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# ULTIMATE GUIDE to HOLIDAY COOKIES

Our TOP  
**10** COOKIES

The Best New  
Baking Tools

GIFTING  
Cookies  
and More!

COOKIE Swap  
How-To



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## EDITORIAL NOTE

Once a year, our test kitchen fills up with folks from different areas of our company. You'll find the marketing team, software developers and ad sales staff, all with one thing on their mind: cookies. Everyone on staff gets to pick their favorite cookie from Allrecipes.com and has to prepare six dozen for trading. Our annual staff cookie swap (see ideas for hosting your own on p. 10) always reminds me of the power and joy of sharing home-baked foods with others. Few things are more personal, impressive or touching than a gift from a friend's kitchen.

Inevitably, gathered in our kitchen, other swapping occurs. Reflections on this year's successes and updates on kids and spouses get passed with each plate.

This year we decided to package together our favorite cookies with all the tips and hints you need for successful holiday baking in this handy guide. We hope it helps make your holiday a bit easier and a bit brighter.

Wishing you the best,

Jerry Gulley  
Editor-in-Chief

# The BEST BAKING tools



## **Sil-Pin Silicone Rolling Pin**

The silicone revolution marches on with this nonstick rolling pin. Frozen cookie dough is no match for the sturdy construction.



## **OXO Good Grips Cookie Scoops**

Uniform and perfectly-round cookies are possible every time with this easy-release scoop. Available in small, medium and large sizes.



## **KitchenArt Adjust-A-Spoons**

The unique sliding mechanism makes measuring spices a breeze. Available in both teaspoon and tablespoon scales.



## **OXO Nylon Flexible Turners**

This wide, flexible spatula makes it easy to transport large cookies for cooling or serving. Available in Blueberry, Pumpkin, Pesto and other mood-matching colors.





**The right touches can turn refrigerated cookie dough into showstoppers.**

1. **Cinnamon Pecan Sugar Cookies** – Slice ready-to-bake sugar cookie dough into 1/4-inch thick slices and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Sprinkle with raw (turbinado) sugar and cinnamon. Press a pecan half into the center of each cookie and bake until golden.
2. **Jingle Bell Cookies** – Slice ready-to-bake sugar cookie dough into 1/4-inch thick slices and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Draw a bell shape on each cookie using tube icing and sprinkle with dragees (small silver balls found in the baking aisle). The dragees will stick in the shape of a bell. Bake cookies until golden.
3. **Black and White Sugar Cookies** – Slice ready-to-bake sugar cookie dough into 1/4-inch thick slices and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake until golden. Dip each cookie half way into melted milk chocolate, let extra chocolate drip away and place on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper to set.

## The GIFT of COOKIES

**Stacked in boxes or layered on platters, homemade cookies make great holiday gifts.**

**Freezing cookie dough** – Beat the last-minute rush by preparing cookie dough up to six weeks ahead of time and freezing it. Just remember to wrap it tightly twice in plastic wrap.

**Think outside the box** – Cardboard boxes and tins are perfect packers for cookies, but why stop there? You could also use vintage lunchboxes or hat boxes. Just make sure to line the box with parchment paper and layer add an extra sheet between each layer of cookies.

**Wrap it up** – Colored plastic wrap can turn a plate of cookies into an instant gift. You can also add ribbon, pine cones, small tree ornaments or a sprig of fresh rosemary for decoration.

**Multi-task** – Give your cookies in a ceramic cookie jar for a lasting impression. You could also layer them in a wicker basket or a fun flower pot.

# { Our TOP 10 Cookies }

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## Award Winning Soft Chocolate Chip Cookies

Submitted by: Debbi Borsick



"Everybody wants this recipe when I take them in for a carry-in. To make them award winning, my daughter, Tegan, made them for a cookie baking contest and won a red ribbon! You can use any flavor pudding you like for this recipe."

Original recipe yield: 6 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 cups butter, softened  
1 1/2 cups packed brown sugar  
1/2 cup white sugar  
2 (3.4 ounce) packages instant vanilla pudding mix  
4 eggs  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
4 cups semisweet chocolate chips  
2 cups chopped walnuts (optional)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Sift together the flour and baking soda, set aside.
2. In a large bowl, cream together the butter, brown sugar, and white sugar. Beat in the instant pudding mix until blended. Stir in the eggs and vanilla. Blend in the flour mixture. Finally, stir in the chocolate chips and nuts. Drop cookies by rounded spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven. Edges should be golden brown.

