips for a festive look and delicious taste.*

Add each ingredient into the jar in the order listed. After each addition, use a large spoon or a small fist to level and pack down each layer. Attach the lid.

On the white card stock, make a gift tag that includes the following instructions: “For scrumptious holiday cookies in a flash, preheat the oven to 375°F. Beat together 3 oz. (¾ stick) softened unsalted butter, ½ tsp. vanilla extract and 1 egg in a large bowl or mixer. Add the contents of the jar and stir or mix until well blended. Drop by rounded spoonfuls onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until golden, 7 to 10 minutes. Makes 2 dozen cookies. Enjoy!”

Punch a hole in a corner of your gift tag, and thread your ribbon or kitchen string through. When the tag is centered in the middle of the ribbon, tie the ribbon around the jar’s neck or secure it under the threads of the lid. Makes 1 jar.

Adapted from *Kids in the Holiday Kitchen*, by Jessica Strand & Tammy Massman-Johnson (Chronicle Books, 2007).

### Ingredients for Jolly Cookie Jar

1-quart wide-mouthed jar (with a lid)  
in glass or clear plastic

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup packed light brown sugar

¼ cup all-purpose flour

¼ tsp. baking soda

¼ tsp. baking powder

½ cup chopped walnuts

½ cup dried tart cherries

½ cup rolled oats (not instant)

¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips

3-by-3-inch piece white card stock

Hole punch

16 to 18 inches narrow ribbon or  
kitchen string

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## *The Cookie Baker’s Equipment*

- Mixing bowls in various sizes
- Dry and liquid measuring cups

- Measuring spoons

- Rolling pin

- Baking sheets

- Electric mixer

- Cookie cutters

- Offset spatula

- Parchment paper

- Pastry bag and tips

- Small paintbrushes

- Silicone baking mats

- Toothpicks

- Wire cooling racks

## *The Cookie Artist’s Tool Kit*

Like artists, cookie makers need to stock an array of supplies. Here are some essentials:

- Coconut

- Dark chocolate pearls

- Dragées

- Food coloring

- Jimmies

- Luster dust

- Nonpareils

- Nuts

- Sanding sugar

- Instant espresso powder

- Vanilla bean paste

- Candied citrus peel

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# Technique Class: The Perfect Cookie Exchange

## *Give a Little, Get a Little*

An exciting way to share—and maybe even show off—your eye-catching creations is through a cookie exchange party. Guests bring their favorite homemade cookies to display and exchange, and each person goes home with samples and recipes. Cookie exchanges are a winter holiday party classic, and they also make enjoyable activities for other occasions, such as birthdays, brunches and showers.

A cookie exchange party has all of the makings and charm of a potluck, and is just as easy to host. Two to three weeks before the date of your get-together, send invitations or an email with the basic information: time, place and an RSVP request. Since a cookie exchange might be new for some guests, briefly explain in the invitation that each guest should bring one to two dozen cookies to sample and exchange, along with enough copies of the recipe to share.

Let guests know that this will be a chance to sample and talk about a wide range of recipes, whether new or familiar. You can let your guests choose a type of cookie or you can suggest a theme, such as flowers for an outdoor garden party, goblins and ghouls for Halloween, or a winter wonderland of stars and trees for Christmas.

Depending on the occasion and time of day, consider offering a few savory snacks and beverages, such as coffee, tea, sparkling water or wine. On the day of the cookie exchange, set up a table that can accommodate everyone’s offerings, and have ready jars, boxes, bags, or colorful papers and string that guests can use to take cookies home.

Adapted from *The Art of the Cookie*, by Shelly Kaldunski (Weldon Owen Inc., 2010).

## *Basic Cookie Making and Cookie Exchange Tips*

These tips will help you have a great cookie-baking experience every time:

- If you have time, make the cookie dough in advance and refrigerate it overnight. Giving the dough time to rest makes it easier to roll out and cut.
- Unless specified otherwise in your recipe, have all the ingredients at room temperature. They will mix together more evenly, minimizing lumps in the cookie dough.
- If you want to use a different-flavored extract than the one called for, such as orange extract instead of almond, use the same quantity that is specified in the original recipe.
- Add the room-temperature eggs to the other ingredients one at a time, incorporating each egg completely before adding the next.

