

Salt and Serenity

Sugar Cookies with Brown Sugar

From the December 2000 issue of Bon Appetit magazine.

1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground whole vanilla bean (see below)
2 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Using electric mixer, beat butter and sugar in large bowl until fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Sift flour, baking powder and salt and stir to blend well. Add dry ingredients to mixer and mix just until dry ingredients are incorporated. Turn dough out onto lightly floured surface and knead gently 1 minute.
2. Scrape dough out onto a work surface and divide it half. Working with one piece at a time, roll the dough, $\frac{1}{4}$ 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Cut the dough using cookie cutters of your choice. Transfer shapes to prepared baking sheets, using a wide metal spatula, spacing them $\frac{3}{4}$ inches apart. Set scraps aside. Repeat with remaining dough until baking sheets are full.
6. Bake cookies until light brown, about 11 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes on sheet. Transfer cookies to rack; cool.
7. Gently reroll dough scraps between 2 sheets of parchment, chill and cut out more cookies. Transfer to cookie sheets and bake as above.

To grind whole vanilla beans, cut several vanilla beans into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch lengths. Using a coffee grinder, designated for spice grinding only, grind the vanilla beans until they are fine.