

— AMERICA'S —  
TEST KITCHEN

# THE perfect cookie

YOUR ULTIMATE  
GUIDE TO  
FOOLPROOF  
cookies,  
brownies  
& bars



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Welcome to the Test Kitchen**

**Introduction**

**1 Drop Cookies**

**2 Slice-&-Bake Sweets**

**3 Rolled, Shaped, & Pressed**

**4 Sublime Sandwich Cookies**

**5 Let's Get Fancy**

**6 Brownies & Blondies**

**7 Bar Cookies**

**8 (You'll Never Know They're) Gluten-Free**

**9 No-Bake Cookies & Candies**

**10 Christmas Cookies**

**Conversions & Equivalents**

**Index**



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Portable, fun to make, easy to gift, and open to countless flavor variations, cookies are everyone's favorite sweet treat. America's Test Kitchen has years of experience making the very best cookies; in *The Perfect Cookie*, we've collected all of that knowledge in one place for the definitive guide to cookie baking. This comprehensive anthology includes kitchen-tested, never-fail recipes for cookie jar classics, in addition to recipes for rich and chewy brownies, fruit-and-crumble-topped bars, quick no-bake confections, holiday favorites, and even candies like truffles and caramels; they're all included in a gorgeous package, with a full-page photo showing off every recipe. And, as only the test kitchen can, there are tips and tricks throughout the chapters, as well as an introductory section to get you started with insight on everything from what makes a cookie chewy versus crispy to what baking sheet you should buy so that your cookies bake evenly every time. The result? The perfect cookie.

### **300 kitchen-tested recipes cover a wide range of cookies.**

We've included recipes for better-than-the-rest essentials like chocolate chip cookies; crowd-pleasers like cream cheese brownies; our takes on your favorites like chocolate sandwich cookies with cream filling; cookies with a touch of elegance like French butter cookies and honey-soaked baklava; Christmas cookies from gingerbread people to eggnog snickerdoodles; and cookies you thought you could get only at bakeries like anise-flavored, sprinkle-topped angeletti and cakey madeleines.

### **Recipes are grouped by cookie type.**

Each chapter highlights a certain style of cookie: drop; slice-and-bake; rolled, shaped, and pressed; sandwich; brownies and blondies; bars; gluten-free; and no-bake; plus, a chapter of Christmas cookies. The cookies in a given chapter all draw on similar techniques, so the skills you learn when baking one are transferable to another. Those techniques are reinforced in informative All About spreads, which include illustrated secrets to success like how to roll out buttery dough without tearing it or how to keep logs of slice-and-bake dough perfectly round as they chill.

### **Technique sidebars for foolproof results.**

When it's helpful, we've included sidebars with step photography to show you just how you should be mixing and forming your dough or when your cookie is properly baked. We make even the fanciest cookies easy and approachable.

### **An introduction section sets the stage to success.**

Find out what you need to stock your kitchen for cookie baking. Bake cookies on your own schedule by following our tips for making doughs in advance or storing cooking. We cover the different dough mixing methods, how to achieve a brownie with that coveted shiny top, and so much more—from the basics to the more advanced.



# PERFECT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes 16 cookies

1¾ cups (8¾ ounces) all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon baking soda

14 tablespoons unsalted butter

¾ cup packed (5¼ ounces) dark brown sugar

½ cup (3½ ounces) granulated sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 teaspoon salt

1 large egg plus 1 large yolk

1¼ cups (7½ ounces) semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips

¾ cup pecans or walnuts, toasted and chopped (optional)

**Why This Recipe Works** There's no question that the chocolate chip cookie is the most iconic American treat. While crispy cookies and cakey ones have their place, it's something right in the middle—the classic Toll House recipe—that often comes to mind. But that recipe comes out a bit cakey and wan. We wanted to refine the Toll House recipe to create a reliably moist and chewy cookie with crisp edges and deep butterscotch notes. The key ingredient for building both the right texture and the right flavor was melted butter. We browned the butter and then added the sugar. Melting made the water in the butter available to readily interact with the flour to create more gluten, the protein that gives baked goods chew. In addition, the sugar dissolved in the butter, which enhanced its ability to caramelize. Using two egg yolks but only one white added richness without giving us a cakey texture. Finally, knowing they would firm up as they cooled, we baked the cookies just until they were set but still soft. Studded with gooey chocolate and boasting a complex toffee flavor, these are chocolate chip cookies, perfected. Light brown sugar can be used in place of the dark, but the cookies won't be as full-flavored.

**1** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Whisk flour and baking soda together in bowl.

**2** Melt 10 tablespoons butter in 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Continue to cook, swirling skillet constantly, until butter is dark golden brown and has nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Transfer browned butter to large bowl and stir in remaining 4 tablespoons butter until melted. Whisk in brown sugar, granulated sugar, vanilla, and salt until incorporated. Whisk in egg and yolk until smooth with no lumps, about 30 seconds.

