12 recipes that will show your friends and family there's nothing like Homemade for the holidays

Recipes compiled by
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Magic In The Middles

1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup unsweetened natural cocoa powder
½ tsp. baking soda · ½ tsp. salt
½ cup granulated sugar (and some to dip in)
½ cup brown sugar · 1 stick unsalted butter
½ cup smooth peanut butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract · 1 large egg
Filling: ½ cup smooth peanut butter
½ cup confectioners' sugar

Oven: 375° F
Bowl 1: Mix flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. **Bowl 2:** Mix sugar, butter and the peanut butter. Mix in vanilla and egg – then add dry ingredients. **Filling:** Mix peanut butter and confectioners' sugar until smooth. Roll the filling into 26 one-inch balls.
Cookies: Break off about 1 tbsp. of dough, make an indentation in the center with your finger. Place peanut butter ball into the indentation. Bring the dough up and over the filling, pressing it closed, roll the cookie to smooth it out. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling, then dip each cookie in granulated sugar and place on baking sheets. Flatten each cookie to about ½ inch thick. **Bake:** 7 to 9 minutes. Cool on rack.

– From "The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion"

Lemon Tea Snaps

½ cup unsalted butter · ½ cup sugar · ½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking soda
1 tbsp. grated lemon rind (zest), or ½ to ½ tsp. lemon oil, to taste
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
2 tbsp. lemon juice
Milk for brushing (optional)
Coarse sugar for sprinkling (optional)

Oven: 350° F
In a large mixing bowl, cream together the butter, sugar, salt and baking soda. Mix in the lemon zest, then half of the flour. Add the lemon juice, then the other half of the flour.

Roll the dough into a ½-inch-thick rectangle on a piece of parchment paper. Transfer the parchment to a baking sheet. Prick the dough all over with a fork and cut it into 1-by-1½-inch rectangles. There's no need to separate the rectangles; all you need to do is cut the dough. Brush the top of the dough with milk and sprinkle with sugar, if desired.
Bake the cookies for 15 to 18 minutes, until they're a light golden brown. Remove them from the oven and transfer to a rack to cool. When they're cool, break them apart into individual cookies; they'll separate nicely.
Makes 6 dozen small cookies.

– From "The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion," Countryman Press

Sue Moore's Cardamom Cookies

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
2 tsp. vanilla
2½ cups all-purpose flour
½ tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. black cardamom seeds

In a large bowl, combine the butter, sugars, egg and vanilla and beat until light and fluffy. Sift the flour and baking soda into the mixture and mix well. Stir in cardamom seeds. Shape the dough into two 10-inch-long logs the diameter of a quarter. Wrap the logs in waxed paper and chill for at least an hour.

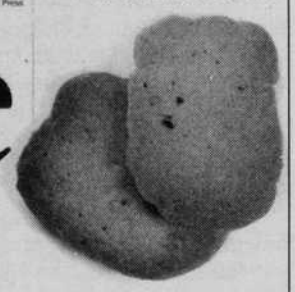
Oven: 350° F

Cut the logs into very thin slices, about ⅛ inch thick, and place on ungreased baking sheets. Bake for about 10 minutes, or until golden brown. Watch carefully. They can burn easily.

Transfer the cookies to a wire rack after they have cooled for a few minutes.

Makes about 60 to 70 cookies.

– From "Simple Suivers," Stewart, Tabori & Chang



Crystal Diamonds

1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup plus 1 tbsp. whole milk
1 drop lemon oil (see note)
1 tsp. instant yeast
½ tsp. salt
½ cup unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
1½ cups coarse sugar, for rolling

Oven: 275° F
Mix: Flour, milk, lemon oil, yeast and salt until well combined. Mix in the pieces of butter one at a time, beat each for 1 full minute. Remove and cover, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

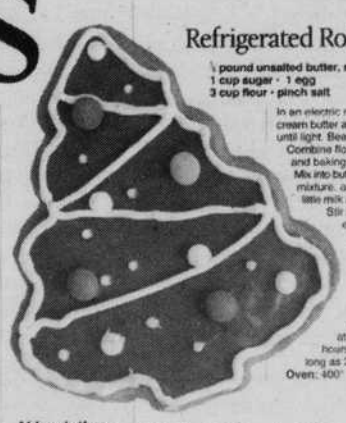
Sprinkle work surface heavily with coarse sugar. Working with half the dough at a time, Roll it on the sugar-covered surface as thin as possible, adding additional sugar to the work surface and sprinkling it atop the dough as necessary. Flip it over, and sprinkle work surface with more sugar – the top and bottom surfaces should be heavily coated with sugar. The dough should be about ¼ inch thick, almost translucent in spots. Cut pieces about 2½ inches in size.

