

A very British holiday treat

Recipe for shortbread

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

I'm a self-confessed Anglophile, a person who greatly admires all things English. If its British, chances are I'll love it. My favorite TV shows are British, my favorite cooks are British. When the two are combined, my joy knows no bounds.

I have stated (jokingly) that I'd be the first American winner of "The Great British Bake Off" reality TV show. Realistically, I know I'd be eliminated during biscuit week. My brain would automatically instruct my hands to craft a tall, flaky and buttery Southern-style biscuit.

I'd look at the other contestants with dismay at their short, unfluffy biscuit outcomes. My only hope is that I'd keep my snarky comments to myself and not speak them aloud on camera. I don't want my mother to shake her head in disappointment at my on-screen behavior.

And then of course I would realize I was supposed to make a British biscuit, aka a cookie. Say goodbye, Brian.

My friend, Basil, travels frequently to the U.K. I'm thankful she brings me exceptional treats upon her return. My favorites include a pair beeswax tapered candles that became the final straw in a relationship when someone attempted to light them. And less controversially, a tin of Scottish shortbread. The assortment of crumbly and buttery shortbread shapes encased in the thin metal tin are enthralling. It's like opening your most sought-after Christmas gift every morning.

During the drizzly and foggy final months of the year, I frequently make myself a cup of tea, open the tin and retrieve a shortbread biscuit or two. It's a soothing self-indulgence, one that I intend to keep on repeat year-round.

This antlered stag adorned tin is now my official cookie jar. When it's empty, I will refill it. My hope is that when friends and family visit, I'll greet them and then they'll hasten to my dining room to check out the latest installment in my biscuit tin.

Whether it's shortbread, jaffa cakes, hobnobs or even a store-bought digestive, fill your version of a shortbread tin. And when



Brian Medford

Brian Medford's British biscuit.

it's time, don't sneak a biscuit, but select it enthusiastically and eat with abandon, with or without tea. Share them with friends and shine some buttery light during the dark and wet winter season.

Holiday Shortbread Recipe

Adapted from Mary Berry

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces all-purpose flour
- 4 ounces cornstarch
- 8 ounces unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for the tin
- 4 ounces granulated sugar, plus 2 tablespoons for finishing
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Directions:

Lightly butter a 9"x13" baking tin. In large bowl, mix the flour and the cornstarch. Add the butter, sugar and salt and rub together with your fingers until the mixture begins to bind together. Gently knead until the mixture forms a smooth dough.

Press the dough into the prepared baking tin and ensure it is spread evenly. Prick the dough with a fork in straight lines and chill in the refrigerator until firm.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Bake the shortbread for 30 to 35 minutes, or until very pale golden brown. Sprinkle with the remaining two tablespoons of granulated sugar and let cool slightly.

Cut the shortbread into about 36 (1" by 3") fingers. Lift out of the tin and let cool completely. Store in an airtight tin.

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