

Chewy Chai Meringue Cookies

-Recipe courtesy of Alison Campbell

3/4 cup powdered sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. cloves
1 tsp. ground ginger
2 tsp. cornstarch
4 egg whites
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
Pinch of salt
1 tsp. white or rice vinegar
1 cup white chocolate chips
3/4 cup chopped nuts, lightly toasted (Macadamia or pecans)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

Sift together powdered sugar, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and cornstarch and set aside.

In a double boiler or a metal bowl set over a pot of boiling water, whisk together egg whites and granulated sugar until mixture is warm and sugar has dissolved. Be careful not to overheat, as egg whites will cook and congeal. You only need to do this until the mixture is warm (doesn't take long)

Remove from heat, add cream of tartar and salt and beat with electric mixer until egg whites hold stiff peaks, about 3 minutes. Add vinegar and mix just until incorporated.

Gently fold in reserved powdered sugar mixture, white chocolate chips and nuts.

Drop by large tablespoonfuls onto parchment-lined baking sheets and bake for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool on a rack.

Makes about 24 cookies which are crusty on the outside and chewy in the middle.

Tex-Mex Chocolate Cookies

- Recipe courtesy of Michael Hegedus

This rich chocolate cookie blends the sweetness of Texas pecans and honey with the warmth of Mexican vanilla and spices. Its crisp outer layer of cinnamon sugar is complemented by a moist, brownie-like texture.

2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 cup cocoa powder (I used natural)

1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
3 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp chipotle powder
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1 cup unsalted butter, softened (2 sticks)
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup honey (local honey if available)
3 tsp pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs
1 12-oz. pkg semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 cups pecans, roughly chopped and toasted

Cinnamon sugar for coating:

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 tsp cinnamon

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix flour, cocoa, baking soda, salt and spices together in a medium bowl.

In a separate large bowl, cream butter with sugars, honey and vanilla extract. Add eggs, one at a time. Slowly incorporate dry mixture into batter. Stir in pecans and chocolate chips.

Chill batter in refrigerator for approximately 15 minutes. Roll into tablespoon-sized balls (1 1/2 inches, +/-) and coat with cinnamon sugar coating, then place on cookie sheets that are greased or lined with parchment or silpat. Bake for approximately 10 minutes or until outer surface begins to crack. Place unused raw batter back in refrigerator between batches. Cool cookies on a wire rack before storing in an airtight container. Yields approximately 3 dozen cookies.

Almond Snowflakes

-Recipe courtesy of Suzanne Zucca

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp almond flavoring
2 3/4 cups flour
3/4 tsp salt
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
Buttercream Frosting (*recipe below*)

Cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs and almond flavoring. Gradually blend in dry ingredients. Chill 1 hour. Roll to 1/8" thickness and cut out with cookie cutters. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Cool and decorate with buttercream frosting. Yields 1 dozen large cookies.

Buttercream Frosting-

2 sticks butter
4 cups confectioner's sugar
1 T. milk

Cream butter and gradually add powdered sugar. Thin with milk if necessary. Decorate cookies as desired.

Chocolate Covered Peanut Butter "Surprise" Balls

- Recipe courtesy of Talaya and Talaya Ann Frasier

3 3/4 cups confectioners sugar (1 pound)
2-3 cups rice krispies, crushed or ground
1 18-oz. jar creamy peanut butter
4 regular size Butterfinger bars, crushed
1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup butter, melted
Plenty of chocolate for melting and dipping
Some melted white chocolate for accent

Combine all ingredients and roll into balls.

Dip into chocolate of choice, then drizzle with white chocolate as an accent.

Makes anywhere from 70 to 80 depending on how big you make the balls.