They'll shrink a bit after baking. Transfer the diamonds to ungreased, unlined baking sheets. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes. They should be a deep golden brown. The closer you get to deep brown, the better they'll taste. Remove them from the oven and transfer to a rack immediately to cool. Otherwise, they may stick to the pan.

Just a lil' lemon: Yes, a drop of lemon oil. You want just the merest hint of citrus here: it should be almost undetectable, just enough to make people wonder what they're tasting.
Makes about 5 dozen 2-inch cookies.

– From "The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion"

Refrigerated Rolled Cookies



½ pound unsalted butter, softened
1 cup sugar · 1 egg
3 cup flour · pinch salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tbsp. milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract

In an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until light. Beat in egg. Combine flour, salt, and baking powder. Mix into butter-sugar mixture, adding a little milk at a time. Stir in vanilla extract. Shape the dough into a dish and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or as long as 2 days.
Oven: 400° F

Cut the dough dish in half. Lightly flour a work surface and a rolling pin and roll gently until about ¼ inch thick, adding flour as necessary. Cut with any cookie cutter. Bake on lightly greased baking sheets until the edges are lightly brown and the center set, 6-10 minutes. Let rest on sheet a minute before removing with a spatula. Store in covered container at room temperature for no more than a day or two.
Makes at least 3 dozen cookies.

– From "How to Cook Everything" Macmillan

Maple-Caramel Nut Crisps

3 tbsp. maple syrup, preferably medium amber
½ cup plus 3 tbsp. granulated sugar
2 cups coarsely chopped walnuts or pecans
2 tbsp. water · 3 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder · 2 tsp. baking soda
½ generous tsp. salt
2 sticks unsalted butter
1 cup packed light brown sugar

Oven: 350° F
Line a large pie plate or similar-size heatproof dish with aluminum foil coated with nonstick spray; set aside. Line a 10-by-15-inch (or similar) rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil coated with nonstick spray.
Mix: Maple syrup, 3 tbsp. sugar, and pecans until nuts are well coated. Spread on baking sheet. Toast 8 to 13 minutes, stirring every 3 to 4 minutes until nicely browned. Set aside to cool. In a heavy 2-quart saucepan over medium heat, stir together the remaining ½ cup granulated sugar and the water until the sugar dissolves. Bring mixture to a boil over medium heat. Adjust the heat so the mixture boils briskly. Continue boiling, and gently swirl the syrup for 3 to 4 minutes. Do not stir. Remove from heat when it turns an amber color, then pour syrup into pie plate. Let stand 10 minutes until cooled and hard. Break the caramel into small chunks. Transfer to a food processor and pulse until fairly finely ground, with some bits visible. **Mix:** Flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a large bowl using a mixer on medium speed, beat together the butter, brown sugar and ground caramel until very fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla until smooth. Beat in half the flour mixture. Stir in the remaining flour mixture, the toasted nuts, until smooth. Spoon half the dough onto a 16-inch-long sheet of baking parchment. Smooth and form into a thick log about 12 inches long. Twist the ends of the paper to keep the log from unrolling. Repeat with the remaining dough. Place logs on a rimmed baking sheet and freeze until firm.
Oven: 375 F
Cut logs into generous 1/8-inch-thick slices and transfer to baking sheets, spacing them about 2 inches apart. Bake for 7 to 11 minutes, or until the cookies are golden all over and just slightly darker around the edges.

