

Introduction

As the holiday season approaches, kitchens across the world fill with the delightful scents of baked goods, laughter, and joy. One of the most cherished traditions during Christmas is baking cookies, and among them, soft Christmas cookies stand out as a crowd favorite. Their melt-in-your-mouth texture, combined with festive shapes and decorations, makes them perfect for sharing with loved ones, gifting, or simply enjoying with a glass of milk. This recipe for soft Christmas cookies is simple, allowing bakers of all skill levels to create these delightful treats that will surely become a holiday staple.

Detailed Ingredients

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups white sugar
1 cup margarine, softened
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Prep Time

Prep Time: 20 minutes (plus 2 hours chilling)

Cook Time, Total Time, Yield

Cook Time: 6-8 minutes per batch
Total Time: 45 minutes active, plus chilling time
Yield: Approximately 24 cookies

Detailed Directions and Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Dry Ingredients

Begin by sifting together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. This step is essential as it helps to aerate and combine the dry ingredients, ensuring an even distribution of the baking powder and salt throughout the flour. Set this bowl aside for later

use.

Step 2: Cream the Margarine and Sugar

In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat the softened margarine and white sugar together until the mixture is smooth and creamy. This process incorporates air into the mixture, creating a light and fluffy texture that is pivotal for soft cookies.

Step 3: Add Eggs and Vanilla

Beat in the first egg until fully incorporated, followed by the second egg, and mix in the vanilla extract. Continue blending until the mixture is well combined. The eggs will provide moisture and help bind the ingredients together, while the vanilla adds a warm, inviting flavor.

Step 4: Combine Wet and Dry Ingredients

Gradually add the previously prepared flour mixture to the wet ingredients. Stir gently until just combined; be careful not to overmix at this stage as it can lead to tougher cookies. The dough will come together beautifully, creating a soft texture.

Step 5: Chill the Dough

Take the dough and wrap it tightly in plastic wrap. Place it in the refrigerator to chill for 2 hours. Chilling the dough is crucial as it firms up the margarine, making it easier to roll out and helps prevent the cookies from spreading too much during baking.

Step 6: Preheat the Oven

Once the dough has chilled, preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). While the oven heats up, prepare your baking sheets by greasing them lightly to prevent sticking.

Step 7: Roll Out the Dough

On a clean, floured surface, roll out the chilled dough to a thickness of about 1/4 inch. It's essential to use flour on the rolling surface and your rolling pin to avoid sticking.

Step 8: Cut Out Shapes

Using cookie cutters, cut out shapes from the rolled dough and place them on the prepared

cookie sheets. Gather any scraps of dough, roll them out again, and repeat the process until all the dough is used.

Step 9: Bake the Cookies

Bake the cookies in batches for 6 to 8 minutes, or until the edges are just golden. Keep a close eye on them, as ovens can vary in temperature, and overbaking can result in a less soft cookie.

Step 10: Cool the Cookies

After removing the cookies from the oven, allow them to cool on the baking sheet for a few minutes. This cooling time helps them set properly. Once slightly cooled, transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely before decorating or serving.

Notes

Ensure that your margarine is sufficiently softened before starting the recipe; this will make it easier to cream with the sugar. If you want to add sprinkles or colored sugar for decoration, you can sprinkle them on top of the cookies before baking.

Cook techniques

Mixing techniques: Use a gentle folding motion when incorporating the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients to maintain the fluffiness of the dough.

Rolling: Ensure that you keep the rolling surface floured to prevent the dough from sticking.

FAQ

Can I use butter instead of margarine?

Absolutely! While the recipe calls for margarine, you can substitute butter for a richer flavor. Just ensure that the butter is softened.

Can I add flavors or spices to the cookies?

Yes, you can add spices like cinnamon or nutmeg for a warm spice flavor, or even citrus zest for a refreshing twist. Adjust the quantity to suit your taste.

How should I store these cookies?

Store the cooled cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one week. They can also be frozen for longer storage; just ensure they're well-wrapped to prevent freezer burn.

Are these cookies suitable for decorating?

Yes, these soft Christmas cookies are perfect for decorating! Once cooled, you can use icing, sprinkles, or any other decorations you prefer. They provide a lovely canvas for all your holiday creativity.

Conclusion

Soft Christmas cookies are not just desserts; they are an embodiment of holiday spirit, warmth, and joy. Whether enjoyed fresh from the oven, shared with friends and family, or stacked in a festive tin as a gift, they create lasting memories. This recipe is not only simple to follow but also allows for endless customization, making it an ideal starting point for holiday baking.

More recipes suggestions and combination**Decorative Icing Recipe**

Enhance your soft Christmas cookies with a simple icing made from powdered sugar, milk, and vanilla extract. Decorate them with festive colors to really bring out their holiday charm.

Chocolate Chip Addition

For an added twist, consider mixing in chocolate chips or other candies into the dough before chilling. This can provide a delightful textural contrast and an extra layer of flavor.

Alternative Shapes

Use different cookie cutters to create festive shapes such as stars, trees, or ornaments to diversify the look of your cookie platter. These variations can make your holiday treats even more appealing.

Cookie Sandwiches

Try making cookie sandwiches by filling the cooled cookies with frosting, whipped cream, or ice cream. This indulgent treat is sure to wow your guests at any holiday gathering.

Gluten-Free Version

If you're looking to cater to gluten sensitivities, substitute all-purpose flour with a gluten-free flour blend. The results are deliciously soft cookies that everyone can enjoy!

The holidays will undoubtedly feel a little warmer with the smell of these soft Christmas cookies wafting through your kitchen. Happy baking and enjoy the festive season!