

Thick and Chewy Gingerbread Cookies

This recipe comes from Cook's Illustrated Magazine. It makes about 18 large or 30 small gingerbread cookies.

3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
¾ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
¾ teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground cloves (totally optional – I leave it out as I hate cloves)
½ teaspoon salt
12 tablespoons (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened but still cool, cut into 12 pieces
¾ cup fancy (not cooking) molasses
2 tablespoons milk

1. In a food processor, process the flour, brown sugar, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and salt until combined, about 10 seconds. Scatter the butter pieces over the flour mixture and process until the mixture is sandy and resembles very fine meal, about 15 seconds.
2. With the machine running, gradually add the molasses and milk. Process until the dough is evenly moistened and forms a soft mass, about 10 seconds.
3. Scrape dough out onto a work surface and divide it half. Working with one piece at a time, roll the dough, ¼ inch thick, between 2 sheets of parchment paper. Leaving the dough sandwiched between the parchment layers, stack on a baking sheet and freeze until firm, 15-20 minutes.
4. Adjust the oven racks to the upper and lower middle positions and heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
5. Remove 1 dough sheet from the freezer; place on work surface. Peel off top parchment sheet and gently lay it back in place. Flip the dough over; peel off and discard second parchment layer.
6. Cut the dough using cookie cutters of your choice. Transfer shapes to prepared baking sheets, using a wide metal spatula, spacing them ¾ inches apart. Set scraps aside. Repeat with remaining dough until baking sheets are full.

7. Bake the cookies for 8 – 11 minutes, until they are set in the centers and the dough barely retains an imprint when touched very gently with a fingertip. The baking sheets should be rotated from front to back and switching positions top to bottom, halfway through the baking time. Do not overbake. Cool cookies on the sheets for 2 minutes, then remove the cookies with a wide metal spatula to a wire rack to cool completely.
8. Gather the scraps; repeat rolling, cutting and baking.