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## Christmas Cookies!

By Wesley Trobaugh



As Christmas approaches, so does the annual repertoire of Christmas baking, started in my family only by the previous generation, my mom, as my grandma was not one to spend too much time in the kitchen. Cookies are an integral part of Christmas and as I am far away, I have to (or choose to) make cookies and sweets of my own. In the U.S., each baker's list of specialties differs, so mine is a little different and with some variations.

Here are three of the ones that I make with recipes in case you want to try. Remember that in the U.S., we measure everything in volume because it's easier. One cup is about 250 mL. A teaspoon is similar to the spoon you use in coffee. Places like IKEA have utensils with these measurements if you want to be really exact! Where you see shortening, you need to use some sort of fat. I just add more butter or margarine.

**Thumbprints.** Thumbprints have been an annual favorite for as long as I can remember. The original recipe is from a Betty Crocker cookbook, I believe, and calls for balls of buttery dough to be rolled in chopped walnuts (or walnuts smashed with a coffee mug), flattened with the thumb (thus the name), and topped with jam once baked and cooled. My mom changed that and filled them with frosting (icing), an excellent improvement if I do say so myself. What I have done to make them my own is use almonds instead of walnuts, as I like almonds better.

The recipe:

¼ cup packed brown sugar  
¼ cup shortening  
¼ cup butter or margarine, softened  
½ teaspoon vanilla  
1 egg, separated  
1 cup flour  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¾ cup finely chopped walnuts (I use almonds.)  
Jam

Heat oven to 175°C. Mix brown sugar, shortening, butter, vanilla and egg yolk in medium bowl. Stir in flour and salt until dough holds together. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Beat egg white slightly. Dip each ball into egg white. Roll in nuts. Place about 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Press thumb deeply in center of each. Bake about 10 minutes or until light brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheet to wire rack. Cool completely, about 30 minutes. Fill thumbprints with jam (or frosting).

**Sugar cookies.** These are a classic in probably every family. I suppose the main difference is the shape. The dough is rolled out flat and the cookies are cut into star, bell, snowman, and Santa Claus shapes, to name a few. Then the cookies are frosted (iced), usually with frosting, which, by the way, is made of butter, powdered sugar, and vanilla. My take on the sugar cookie is a version which isn't rolled out or frosted, just rolled in sugar flattened with a glass. I don't do detail work and only frost if it can be done in blobs.

The recipe:

2 cups flour  
¾ teaspoon baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)  
1 teaspoon cream of tartar (potassium bitartrate)  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 cup powdered sugar  
½ cup butter  
½ cup shortening  
1 egg, beaten  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Sift dry ingredients into bowl, cut in shortening and butter. Stir in beaten egg and vanilla. Dough is soft. Shape into balls, roll in sugar and flatten with a glass, dipped in sugar. Bake at 150°C for 12 minutes.

**Peanut butter chocolate cookies.** These are just really good. You can use any chocolate drop in the middle.

The recipe:

½ cup sugar  
½ cup brown sugar  
½ cup creamy peanut butter  
¼ cup butter or margarine, softened  
¼ cup shortening  
1 egg  
1 ½ cups flour  
¾ teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
Sugar  
milk chocolate stars or something similar, one for each cookie

Heat oven to 190°C. Stir together 1/2 cup sugar, the brown sugar, peanut butter, butter, shortening and egg. Stir in flour, baking soda and baking powder. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll in sugar. Place about 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges are light brown. Immediately press 1 chocolate star firmly into each cookie.

Merry Christmas!

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