– "The All-American Dessert Book" Houghton Mifflin

Key Lime Cookies

1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. corn or vegetable oil
1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. finely grated Key lime or regular lime zest (green part of the skin)
6 tbsp. fresh or bottled Key lime juice
1½ cups all-purpose flour · 1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder · Pinch of salt
½ cup granulated sugar · 7 tbsp. unsalted butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract
½ tsp. lemon extract or lime flavoring oil
1 tbsp. water, if needed
3 tbsp. lime-colored decorating sugar

Combine: oil and lime zest. Let stand, covered, for at least 30 minutes. Microwave lime juice for 2½ to 5 minutes until it's reduced to 2½ tbsp.; the juice will darken in color slightly. Let cool to room temperature.
Bowl 1: Mix flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. **Bowl 2:** Beat together the oil mixture and granulated sugar. Add butter, beating until fluffy. Mix in lime juice, vanilla and lemon extract until smooth. Gradually beat flour mixture into a smooth dough. If too soft, let stand for 5 min. to firm. If it seems dry, stir in up to 1 tbsp. water.
Divide the dough in half, then roll each portion between sheets of baking parchment or wax paper until ¼ inch thick. Stack the rolled portions (paper still attached) on a baking sheet.
Refrigerate for 30 minutes or freeze for 15 minutes.
Oven: 350° F Grease several baking sheets or coat with nonstick spray. Work one portion at a time. Keep the other refrigerated. Peel off the top sheet of paper, then pat loosely back into place so it will be easy to remove later. Invert dough and peel off second sheet.
Using a 2½-inch round cutter, cut out cookies, then cut each in half. If dough softens too much, transfer the paper and cookies to a baking sheet and refrigerate until firm.
Transfer the cookies to the baking sheets, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Generously sprinkle the cookie tops with decorating sugar.
Bake: 7 to 11 minutes, or until cookies brown at edges. Immediately transfer the cookies to a wire rack. Let cool.
Makes 50 to 60 cookies.

– "The All American Dessert Book" Houghton Mifflin

Abbreviations
tsp. Teaspoon
tbsp. Tablespoon
Some recipes require advance preparation time.

High Altitude Chocolate Chips

½ cup vegetable shortening · ½ cup plus 2 tbsp. sugar
½ cup plus 1 tsp. packed light brown sugar
½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
½ tsp. water · 1 large egg
1½ cups sifted all-purpose flour
½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1 cup chocolate chips
½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Oven: 375° F
Lightly butter two large baking sheets or line with parchment paper.
Mixer: Place shortening in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment – cream until smooth. Add the sugars and cream until light and fluffy. Add vanilla extract, water and egg, and beat well.
In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking soda and salt, and mix well. Add dry ingredients, and mix on low speed until combined. Remove the bowl from the mixer, add chocolate chips and nuts, then turn gently with a wooden spoon.
Use two spoons to shape the cookies. Scoop a generous tsp. of dough with a spoon, then use the other spoon to scooch it onto the sheet. Remember, the cookies will spread out while baking.
Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until the cookies are golden brown.
Makes nearly 3 dozen very raised cookies.

– From "Home Baking" by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid, Artisan

Coconut Jumbles

¾ cup unsalted butter · ¾ cup sugar
2 large eggs · 1½ tsp. vanilla extract
½ tsp. strong coconut flavor (optional)
½ tsp. salt · ½ tsp. baking soda
1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1½ cups sweetened flaked coconut
About 36 candied cherries, cut in half, or 72 macadamia nuts

Oven: 375° F
Bowl 1: Mix cream, butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and coconut flavor until light and fluffy.
Bowl 2: Sift flour, salt and baking soda together, then mix into egg mixture. Stir in the coconut until everything is well combined.
Drop the dough by the teaspoon onto prepared baking sheets, then press each ball down slightly.
Bake: 9 minutes, or until they're light golden brown and just firm to the touch. As cookies come out of oven, plunk half a candied cherry or a macadamia nut, into the center of each and press down gently. Cool.
Makes about 6 dozen cookies.

