



Christmas is coming! And it just wouldn't be Christmas morning without cookies for Santa. So, whoever in your house is responsible for Santa's snack, had better start thinking about what they're going to bake. After all, his cookies can't be store bought! Everyone knows that Santa and his reindeer love home baked goodies with their cups of milk.

Tradition says that leaving cookies and milk for Santa began in medieval Germany when folks decorated their (paradise) trees with apples, wafers and cookies. Later, cookies were included in the celebration of St. Nicholas day on the sixth of December and placed on the fireplace hearth.

With nearly three weeks to go until Christmas, this is a great time to get our cookie recipes organized for Santa and the entire family. I like to make a list of needed ingredients, check out the sales and stock up on everything so there won't be any last minute super market runs. Be sure and check your butter, brown and powdered sugar, eggs and cookie cutters.

This is the only time of the year that my husband and I frost cookies. I'm the baker but he's the decorator. I make the dough, roll it out and cut it into shapes. Once they're baked and cooled, he chooses the colors and designs to make the angels, reindeers, stars, Santa's and gingerbread men come to life.

Our two family favorites are sugar cookies and gingerbread men. Both are simple to make. It's the decorating that's tricky. The sugar cookie dough is made with cream cheese (no eggs). It is tender and easy to handle. The gingerbread recipe makes a lot. The frosting can be used on both kinds of cookies. And since everyone loves Thumbprint cookies, I've included a special recipe for the kids—peanut butter in the dough with jelly on the top. Any kind will do. I like apricot but kids may prefer grape. Enjoy!

Cream Cheese Sugar Cookie Dough

- 1 pkg. (8 ounce) Cream Cheese, softened
- 3/4-cup butter (1-1/2 sticks) softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2-1/4 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Beat cream cheese, butter, sugar and vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add flour and baking soda; mix well. Cover. Use as base for the following two cookie recipes.

Note: For a sweeter dough add 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1 table-spoon milk and a pinch of salt.

Sugar Cookie Cut-outs

Preheat oven to 350° F. Roll above dough to 1/8-inch thick-ness on lightly floured surface. Cut into assorted shapes using 3-inch cookie cutters. Place on greased baking sheets.

Bake 10-12 minutes or until edges begin to brown. Transfer cookies to wire rack; immediately press about 1/2-teaspoon crushed candies onto each hot cookie. Cool completely on rack. Makes about 3 1/2 dozen cookies.

Cookie Frosting

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- Food Coloring of your choice

Frost cooled cookies lightly and put faces on gingerbread men or snow ladies. Use raisins for eyes, Red Hots for lips or decorate with your favorite sprinkles.

German Molasses Cookies or Gingerbread Men

Makes 8 dozen

- 1 cup butter
- 1 1/4 cups light molasses
- 3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Melt butter in a saucepan; add molasses and brown sugar and heat until sugar is dissolved, stirring occasionally. Pour into a bowl; cool.

Sift remaining ingredients together; add to cooled mixture in fourths, mixing until blended after each addition.

Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead until easy to handle, using additional flour if necessary. Cover in plastic wrap; refrigerate and allow dough to ripen one or two days.

Roll one fourth of dough at a time about 1/8 inch thick on a floured surface; cut with a 3-inch round cutter or fancy cutters. Transfer to ungreased cookie sheets. Bake about 7 minutes.

Note: For gingerbread men, roll dough 1/4 inch thick and cut with a gingerbread-man cutter. Bake about 13 min. Makes a lot!

PBJ Thumbprint Cookies

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 1/4 cup butter softened
- 1/2 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Whisk 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1/2 tsp baking soda and 1/4 tsp salt together in a small bowl.

Combine in mixer: 1 egg with 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup natural peanut butter, 1/4 cup soft butter and 1/2 tsp vanilla. Mix well. Add flour mixture.

ROLL into tablespoon-sized balls and set on baking sheet. Make a deep indent in the center of each ball. Fill with jelly of choice. Bake in center of oven, 7 to 9 min. Makes about 18.

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currently has two vacancies. Committee positions will be appointed by the City Council. The Urban Forestry Committee meets once a month at 4pm. People interested in applying for this position need to complete the Volunteer Appointment Application available at the Community Center/Library or City Hall.

The deadline for submitting applications is 5:00 on Friday December 22, 2017.

For further information please contact the Community Coordinator at 541-942-1185.

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