



Home on the Range

Build Holiday Baking Memories

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Candy Cane Cottage: Follow directions for Village Square House, cutting 4 inches off carton base. To make door, use sugar wafers instead of gum sticks. Use individually wrapped large size red and candy cane Life Savers roll candies for roof instead of crackers, cutting candies in half to fit as needed. Use stuck gum to make regular and arched windows as pictured. To make chimney, use a sharp knife to cut out center of 1 bubble gum, leaving about 1/8-inch around outside edge; stack on top of two more pieces bubble gum attaching with icing. Place chimney on roof; stand holiday-shaped bear graham snack in chimney opening.

Cookie Mansion: Follow directions for Village Square House, but do not discard bottom carton piece. Attach bottom carton piece, bottom-side up, next to one side of carton top and attach with tape for garage. Attach holiday graham crackers to house and garage, cutting to fit. To make door, use tea biscuit cookie instead of gum sticks. For garage door, use chocolate graham crackers cut to 2 1/2-inch height. Use stuck gum for windows. For roof, split chocolate sandwich cookies, leaving filling on one side. Use red and white gum sticks for garage roof railing. Stand holiday-shaped bear graham snacks on garage roof.

White Royal Icing: Beat 1/2 cup refrigerated pasteurized egg whites and 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar in large bowl with mixer at high speed until blended. Blend in 1 (16-ounce) package powdered sugar at low speed; beat at high speed until stiff peaks form, about 5 minutes. Keep frosting covered at all times by placing plastic wrap directly on frosting surface to prevent hardening. (Three tablespoons meringue powder or 2 tablespoons egg white powder dissolved in 6 tablespoons warm water may be substituted for pasteurized egg whites.)

DROP SAND TARTS

2 eggs
1 cup butter, melted
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 1/2 cups sugar
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon vanilla
Mix together all ingredients and drop by teaspoonful on cookie sheet. Sprinkle with sugar or nuts. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes until light brown.

Debbie Reynolds
Wrightsville

During the holidays, you don't have time for baking mishaps.

The expert home economists at the Land O' Lakes Holiday Bakeline have helped more than a quarter a million people with holiday baking over the past 10 years. The Bakeline is open from Nov. 1 until Dec. 24, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (CST) seven days a week.

For advice or for a free copy of "Baking Traditions to Last a Lifetime," call the Bakeline at 1-800-782-9606.

Here are the three most commonly asked baking questions and answers to help you avoid baking blunders:

• Why are my cookies flat and spreading?

Most likely the dough is too soft. Remember not to over soften the butter or beat the dough too long. Try refrigerating the dough for one to two hours until it's well chilled. If the dough is still too soft, stir in 1 to 2 tablespoons flour.

• How long can cookie dough be frozen?

Most cookie dough can be refrigerated up to two days and frozen up to two months. Package the dough in an air-tight container or freezer bag before storing.

• What can I do if my dough is too dry and crumbly?

Try add 1 to 2 tablespoons milk or cream to soften your dough. Dry cookie dough will most likely result in dry, crumbly cookies.

BEST BUTTER COOKIES

2 cups butter
2 eggs
5 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 teaspoons baking powder
Cream butter in large mixing bowl. Gradually add sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Blend in eggs and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Gradually add to creamed mixture; mix well. Roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut into desired shapes. Bake for 6-8 minutes at 375 degrees.

Amanda Martin
Lebanon Co. Dairy Princess
SUPER PEANUT BUTTER
(No flour cookies)

Cream together:
1 cup sugar
1 cup peanut butter
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
Roll in balls and mash lightly with a fork. Can also drop by teaspoonful.
Bake in 350-degree oven 12-15 minutes.

Cookies will be soft but will set up while cooling.

Debbie Reynolds
Wrightsville

PEANUT BUTTER CUPS

1/2 cup peanut butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 1/4 cups flour
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
5 dozen peanut butter cups
Mix together all ingredients except peanut butter cups. Form 1-inch balls. Place in paper holders in tassel pans. Bake 10-12 minutes at 375 degrees. Press peanut butter cup in center or cookie while hot. Makes 5 dozen.

Ashley Carper
Huntingdon Co. Dairy Princess

BUTTER BALLS

2 cups butter
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup chopped walnuts or nuts desired
1 cup confectioners' sugar
3 1/2 cups flour
Soften butter. Cream butter and confectioners' sugar until fluffy. Blend in vanilla and flour. Stir in nuts, if desired. Chill dough. Shape into one-inch balls. Bake 20 minutes in 350-degree oven. Roll while still warm in confectioners' sugar. Makes about six dozen cookies. Store between layers of waxed paper to keep cookies from sticking to each other.