**3** Let mixture stand for 3 minutes, then whisk for 30 seconds. Repeat process of resting and whisking 2 more times until mixture is thick, smooth, and shiny. Using rubber spatula, stir in flour mixture until just combined, about 1 minute. Stir in chocolate chips and pecans, if using.

**4** Working with 3 tablespoons dough at a time, roll into balls and space them 2 inches apart on prepared sheets. (Dough balls can be frozen for up to 1 month; bake frozen dough balls in 300-degree oven for 30 to 35 minutes.)

**5** Bake, 1 sheet at a time, until golden brown and edges have begun to set but centers are still soft and puffy, 10 to 14 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Let cookies cool completely on sheet before serving.

## Baking A Bigger, Better Cookie

We pulled out lots of tricks to produce a cookie with the chew we were missing from the Toll House chocolate chip cookie recipe. But there's one particularly easy way to get a cookie with a gradation of textures: Simply make the cookie bigger. While the Toll House recipe calls for dropping rounded tablespoons of dough onto a baking sheet, we call for rolling 3 tablespoons of dough into a ball for each cookie. A larger diameter increases the contrast between the crispy edges and the chewy centers.



**Less Dough**

A tablespoon of dough per cookie creates a more uniform texture from edge to center.



**More Dough**

Three tablespoons of dough per cookie increases its crisp-chewy contrast.

# CHERRY ICEBOX RIBBONS

Makes about 40 cookies

- 1/3 cup (2 1/3 ounces) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 12 pieces and softened
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups (7 1/2 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup dried tart cherries
- 6 tablespoons cherry jam or preserves

**Why This Recipe Works** Layered with vibrant ribbons of cherry jam, these buttery cookies have a striking appearance. While their stripy aesthetic may seem difficult to achieve, these are actually a simple slice-and-bake cookie. We started by making a flavorful dough, which we enhanced with a touch of complex-tasting light brown sugar and vanilla and almond extracts, both of which compliment cherry flavor. Once the dough was made, we formed it into a square and chilled it in the fridge. Then we rolled out the dough, cut it into strips, stacked it, and filled it before slicing off individual cookies. This technique was easy, but the jam seeped out of its layers during baking. To maintain distinct layers, we briefly cooked the jam to thicken it without dulling its flavor. This helped, but the cookies still weren't holding together neatly. We found we could mitigate seeping altogether by adding dried tart cherries to the jam before heating. The dried cherries plumped and thickened the mixture beautifully while also fortifying the tangy cherry flavor. To make sure the layers didn't slide around as we sliced off individual cookies, we froze the assembled dough log before slicing and baking the individual cookies.

**1** Process granulated sugar, brown sugar, and salt in food processor until no lumps of brown sugar remain, about 30 seconds. Add butter, egg yolk, vanilla, and almond extract and process until smooth and creamy, about 20 seconds. Scrape down bowl, add flour, and pulse until cohesive dough forms, about 20 pulses. Transfer dough to counter and pat into 5-inch square. Wrap square tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.

**2** Heat cherries and jam in small saucepan over medium heat until just bubbling; let cool completely, about 30 minutes. Process cherry mixture in clean, dry food processor until smooth, about 15 seconds.

**3** Roll dough between 2 pieces of parchment paper into 10-inch square, about 1/4 inch thick. Freeze dough until firm, about 15 minutes. Cut chilled dough into four 2 1/2-inch-wide strips. Spread cherry mixture evenly over 3 strips and stack strips, cherry mixture side up; place plain strip on top. Wrap dough tightly in plastic and freeze until firm, about 15 minutes.

**4** Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment. Slice chilled dough into 1/4-inch-thick rectangles and space them 1 inch apart on prepared sheets. Bake until

edges are just golden, 13 to 15 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Immediately and carefully transfer cookies to wire rack. Repeat with remaining dough. Let cookies cool completely before serving, about 45 minutes.

## Assembling Icebox Ribbons



**1** Roll dough into 10-inch square, freeze it, then cut it into four 2 1/2-inch-wide strips. Spread cherry mixture evenly over three strips of dough. Stack strips, placing plain strip on top.