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#### Ingredients for Crisp Chocolate Chip Cookies with Pistachios and Dried Cherries

1¼ cups all-purpose flour

¾ tsp. salt

¾ tsp. baking soda

12 Tbs. (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

¼ cup granulated sugar

3 Tbs. light corn syrup

2 Tbs. milk

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup miniature bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips

¾ cup unsalted toasted shelled natural pistachios, chopped

¾ cup dried tart cherries, chopped

- Sift the dry ingredients (unless your recipe specifically says not to) before adding them to the butter, sugar and egg mixture. This prevents lumps from forming.
- Refrigerate the cookie dough for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours. This makes the dough easier to roll out and cut and ensures the dough will bake properly.
- Always preheat the oven before baking the cookies.
- Use high-quality ingredients to ensure exceptionally flavorful cookies. Purchase real, not imitation, extract. Premium chocolate produces better-tasting cookies with a smoother chocolate finish.
- When inviting guests to a cookie exchange, utilize an online invitation website so they can RSVP and share what type of cookie they are planning to bring; this will help avoid duplication.
- Create a fun theme for your cookie exchange, such as who wears the most festive outfit or whose cookies are the most beautiful, then have a cookie-inspired prize for the winner.
- Display your guests' cookies on a table decorated with beautiful copper cookie cutters, festive platters and seasonal inspiration.
- Serve classic beverages to enjoy when your guests are sampling each other's cookies, such as cold milk and hot chocolate.

## Crisp Chocolate Chip Cookies with Pistachios and Dried Cherries

*Laced with dried cherries, chocolate chips and natural pistachios (the green ones), these cookies have a festive look and are full of flavor.*

Position the racks in the upper and lower thirds of an oven and preheat to 375°F. Butter 2 baking sheets.

In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, salt and baking soda.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the flat beater, beat the butter on medium-high speed until light and fluffy. Add the brown and granulated sugars and beat until light and fluffy. Add the corn syrup and beat until well blended, then beat in the milk and vanilla. Reduce the speed to low, add the flour mixture and beat just until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed. Using the spatula, stir in the chocolate chips, pistachios and cherries.

Transfer the dough to a work surface and press it together with your hands. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls and place them about 2 inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. With the palm of your hand or the flat bottom of a glass, flatten each ball into a disk about ¾ inch thick. Bake for 4 minutes, switch the position of the pans and bake until the cookies are light golden brown, 4 to 6 minutes more.

Transfer the baking sheets to wire racks and let cool for 3 minutes, then transfer the cookies to the racks and let cool completely. The cookies will crisp as they cool. (The cookies can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.) Makes a generous 4 dozen cookies.

Adapted from *Luscious Chocolate Desserts*, by Lori Longbotham (Chronicle Books, 2004).

## Cornmeal Sticks

*Crunchy in texture from cornmeal, the cookies have a subtle citrus flavor from the addition of lime zest. The dough can be wrapped well and frozen for up to 1 month.*

In a bowl, whisk together the flour, the 3 Tbs. cornmeal and the salt. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, beat together the butter and confectioners' sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and slowly add the flour mixture, beating until almost incorporated and scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the walnuts, currants, raisins and lime zest and beat until just incorporated.

Transfer the dough to a work surface. Form the dough into a log about 5 inches wide, 1¼ inches high and 7 inches long. Sprinkle the ¼ cup cornmeal onto the log, using your hands to gently press it into the dough. Wrap the log tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to overnight.

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.

Using a chef's knife, cut the log crosswise into slices ¼ inch thick. Transfer the cookies to the prepared baking sheets, spacing them 1 inch apart. Sprinkle with sanding sugar.

Bake until the edges turn light golden brown but the centers are barely colored, 16 to 18 minutes. Let the cookies cool on the sheets for 5 minutes. Using a metal spatula, transfer the cookies to wire racks and let cool completely, about 30 minutes. Store the cookies in an airtight container, layered between parchment paper, at room temperature for up to 4 days. Makes about 25 cookies.

Adapted from *The Art of the Cookie*, by Shelly Kaldunski (Weldon Owen Inc., 2010).

## Peppermint Sticks

*These crisp cookies are delicious on their own. You can also fill the rolled cookies by piping vanilla cream frosting into them; refrigerate for 20 minutes before serving.*

In a bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, beat together the butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the egg whites and peppermint extract, reduce the speed to low and beat until the whites are completely incorporated. Slowly add the flour mixture and beat until just incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Place 2 Tbs. of the dough into each of 4 small bowls. Color each a different shade of red, starting with pale pink and ending with dark burgundy. To make burgundy, use the tip of a toothpick to add a tiny bit of brown to deep red. Spoon the doughs into separate pastry bags, each fitted with a ⅛-inch round tip. Refrigerate the dough until chilled, about 30 minutes.

Preheat an oven to 325°F. Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper.

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#### Ingredients for Cornmeal Sticks

2¼ cups all-purpose flour

3 Tbs. plus ¼ cup medium-grind yellow cornmeal

½ tsp. salt

16 Tbs. (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 cup confectioners' sugar

½ cup walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped

¼ cup currants

½ cup golden raisins

2 tsp. finely grated lime zest

White sanding sugar for sprinkling

#### Ingredients for Peppermint Sticks

¾ cup all-purpose flour

¼ tsp. salt

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ cup plus 1 Tbs. sugar

3 egg whites

¾ tsp. peppermint extract

Gel paste food coloring in shades of red and brown