



Spiced Chocolate Holiday Cookies

A Cookie with a Kick

Let's talk about these cookies. They are chocolatey and sweet. But they have a little secret. A pinch of pepper and cayenne hides inside.

It sounds strange, I know. My grandson made a funny face when I told him. But trust me. The spice doesn't make them hot. It just makes the chocolate taste deeper and warmer. It feels like a cozy hug from the inside. That matters. Good food should make you feel something.

My First Spiced Cookie

I learned this trick years ago. My friend Margot brought similar cookies

to a winter party. We all took one bite. Then our eyes got wide. We couldn't figure out why they were so good.

She finally told us her secret. A bit of black pepper! We all laughed. Now I always add that special zip. It reminds me of her and that snowy night. Do you have a food that reminds you of a friend?

Rolling and Chilling is Key

The dough is very soft. You must chill it in the fridge. This is the hardest part. You have to wait! But it matters so much.

Chilled dough is easy to slice. It keeps the cookies pretty and round. If you skip the chill, you'll have a puddle. Not a cookie. So wrap that dough log tight. Let it rest. Use the time to wash your bowls. The waiting makes the baking better.

The Sparkly Sugar Coat

Now for the fun part. Mix sanding sugar with more cinnamon. Roll your cold dough log in it. Press the sparkles right in.

This sugar coat is magic. It gives a sweet crunch. It also makes them look like holiday jewels. *Fun fact: Sanding sugar has bigger crystals. That's why it sparkles so much!* Do you like your cookies crunchy or soft?

Sharing the Warmth

These cookies smell amazing in the oven. Like spicy chocolate. Let them cool completely on a rack. They get a perfect snap.

See also Rolo Pretzel Christmas Wreaths

I pack them in a tin with wax paper. I give them to neighbors. Food is meant to be shared. That is the second thing that matters. A shared treat can brighten a gray day. What is your favorite treat to share with others?

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
All-purpose flour	1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups (6 $\frac{2}{3}$ ounces/189 grams)	
Dutch-processed cocoa powder	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ ounces/64 grams)	
Ground cinnamon	1 tablespoon	Divided use
Salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon	
Pepper	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	
Cayenne pepper	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	
Unsalted butter, softened	12 tablespoons	
Granulated sugar	1 cup (7 ounces/198 grams)	
Large egg	1	
Sanding sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	For rolling



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Instructions

Step 1: Grab a big bowl. Whisk your flour, cocoa, two teaspoons of cinnamon, salt, pepper, and cayenne together. Set it aside. In your mixer, beat the soft butter and sugar until it's light and fluffy. This takes about three minutes. Add the egg and mix it in. Now, slowly add your flour mixture on low speed. Mix until it just comes together. (Scrape the bowl's sides once to help it mix!)

Step 2: Split the dough right in half. Roll each half into a log, like a little bread loaf. Wrap them up tight in plastic wrap. The fridge is their home now, for at least two hours. This makes them easy to slice later. I sometimes make the dough two days ahead. It makes the whole house smell wonderful on baking day.

Step 3: Heat your oven to 375 degrees. Line your baking sheets with parchment paper. Mix the sanding sugar and last teaspoon of cinnamon in a shallow dish. Unwrap your cold dough logs. Roll them in the sugar mix to coat them all over. Press the sugar on so it sticks. Doesn't that sparkly sugar look pretty already?

Step 4: Slice your logs into little rounds. Make them about a quarter-inch thick. Roll the log a bit after each slice to keep it round. Place them on your sheets. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Switch the trays halfway through. You'll know they're done when the edges look dry. **What's your favorite cookie smell? Share below!**

See also Sage Brown Butter Butternut Pie

Step 5: Let the cookies cool on the sheets for five minutes. Then, move them to a wire rack. They must cool completely before you eat them. I

know, the waiting is hard! They get a perfect little crunch this way. Store them in a tin for up to three days. (If they last that long!) I still laugh at how fast my grandson makes them disappear.

Creative Twists

These cookies love to play dress-up. You can give them a whole new personality. Try one of these fun ideas next time you bake.

Orange Zest: Add a tablespoon of fresh orange zest to the dough. It sings with the chocolate.

Peppermint Sparkle: Roll the logs in crushed candy canes instead of sugar. So festive!

Hidden Heart: Press a dried cherry or a raspberry into the center of each cookie before baking.

Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving & Pairing Ideas

These cookies are wonderful all on their own. But sometimes, a little company is nice. For a plate, I love a small bowl of whipped cream for dipping. A sprinkle of orange zest on top looks lovely, too. They are perfect with a hot drink.

For a grown-up treat, try them with a glass of ruby port. The sweetness is just right. For everyone, a big mug of cold milk or spicy chai tea is my go-to. The cool milk makes the spice in the cookie dance. **Which would you choose tonight?**



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Keeping Your Spiced Chocolate Cookies Perfect

Let's talk about keeping these cookies lovely. First, store them in a tin at room temperature. They stay perfect for three days. I use my old biscuit tin with the floral pattern.

See also Roasted Squash and Apple Holiday Feast

You can freeze the dough logs for a future treat. Just wrap them well in plastic. They keep for a month. Thaw in the fridge before slicing and baking.

Batch cooking is a wonderful gift to your future self. I once made a double batch before my grandkids visited. We had fresh, warm cookies all weekend. It saved so much time.

This matters because good food should bring joy, not stress. Having dough ready means spontaneous cookie magic. **Have you ever tried storing cookie dough this way? Share below!**

Cookie Troubles? Here Are My Fixes

Sometimes cookies can be tricky. Here are simple fixes. First, if your dough is too crumbly, it's too cold. Let it sit on the counter for ten minutes.

Second, if cookies spread too much, your butter was too soft. I remember my first batch melting into puddles. Chilling the dough properly fixes this every time.

Third, if they taste too spicy, just use less cayenne next time. Start with a tiny pinch. Getting this right builds your cooking confidence. It also makes the chocolate flavor sing. **Which of these problems have you run into before?**

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Can I make these gluten-free? A: Yes. Use a good gluten-free flour blend. I like the one with the blue label.

Q: How far ahead can I make the dough? A: You can make it up to three days ahead. Keep it wrapped in the fridge.

Q: What if I don't have Dutch-process cocoa? A: Regular cocoa works. Your cookies will be a bit lighter in color.

Q: Can I double the recipe? A: Absolutely. Just mix in two separate batches for best results.

Q: Any optional tips? A: A tiny sprinkle of sea salt on top is lovely. *Fun fact: The salt makes the chocolate taste even richer.* **Which tip will you try first?**

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope you love making these special cookies. They always make my kitchen smell like a holiday. I would love to hear about your baking adventure.

Please tell me all about it in the comments below. Sharing stories is the best part of cooking. **Have you tried this recipe?** I am waiting to hear your story.



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Happy cooking!
—Elowen Thorn.



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