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## Cinnamon Hazelnut Biscotti

Submitted by: Kris



"These are delicious with coffee and they smell wonderful!"

Original recipe yield: 30 cookies.

### INGREDIENTS:

3/4 cup butter  
1 cup white sugar  
2 eggs  
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
3/4 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup hazelnuts

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a cookie sheet or line with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, cream together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Sift together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, and salt; mix into the egg mixture. Stir in the hazelnuts. Shape dough into two equal logs approximately 12 inches long. Place logs on baking sheet, and flatten out to about 1/2 inch thickness.
3. Bake for about 30 minutes in preheated oven, or until edges are golden and the center is firm. Remove from oven to cool on the pans. When loaves are cool enough to handle, use a serrated knife to slice the loaves diagonally into 1/2 inch thick slices. Return the slices to the baking sheet.
4. Bake for an additional 10 minutes, turning over once. Cool completely, and store in an airtight container at room temperature.



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## Eileen's Spicy Gingerbread Men

Submitted by: STEPH67



"Spicy gingerbread men. This is the only recipe we have ever used. For best flavor, do NOT use blackstrap molasses."  
Original recipe yield: 2 1/2 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup margarine  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup molasses  
1 egg yolk  
2 cups sifted all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 teaspoon ginger  
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large bowl, cream together the margarine and sugar until smooth. Stir in molasses and egg yolk. Combine the flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and nutmeg; blend into the molasses mixture until smooth. Cover, and chill for at least one hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into desired shapes with cookie cutters. Place cookies 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, until firm. Remove from cookie sheets to cool on wire racks. Frost or decorate when cool.



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## Caramel Shortbread Squares

Submitted by: Julia



"These cookies consist of a shortbread crust, firm caramel center, and a milk chocolate top. They are super-easy to make and they take only 20 minutes to bake."  
Original recipe yield: 1 9x9 inch pan.

### INGREDIENTS:

2/3 cup butter, softened  
1/4 cup white sugar  
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup butter  
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar  
2 tablespoons light corn syrup  
1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk  
1 1/4 cups milk chocolate chips

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a medium bowl, mix together 2/3 cup butter, 1/4 cup white sugar, and 1 1/4 cup flour until evenly crumbly. Press into 9" square baking pan. Bake for 20 minutes.
3. In a 2 quart saucepan, combine 1/2 cup butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, and sweetened condensed milk. Bring to a boil. Continue to boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon for about 3 minutes. Pour over baked crust (warm or cool). Cool until it begins to firm.
4. Melt chocolate and pour over caramel layer. Cover the layer completely. Chill. Cut into squares (about 48 - small because it is rich).



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## Orange Cranberry Drops

Submitted by: Randi



"A delicious orange cookie with dried cranberries. Beautiful and tasty!"  
Original recipe yield: 3 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup white sugar  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
1/4 cup butter, softened  
1 egg  
3 tablespoons orange juice  
1/2 teaspoon orange extract  
1 teaspoon grated orange zest  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 cup dried cranberries

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease cookie sheets, or line with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, cream together the white sugar, brown sugar, and butter. Stir in the egg, orange juice, orange extract, and orange zest. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt; mix into the orange mixture. Stir in the dried cranberries. Drop cookie dough by heaping teaspoons, 2 inches apart, on the prepared cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until edges are starting to brown. Cool on baking sheets for 5 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.



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## Mrs. Sigg's Snickerdoodles

Submitted by: Beth Sigworth



"These wonderful cinnamon-sugar cookies became very popular with my friends at church. My pastor loves them! You will too! Crispy edges, and chewy centers; these cookies are a crowd pleaser for sure!"  
Original recipe yield: 4 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup butter, softened  
1/2 cup shortening  
1 1/2 cups white sugar  
2 eggs  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons cream of tartar  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons white sugar  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Cream together butter, shortening, 1 1/2 cups sugar, the eggs and the vanilla. Blend in the flour, cream of tartar, soda and salt. Shape dough by rounded spoonfuls into balls.
3. Mix the 2 tablespoons sugar and the cinnamon. Roll balls of dough in mixture. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets.
4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, or until set but not too hard. Remove immediately from baking sheets.



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## Mom's Ginger Snaps

Submitted by: Elaine

"Fabulous, spicy cookies."  
Original recipe yield: 3 dozen.



### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup packed brown sugar  
3/4 cup vegetable oil  
1/4 cup molasses  
1 egg  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/3 cup white sugar for decoration

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. In a large bowl, mix together the brown sugar, oil, molasses, and egg. Combine the flour, baking soda, salt, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger; stir into the molasses mixture. Roll dough into 1 1/4 inch balls. Roll each ball in white sugar before placing 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in preheated oven, or until center is firm. Cool on wire racks.



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## Rich Chocolate Chip Toffee Bars

Provided by: HersheysKitchens.com

"The most rich and delicious bar cookie you may ever try! The perfect combination of smooth and crunchy, the chocolate chips and toffee bits melt in your mouth in this delectable creation from the Hershey's Kitchens!"  
Original recipe yield: 48 bars.



### INGREDIENTS:

2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour  
2/3 cup packed light brown sugar  
3/4 cup butter  
1 egg, slightly beaten  
2 cups HERSHEY'S Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips, divided  
1 cup coarsely chopped nuts  
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated milk)  
1 3/4 cups SKOR® English Toffee Bits

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease 13x9x2-inch baking pan.
2. Combine flour and brown sugar in large bowl. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add egg; mix well. Stir in 1-1/2 cups chocolate chips and nuts; set aside 1-1/2 cups mixture.
3. Press remaining crumb mixture onto bottom of prepared pan. Bake 10 minutes. Pour sweetened condensed milk evenly over hot crust; top with 1-1/2 cups toffee bits. Sprinkle reserved crumb mixture and remaining 1/2 cup chips over top.
4. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup toffee bits. Cool completely in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars.





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## Russian Tea Cakes I

Submitted by: Odette



"This is a family recipe that's been made at Christmas time by at least 4 generations. This year will be the first for number 5!!! 'Bubba' brought it with her when she came from Lithuania. I pass it on in the true spirit of this season!"  
Original recipe yield: 3 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar for decoration

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a medium bowl, cream butter and vanilla until smooth. Combine the 6 tablespoons confectioners' sugar and flour; stir into the butter mixture until just blended. Mix in the chopped walnuts. Roll dough into 1 inch balls, and place them 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
3. Bake for 12 minutes in the preheated oven. When cool, roll in remaining confectioners' sugar. I also like to roll mine in the sugar a second time.



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## Apricot Cream Cheese Thumbprints

Submitted by: Mellan



"These always look so pretty on the cookie plates I give for Christmas."  
Original recipe yield: 7 dozen.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 cups butter, softened  
1 1/2 cups white sugar  
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened  
2 eggs  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 1/2 teaspoons lemon zest  
4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 cup apricot preserves  
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar for decoration

### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large bowl, cream together the butter, sugar, and cream cheese until smooth. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the lemon juice and lemon zest. Combine the flour and baking powder; stir into the cream cheese mixture until just combined. Cover, and chill until firm, about 1 hour.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Roll tablespoonfuls of dough into balls, and place them 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Using your finger, make an indentation in the center of each ball, and fill with 1/2 teaspoon of apricot preserves.
3. Bake for 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until edges are golden. Allow cookies to cool on the baking sheets for 2 minutes before removing to wire racks to cool completely. Sprinkle with confectioner's sugar.



# HOST a cookie swap



## **Cookie Swap How-To**

With a little planning, cookie swaps can be a chic and simple way to ring in the season. Start with these easy ideas and have fun!

### **Pick a theme –**

Try a topic like “Cocktail Cookies” (those with liquor) or “Retro” that will help guide guests with their baking choices. Plan your decorations, drinks and foods around the theme.

### **Invite your guests –**

Pick a manageable size of guests like ten or twelve. Tell your guests how many cookies to bring and remind them that’s how many they’ll be leaving with. You can include the rules (ours are below) with the invitation.

### **Don’t forget snacks –**

Plan a simple buffet of appetizers for folks to munch on while they socialize before the swap begins.

### **How it works –**

Gather your guests around the table where all of the cookie platters are displayed. Each guest gets to go around the table selecting 3 cookies from the batches of their choice. This continues until the cookies are divided.

### **Rules**

1. Bring 6 dozen homemade cookies. You can make three dozen each of two different recipes, if you choose.
2. Please adhere to this year’s theme.
3. Bring your cookies displayed on platters and don’t forget to bring a plastic container for the cookies you’ll be taking home.
4. RSVP with the cookie types you’ll be bringing.