

Holiday Cookies

Featured on *The Joy Cardin Show* on December 17, 2009. Recipe comes from *The America's Test Kitchen Family Cookbook*.

MAKES: about 3 dozen cookies

PREP TIME: 5 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 1 hour 15 minutes plus cooling time

Superfine sugar will give your cookies a finer crumb and crisper texture. If you can't find it in the supermarket, simply process about 1 cup granulated sugar in a food processor for about 30 seconds, then measure out $\frac{3}{4}$ cup for the recipe. The dough scraps can be patted together, chilled and re-rolled one time only.

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup superfine sugar (see note above)

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces and softened

2 tablespoons cream cheese, softened

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Whisk the flour, sugar and salt together in a large bowl. Beat the butter into the flour mixture, one piece at a time, using an electric mixer on medium-low speed, then continue to beat until the mixture looks crumbly and slightly wet, 1 to 2 minutes. Beat in the cream cheese and vanilla until the dough just begins to form large clumps, about 30 seconds.
2. Knead the dough in the bowl by hand a few times until it forms a large, cohesive mass. Turn the dough out onto a clean counter, divide it in half, and pat into two 4-inch disks. Wrap the disks tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate until they begin to firm up, 20 to 30 minutes.
3. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 375 degrees. Working with one disk of dough at a time, roll out the dough to a 1/8-inch thickness between 2 sheets of parchment paper. Slide the rolled dough and parchment onto a baking sheet and refrigerate until firm, about 10 minutes.
4. Working with one sheet of dough at a time, cut out shapes using cookie cutters and lay on two parchment-lined baking sheets, spaced about 1 inch apart. Bake the cookies until light golden brown, about 10 minutes, rotating the baking sheet halfway through baking. (While the first batch of cookies bakes, cut out cookies from the second sheet of dough and bake them while the first batch cools.)
5. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheet for 2 minutes before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely, about 30 minutes. When cooled, the cookies can be glazed and decorated as desired.

To Make Ahead

The dough disks can be refrigerated, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, for up to 3 days or frozen up to 2 weeks. Defrost in the refrigerator.