

Baker #12 - Donna Blankinship

Soft and Chewy Cranberry Orange Cookies

Story:

I didn't grow up with a holiday baking tradition. But I happily married into a family with many excellent and generous bakers. I joined their efforts and worked on my baking skills over the decades, but I fine tuned my holiday efforts over the past few years when I started baking cookies for my team at work. The cookies were supposed to be the personal part of a bigger gift, but last year my people told me: "Skip the gifts; we're mostly interested in the cookies." They claimed to love all the treats, but one of the most popular choices was this recipe I adapted only slightly from King Arthur Baking. I know most people gravitate to chocolate treats – they do at my house anyway – but I like this mix of flavors and how cute they turn out.

Recipe:

Recipe by PJ Hamel at King Arthur Baking

Prep: 12 mins

Bake: 6 to 7 mins

Total: 18 mins

Yield: about 2 to 4 dozen cookies

Ingredients

- 8 tablespoons (113g) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3/4 cup (149g) granulated sugar
- zest of 1 orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups (180g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (228g) dried cranberries, roughly chopped,
- 1 cup toasted chopped pecans or walnuts
- Coarse white sugar for rolling (can substitute turbinado sugar)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Lightly grease two baking sheets, or line them with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, beat together the butter, sugar, zest, vanilla, baking powder, and salt.
3. Beat in the egg. The mixture may look slightly curdled; that's OK.
4. Add the flour, dried cranberries and nuts, stirring until well combined.

5. Pour some coarse sparkling sugar into a shallow bowl or baking dish. Use a teaspoon or tablespoon cookie scoop to measure out the dough and roll each piece into a ball. Do not over-process or try to make them look perfect; your cookies won't turn out as soft. Roll the balls in the coarse sugar and place onto the baking sheets, leaving about 1 1/2" between them.
6. When you've finished shaping and rolling your cookies, use the flat bottom of a glass to flatten the cookies slightly, to a scant 1/2" thick.
7. Bake the cookies for 6 to 7 minutes for smaller cookies and 8 to 10 minutes for larger ones, until they're barely set, and a light golden brown around the edges. Don't over-bake; if you do, the cookies will be hard, not soft and chewy. Gently lift one of the cookies and look at the bottom; if you've used parchment, it shouldn't be brown. If you use a dark cookie sheet without parchment, it should be light (not dark) brown.
8. Remove the cookies from the oven, and allow them to cool on the pan for at least 5 minutes before transferring them to a rack to cool completely.
9. Store leftover cranberry orange cookies at room temperature, well wrapped, for 4 to 5 days; freeze for longer storage.