**2** Wrap stack in plastic wrap and freeze until firm. Slice chilled cookies into 1/4-inch-thick rectangles.





# MISSISSIPPI MUD BROWNIES

Makes 24 brownies

## Brownies

6 ounces unsweetened chocolate,  
chopped

16 tablespoons unsalted butter

1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour

⅓ cup (1 ounce) Dutch-processed  
cocoa powder

½ teaspoon salt

3 cups (21 ounces) sugar

5 large eggs

¾ cup chopped pecans

## Topping

¾ cup marshmallow crème

¼ cup semisweet chocolate chips

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

**Why This Recipe Works** Decadent Mississippi mud desserts include pie, cake, and brownies. The brownies are usually laced with pecans, topped with mini marshmallows once the base is set but still moist, briefly returned to the oven, and then covered with chocolate frosting once cooled—pew! We love the idea of these rich, dense concoctions but didn't want to go into a sugar coma. We started from the bottom-up. We wanted an ultrachocolaty brownie, (these are called Mississippi "mud," after all) so in addition to the bittersweet chocolate in the recipe, we used cocoa powder. Three-quarters cup of chopped pecans added plenty of textural interest without distracting from our fudgy brownie. Next, rather than using mini marshmallows and frosting, we liked to slick a thin layer of marshmallow crème evenly over the brownies. And did we really need the frosting? We decided the brownies were chocolaty enough; they needed just a drizzle of chocolate for a dressed-up look. We melted a some chocolate chips and added a little oil to keep the chocolate flowing from the spoon as we waved it over the brownies. Be careful not to overbake these brownies; they should be moist and fudgy.

**1 For the brownies** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Make foil sling for 13 by 9-inch baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil; first sheet should be 13 inches wide and second sheet should be 9 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra foil hanging over edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Spray foil with vegetable oil spray.

**2** Melt chocolate and butter in large bowl set over medium saucepan filled with ½ inch of barely simmering water (don't let bowl touch water), stirring occasionally, until smooth, 5 to 7 minutes; let cool slightly. Whisk flour, cocoa, and salt together in bowl. Whisk sugar and eggs in second bowl until combined. Whisk chocolate mixture into sugar mixture until smooth. Stir flour mixture into chocolate mixture until no streaks of flour remain. Fold in pecans. Transfer batter to prepared pan and smooth top.

**3** Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out with few moist crumbs attached, about 35 minutes. Transfer pan to wire rack.

**4 For the topping** Spoon marshmallow crème over hot brownies and let sit until softened, about 1 minute. Meanwhile, microwave chocolate chips and oil in small bowl until smooth, 30 to 60 seconds. Spread marshmallow crème evenly over brownies, then drizzle with chocolate. Let brownies cool completely in pan, about 2 hours. Using foil overhang, lift brownies from pan. Cut into 24 pieces before serving.



# DANISH KLEINER

Makes about 60 cookies

**3¾ cups (18¾ ounces) all-purpose flour**

**1 teaspoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**8 tablespoons unsalted butter**

**1½ teaspoons ground cardamom**

**1 cup (7 ounces) granulated sugar**

**3 large eggs**

**¼ cup heavy cream**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**4 cups vegetable shortening or vegetable oil**

**confectioners' sugar (optional)**

**Why This Recipe Works** These cookies are extra unique—and extra delicious—because they're deep-fried. *Kleiner* is the Danish version of a cookie that exists with slight variations all over Europe, but common to all is a diamond shape with one end pulled through a hole in the center. We like Danish kleiner because while fried and crisp, they maintain an interior texture that's somewhere between a cookie and a cake, unlike other European versions, which can resemble fried wonton skins. Using cardamom in the dough infused the cookies with authentic Danish flavor. Frying the cookies in vegetable shortening gave them the crispest exterior, but you can also fry in vegetable oil. If you don't have a diamond cookie cutter, cut the dough into 4 by 2¾-inch diamonds. You can also find kleiner/klejner cutters, also called *fattigman* cutters after the Norwegian variation, online.

**1** Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in bowl. Microwave butter and cardamom in second bowl until melted and fragrant, about 1 minute.

**2** Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat granulated sugar and eggs on medium speed until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Add melted butter mixture, cream, and vanilla and beat until combined, about 30 seconds, scraping down bowl as needed. Reduce speed to low and slowly add flour mixture until just combined.

**3** Transfer dough to counter and divide into 4 equal pieces. Form each piece into 4-inch square, wrap squares tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.

**4** Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Working with 1 dough square at a time (keep remaining dough refrigerated), roll into 12 by 10-inch rectangle, about ⅛ inch thick, on well-floured counter. Using 4 by 2¾-inch diamond cookie cutter, cut dough into diamonds. Cut 1½-inch-long slit, lengthwise, in center of each diamond, then carefully pull tip of cookie through slit. Place cookies on prepared sheets and refrigerate until ready to fry.

**5** Heat shortening in Dutch oven over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Fry 8 cookies until golden brown, about 30 seconds per side. Adjust burner as necessary to maintain oil temperature of 350 degrees.

**6** Transfer cookies to wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet to drain. Repeat with remaining cookies. Dust with confectioners' sugar, if using, and serve.

## Forming Danish Kleiner



**1** Cut 1½-inch-long slit, lengthwise, in center of each dough diamond.



**2** Carefully pull tip of diamond through slit.



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