Elizabeth Young
Lancaster Co.
Alternate Dairy Princess

PECAN TASSIES (Tiny Pecan Pies)

1/2 cup butter
3-ounces cream cheese
1 cup flour
3/4 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon vanilla
Dash salt
3/5 cup pecans, coarsely broken
Blend together softened butter and cream cheese. Stir in flour. Chill dough about 1 hour.

Shape dough into two dozen 1-inch balls. Place in ungreased 1 1/4-inch muffin pans. Press dough evenly against sides and bottom of each muffin cup.

Blend together brown sugar, egg, butter, vanilla, and salt. Beat until smooth.

Divide half the pecans among pastry-lined muffin cups. Add egg mixture and top with remaining pecans. Bake at 325-degrees for 25 minutes or until filling is set.

Cool before removing from pans.
Makes 2 dozen.

Elisa Ranck
Lancaster Co.
Dairy Princess

Survey Reveals

Americans Love Cookies

Cookies are an American classic - a traditional sweet treat for adults and kids alike. In fact 70 percent of people recently surveyed consider themselves cookie lovers. The new survey of 1,000 consumers, conducted on behalf of Land O' Lakes, reveals the following cookie trends.

Top Billing

Topping the list for favorite cookies, with 60 percent of the vote, was the chocolate chip cookie. Oatmeal cookies took second place at 16 percent, with peanut butter cookies taking third place with 11 percent. All of the top cookie contenders were made with butter.

Confessions of a Cookie Lover

Seven out of every 10 Americans surveyed consider themselves to be cookie lovers. Virtually all Americans eat cookies once a month or more (93 percent), and the majority of people surveyed (58 percent) eat them once a week or more. Ten percent of respondents eat cookies every day.

Straight from the Oven

The majority of Americans surveyed enjoy eating their

favorite cookies served warm (57 percent) and chewy (71 percent). Almost half, 49 percent, demand their cookies have a buttery flavor.

Cookies Say You Care

An overwhelming majority, 70 percent, of all cookie bakers said that when they bake cookies, they bake them for a family member. Many respondents, 17 percent, also enjoy baking for themselves. Bakers also share cookie creations with friends (5 percent) and co-workers (2 percent).

Ingredients Make the Recipe

The majority of cookie lovers, 70 percent, like their cookies with chocolate. Divided almost evenly are those who love cookies with nuts, 53 percent, and without nuts 46 percent. The majority of respondents, 70 percent, do not like frosting on their cookies.

Bigger is Better

More than half, 56 percent, of all cookie fans would rather eat a big cookie than a small one.

Make a Batch From Scratch
More than half 53 percent, of all Americans surveyed said

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Featured Recipe

While baking your favorite holiday cookies, be on the look-out for a potential prize winner in the Land O'Lakes Cookie Classic Contest.

To celebrate America's love of cookies, Land O' Lakes announces a nationwide search for the best-tasting family cookie recipes and traditions. The grand prize winner will receive a \$25,000 cash prize.

From January 3 through March 24, families across the country are invited to submit treasured cookie recipes and traditions, stating in 50 words or few, "This cookie recipe is a special family baking tradition because . . ."

Entries will be accepted by mail at Land O' Lakes Cookie Classic, P.O. Box 39101, Chicago, IL 60639 or online at: www.landolakes.com

For a complete set of rules, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the above address.

All entries should include a previously unpublished cookie recipe made with Land O Lakes butter.

From the entries received, Land O' Lakes will choose six finalist cookie recipes that best exemplify America's baking tradition. Consumers in three markets will then vote on which finalist recipes will continue to the next round of judging.

Those three outstanding cookie finalists will have the opportunity to showcase their culinary skills in New York in June 2000, where they will bake their family's special, original cookies for a panel of expert cookie judges.

One grand prize winner will be honored with a \$25,000 cash prize and two runners up will each receive \$5,000.

Enjoy this recipe from Land O' Lakes.

CHOCOLATE MINT DROP COOKIES

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa
1 egg
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons sugar

144 small holiday or pastel-colored mint candies
Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine 1 cup sugar and butter in large mixer bowl. Beat at medium speed, scraping bowl often, until well mixed (1 to 2 minutes). Add cocoa, egg, vanilla, baking powder, and baking soda; continue beating until well mixed (1 to 2 minutes). Reduce speed to low; add flour. Beat, scraping bowl often, until well mixed (1 to 2 minutes).

Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in 2 tablespoons sugar. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake for 9-11 minutes or until set. Quickly press 3 small mint candies on top of each cookie. Remove to cooling racks. Cool completely. Makes 4 dozen cookies.

Recipe Topics

If you have recipes for the topics listed below, please share them with us. We welcome your recipes, but ask that you include accurate measurements, a complete list of ingredients and clear instructions with each recipe you submit. Send your recipes to Lou Ann Good, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Recipes should reach our office one week before publishing date listed below.

December 11 - Gifts from the Kitchen

18 - Party Ideas

25 - Christmas Dinner

January 1 - Lentils

