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Holiday Cookie Recipes to Try This Holiday Season

by Heather Walsh

'Tis the season for holiday sweets and treats. Chances are you have the traditional cookies that you bake with your family every year. The smell fills the kitchen providing that sensory memory of baking with your family and friends. Traditions are important, but it is also fun to mix up the cookie baking with fun and new recipes. While you may have your tried and true cookie recipes, check out these three recipes this year to try. Consider bringing them to a cookie exchange, or share them with a neighbor. Even if you don't eat them, you are still providing a sweet treat this season.

Red Velvet Cookies

These cookies are the perfect time saver cookies because they are quick and easy to make. They only require 4 ingredients: Red Velvet Cake Mix, Oil, Eggs, and White chocolate chips. They may not have the typical seasonings of the season but they sure look the part with their red and white coloring.

Directions:

Mix together the red velvet cake mix as instructed including the oil and eggs. Make sure the mix is fully combined. You can use whatever oil you desire.

Add in 1 cup of white chocolate chips. Coat these with a little bit of flour to ensure thorough distribution in the mix.

Bake at 350 °F for 10-15 minutes, time is dependent on the size of the cookie. Make sure the cookies are set before removing them from the oven.

Let cool for 5 minutes before putting on a cooling rack.

Stained Glass Cookies

These cookies take a bit more time but are stunning to look at in addition to being just darn scrumptious. Make your standard cookie sugar recipe, and add a little pizzazz with these cookies. You can even gift them as ornaments, or even gift tags with writing in edible ink. These are fun to do as an assembly line getting the entire family involved in the process.

Ingredients:

Make your standard cutout sugar cookie recipe
 ½ cup - ½ cup of crushed hard candies (ie: jolly ranchers, rock candy, any hard candy you prefer)
 Cookie-cutter - one large and one medium of the same shape

Directions:

Once you make your sugar cookie recipe, make sure your dough is tough enough to withstand cutouts. In most recipes, there will be an addition of a little bit of flour so you can cut the cookies into shapes and they will withstand the heat in cooking and remain in the shape. Chill the dough in the fridge for at least one hour. This also makes the cutouts easier to make.

Roll the chilled dough to about ¼ inch thickness.

Cut out the cookies with the large cookie cutter.

Within the cut cookies, use the smaller cookie cutter to cut out in the inner shape.

If you want to gift these cookies as ornaments, use a toothpick or skewer to put a hole in the top of the cookie.

Put all the hard candies into a sealed plastic bag. Crush up the cookies using whichever method you like - a rolling pin works well too. Into the well of the cookie, place the various colored hard candy.

Bake for 12-15 minutes at 375 °F on a Silpat lined baking sheet. The baking sheet will allow for easy removal of the cookie once it is baked. Once out of the oven, let cool before putting a ribbon in the ornament hole on the cookie.

Candy Cane Meringue Cookies

These cookies provide a quick peppermint bite in cookie form. As meringue cookies, they require longer baking periods at lower temperatures.

Ingredients:

3 large egg whites (make sure there is no egg yolk in your mix, or your meringues won't rise properly - a tip heard often on Great British Bake-off)
 ½ tsp cream of tartar
 ¾ cup sugar
 Crushed peppermints
 Possible additional ingredient: if you want to add a pop of red to your cookies, you can add red food coloring

Directions:

Beat egg whites to add air. Add in cream of tartar and beat until soft peaks form. When you pull out the beaters, the egg white peak slightly bends.

Once the soft peaks are achieved, slowly add in the sugar a spoonful at a time. (It helps to sing A Spoonful of Sugar while doing it for all parties involved). Once all the sugar is added and mixed in, keep mixing until stiff peaks appear. This means the peaks do not bend when put on the end of the spoon or beater.

Fold in crushed peppermint pieces. Be careful not to remove all the air just you just put into the egg whites.

Fill a pastry bag with the egg white mixture to pipe onto a parchment-lined baking sheet or spoon onto the sheet. If you want to add food coloring, add the drop of coloring to the pastry bag.

Bake at 225 °F for 50-60 minutes, checking halfway through to rotate the cookie sheets to different racks.

Once cookies are firm to the touch, turn the oven off and leave in the oven with the jar slightly ajar for about one hour for slow cooling.

While these cookies may not be the first ones you turn to this holiday season, they are delicious, easily gifted, and great fun to make!



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