

Family

Cookie tips simplify holiday baking

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Even people who say they don't bake can make holiday cookies.

"One need not be an accomplished cook to succeed," said Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University Research and Extension food scientist. "Cookie recipes are typically straightforward and somewhat forgiving. A little over mixing isn't likely to matter a lot, and that's why making cookies can be a family-friendly project, even for inexperienced cooks."

But, where to start?

For beginners, Blakeslee recommends choosing a cookie mix or refrigerated dough.

"Follow package directions to bake good cookies with little effort," Blakeslee said.

"No-bake recipes such as a likely-to-be-familiar chocolate and oatmeal combination that requires melting chocolate and little more than mixing oatmeal and sugar with the chocolate and scooping the dough onto waxed paper also can be a good choice for beginning cooks," she said. "Waiting for the dough to set up before sampling the cookies may be the hardest part."

Making and baking cookies from scratch does not need to be difficult, said Blakeslee, who answers food and food safety questions at K-State's Rapid Response Center.

If, for example, you remember a cookie recipe your mother or grandmother made for special occasions and have the recipe, think about continuing the tradition.

"Without the recipe, you still may be able to come close. Look for a recipe that would seem to combine similar flavors that also may be similar in appearance, such as a dropped or rolled cookie," said Blakeslee, who answered frequently-asked cooking and baking questions:

Q: What do I need to have on hand to make cookies?

A: Basic cookie recipes typically require flour, granulated sugar or brown sugar, salt, baking powder or baking soda, eggs and fat — shortening, butter or regular margarine.

Q: Can I use diet margarine instead of regular margarine?

A: Using reduced-calorie margarine in a recipe calling for regular margarine is not recommended. The formulation is different and results will not be the same.

Q: Is it possible to reduce calories and fat in cookies?

A: Yes, but look for recipes formulated to include ingredients that are lower in calories in fat rather than trying to adjust a traditional recipe.

Q: What kitchen equipment do I need to make cookies?

A: Making cookies typically requires a large bowl, mixing spoon, dry measuring cups, liquid measuring cup, measuring spoons, and one or more cookie or baking sheets.

Q: Why do I need more than one baking sheet?

A: Having more than one cookie or baking sheet will speed the baking process because cookie or baking sheets need to be cooled between batches to reduce over-spreading and uneven baking. If a cookie sheet is still warm, new dough will start cooking and spreading before the dough is placed in the oven.

Q: Is one cookie or baking sheet better than another?

A: A heavier gauge metal cookie or baking sheet typically conducts heat uniformly and that translates into even, dependable results. A shiny finish often is preferred, as the darker the pan, the darker the cookie. The reason? A darker metal finish will absorb more heat and that means that cookies will likely bake more quickly — they may over brown and overcook.

A lighter-weight pan may bake cookies more quickly, over brown the cookies and/or warp. Choosing a cookie sheet with just one lip (for grabbing) will allow air to circulate and cookies to bake more evenly than a cookie sheet that has sides all the way around that interrupt air flow. Cookies can be less likely to burn on an insulated cookie or baking sheet, but may require an extended baking time.

Q: I have an older cookie sheet that has some food burned on it and a non-stick finish that's chipping off. Can I still use it?

A: For best results — and safe food handling — discard the damaged cookie or baking sheet. Whenever a non-stick finish starts chipping or peeling, it should no longer be used in food preparation. Also, burned-on food may cook off and affect the flavor or appearance of the food for which the pan is currently being used.

Q: Do I need a mixer?

A: Some recipes may require a mixer, but many do not. Read recipes before beginning to make sure you have the ingredients and equipment needed to complete the process.

Q: Do I need to preheat the oven?

A: When baking, preheating the oven is recommended for even baking during the recommended baking time. For best results, preheat an oven for 20 minutes.

Q: I like the taste of raw cookie dough. Is it really dangerous?

A: Waiting until a cookie is baked before sampling it is recommended, as heat typically will kill any bacteria that may be present. While the risk of contracting salmonella from raw eggs in cookie dough may be slight, it is still a risk.

For more information on cooking and baking, food, nutrition and health, contact a county or district K-State Research and Extension office or check Extension's Web site: www.oznet.ksu.edu/humannutrition/.

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Winonans head to Hawaii for visit

Kent and Karen Barrett spent last week in Hawaii visiting son, Ryan Barrett, his wife, Jennifer, and their first grandson. Gage Keahi Barrett was born Oct. 31, 2005, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He weighed 7 pounds, 15 1/2 ounces and was 20 3/4 inches long. While there they also toured sights including the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, the Dole Pineapple Plantation, the Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie and, of course, the beach.

Members of Susan Schertz's family, extended family and friends honored her with their presence at a bridal shower held in Dunlap Hall



Jean Lowe

Winona Correspondent

at the Winona United Methodist Church Saturday.

From conversations overheard at the Lions Club pancake breakfast and C of C ham and bean lunch, most hunters were flushing out plenty of pheasants the first day of pheasant season.

Each year Maxine Berry gra-

ciously hosts pheasant hunters from Texas. In addition to the men from Texas, Maxine's grandson, Tanner Wycoff, of Lawrence, came for the weekend. Maxine hosted Saturday night dinner for her guests and also Ed and Jana Hutton and Eme of Brewster.