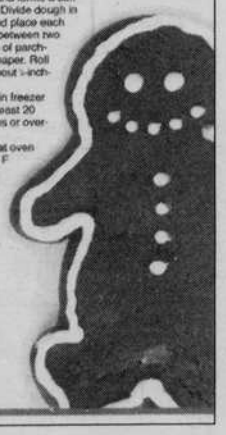
– From "The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion"

Chewy Gingerbread Cookies

3 cups flour
¾ cup dark brown sugar
1 tbsp. cinnamon
1 tbsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. ground cloves
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking soda
1½ sticks unsalted butter, cut into 12 pieces and softened slightly
½ cup molasses
2 tbsp. milk

Oven: 350° F
In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, process flour, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, salt and baking soda until well combined.
Add butter pieces and process until mixture resembles a very fine meal. Add molasses and milk, processing until mixture is evenly moistened and forms a soft mass. Divide dough in half and place each piece between two pieces of parchment paper. Roll until about ½-inch-thick.
Place in freezer for at least 20 minutes or overnight.
Preheat oven to 350 F
Remove dough from freezer and cut into gingerbread or desired shapes. Place on parchment-lined sheet pans and bake for 9 to 12 minutes. Cool and decorate.
Makes about 2 dozen cookies.

– Traditional family recipe

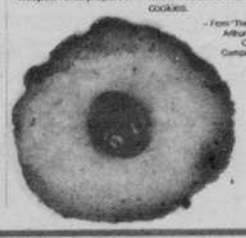


Classic Oatmeal Raisin

2½ cups all-purpose flour · 2 large eggs
1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. ground nutmeg · 1 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda · ½ tsp. salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, slightly softened
1 cup dark brown sugar · ½ cup granulated sugar
3 tbsp. clover or other mild-flavored honey
2½ tsp. vanilla extract
3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
1½ cups dark or golden raisins

Oven: 350° F
Bowl 1: Mix flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Bowl 2: Mix butter and sugars. With a mixer on low, beat until the mixture is well blended and lightened, about 1½ minutes. Add the eggs, honey and vanilla, and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes longer. Beat in the flour mixture on low. Stir in the oats, raisins until evenly distributed. Let stand for 10 minutes. Pull off portions of the dough and shape into golf ball-size balls. Press down the dough tops until the cookies are flat and about 2 inches in diameter.
Bake: 9 to 14 minutes, or until just slightly darker at the edges.

– "The All American Dessert Book" Houghton Mifflin

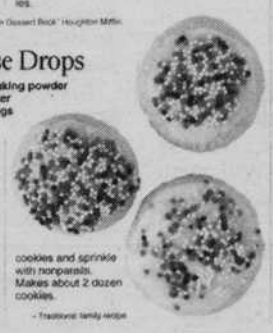


Italian Anise Drops

3 cups flour · 3 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salT · 1 cup butter
½ cup sugar · 1 to 3 eggs
2 tsp. anise extract

Oven: 350° F
Mix: Cream together butter, sugar and anise extract. Add all dry ingredients. Add eggs, one at a time as needed, until dough forms. Roll into 1-inch balls. Bake on greased cookie sheet for 15 minutes. Cool.
Make glaze of 2 cups confectioners' sugar, 1 tsp. lemon juice and milk. Pour glaze over cookies and sprinkle with nonpareils.
Makes about 2 dozen cookies.

– Traditional family recipe



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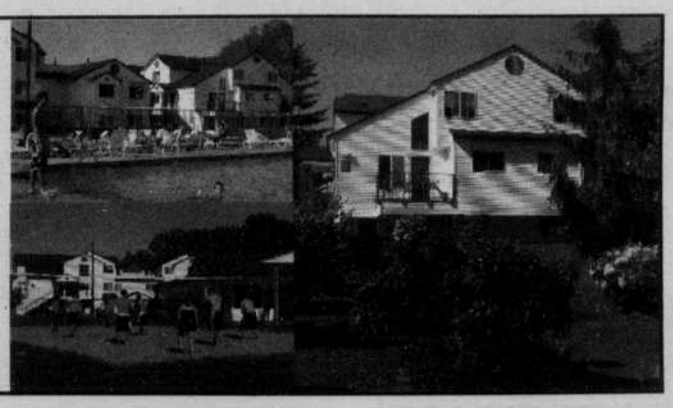
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