

Baker #5 - Joy Cooper

Dark Chocolate Orange Cranberry Cookies

Story:

We used to make these cookies around the holiday season. The smell when they are baking brings back lots of happy memories of Thanksgivings and Christmases past. The intersection of flavors between cranberry, orange and dark chocolate, can't be beat! It's a very easy and convenient cookie to make. The dough can be prepped ahead and either refrigerated or frozen. Then just take out, cut and bake when you are ready!

Local ingredients:

Ocean Spray dried cranberries and Edison AP flour from Cairnspring Mills.

Recipe:

- 4 ounces unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 teaspoon orange zest, finely grated (1 large orange)
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon orange extract (optional but it pumps up the flavor)
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 and 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 8 ounces dark chocolate, chopped
- 1/2 cup of chopped pecans to sprinkle over dipped chocolate portion of cookie.

Instructions:

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large bowl using a handheld electric mixer, combine the butter, orange zest, and sugar and beat on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy. Add in the vanilla and orange extracts. Add in the egg and beat until combined. Add in the flour, dried cranberries, chopped pecans and beat until just combined. Your dough should be stiff.
2. Sprinkle a tablespoon of flour over a clean work surface. Scrape the cookie dough onto the surface and gently knead it for 30 seconds. Divide the dough in half, then roll each portion of cookie dough into a log that's roughly 2" in diameter. Then wrap each log tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours (or up to 5 days).

3. When you're ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350 degrees (F). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a Silpat baking mat.
4. Remove the dough from the fridge and place it on a cutting board. Using a sharp knife, slice the logs of cookie dough into 1/4" rounds.
5. Place the cookies 1/2" apart on the prepared baking sheet, and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly golden.
6. Remove from oven and place the pan on a cooling rack. Cool for at least 15 minutes before removing.
7. In the meantime, make the chocolate coating. Melt the chopped chocolate in a double boiler or in the microwave. If using the microwave method, place the chopped chocolate in a medium heat-proof bowl. Melt in the microwave, on low power, in 15 second increments, stirring after each increment until completely melted and smooth.
8. Dip each cookie halfway into the chocolate then return to the lined baking sheet and sprinkle wet chocolate with chopped pecans.
9. Allow the chocolate to set before serving. To speed this up, you can place the baking sheet into the refrigerator.
10. Once set, serve and enjoy! These are really good with coffee or tea.