Danny and Ellen Lewallen hosted four pheasant hunters from Colorado Springs.

Randy Ausmus of Phoenix, Ariz., is spending this week visiting his parents, Roger and Marge Ausmus and other relatives and friends in the area. After flying into Denver he spent some time visiting Glen

Ausmus and Norma Straub in Denver then went to Colorado Springs for a visit with Alfred Ausmus and Richard and Laura Ausmus and family. He was a Tuesday night guest of Lawrence and Louise Denning in Sharon Springs. He called on Rosalie Bussen while in Sharon Springs. Larry and Michele Werth and boys of Brewster have visited with Randy in Winona.

Linda Latham spent the weekend in Lawrence with her daughter, Candice Latham.

Twelve Son Shine Kids met in Dunlap Hall Wednesday with Pastor Mike Eurit.

Healthy menu can make for happier holidays

The Thomas County Health Department continues its list of recipes for a healthy holiday menu. They are: Panmarino, Marinated Roast Asparagus and Green Beans with Garlic and Onions, Turkey Stuffing, Mashed Potatoes, Mushroom Brandy Gravy, Pumpkin Swirl Cheesecake, and of course, the "Big Bird" (eat only the breast meat, no skin and three ounces which is as big as a deck of cards). Thank you to Anita Epler (martini 1 at pacbell.net) for providing the recipes.

Crudités with Vegetable Cream Cheese Dip: Slice your favorite veggies into strips and serve with Alpine Lace flavored fat-free cream cheese of your choice.

Panmarino (Rosemary Bread, modified from "The Il Foranio Baking Book"): 1/4 teaspoon active dry yeast; half-cup warm water (105 degrees); 2 3/4 cups unbleached bread flour; 3/4 teaspoon salt; one-half cup cool water; 1/4 cup biga (starter dough) at room temperature (recipe follows); additional flour for work surface; yellow cornmeal for baker's peel; two teaspoons roughly chopped fresh rosemary; two tablespoons skim milk; Pam (for bowl); coarse sea salt.

In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Set aside for 15 minutes. Measure flour into a bowl. Stir the salt into the flour. Using a wooden spoon, make a well in the flour and add the yeast mixture, cool

Healthy Haps

water and biga. Using the spoon, stir the ingredients until the dough can't be stirred. Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface to 20 minutes. Return the dough to the bowl, and add the milk and rosemary. (Don't panic, it will be a gloopy mess. Knead if for five minutes and it will be fine; if it's still a mess after five full minutes, add a pinch more flour to get it to shape.)

Shape the dough into a ball. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray and place the ball in the bowl. Turn the ball so it gets coated. Cover with a towel and let rise until double, approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Punch down the dough by folding the edges in and turning it over so the top is smooth again.

Re-cover the bowl, and let rise again, about 45 minutes or until doubled. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface. Trying not to overwork the dough, fold the edges toward the center. Work in a circular motion, folding the entire rim of the dough toward the center twice to form a loose round ball with a smooth side.

Place the ball side up on the floured surface. Using your fingertips, gently press the ball out into a disk about six inches in diameter and one inch thick. Lift the folded edge and roll it toward you until the dough takes a football shape. When you reach the edge nearest you,

press the edge of the roll to the bottom edge of the disk with the heel of your hand, forming a seam. Turn the loaf so that it rests seam side down on a baker's peel dusted with cornmeal. Cover and let rise at room temperature until doubled, about 50 minutes. Meanwhile, place a baking stone in the oven and preheat to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Mist the preheated oven with a spray bottle and quickly shut the door.

Using a serrated knife, make a slash in the top of the loaf. Sprinkle coarse sea salt into the slash. Mist the loaf. With a rhythmic snap of the wrist, slide the loaf onto a baking stone. Mist the oven again and bake until the loaf is golden brown on the top, dark brown on the bottom and has a hollow ring when tapped on the bottom (40 to 40 minutes). Re-

move to a wire rack to cool completely.

Biga (starter dough): 1/4 teaspoon active dry yeast; one-half cup warm water (105 degrees); 31/2 cups unbleached bread flour; 1 1/4-cups cold water. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Set aside 15 minutes. Measure flour into a large bowl. Using a sturdy wooden spoon, form a well in the center and the yeast mixture and cool water. Using the spoon, stir together all ingredients until sticky and difficult to stir. Cover tightly and allow to ferment slowly in the refrigerator for 24 hours before using. Store in the refrigerator up to two weeks in 1/4 or 1/2 cup portions. To use, rinse a measuring cup in water, scoop out the amount needed.

Thank You

Thank you, Dr. Tammy Swartz, D.V.M., for the wonderful care you gave Barkley, our small Yourkshire Terrier, the past year and a half, but especially throughout his recent illness and euthanasia. We have been impressed by your prompt, professional and compassionate care.

Colby and the surrounding communities are fortunate to have your services as you continue to treat, love and comfort your animals and their families at the Swartz Veterinary Hospital.

*Elaine and John Kite
St. Francis, KS*

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