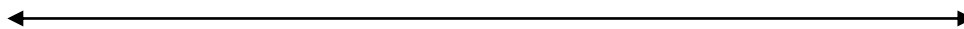


BOB'S BISCUITS

AN AMAZING COLLECTION OF FABULOUS BISCUIT RECEIPTS

ROBERT J. SEWELL

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Biscuit or Cookie?

Well, it seems to depend on where you live. In the U.K. it is “biscuit”; in the U.S.A. it is “cookie” and in Canada it seems that pretty well anything goes.

The Oxford dictionary tells us: “**Biscuit**. Kinds of unleavened bread, usu. dry & crisp, & often sweetened &c.”¹ Webster’s Dictionary (1937) has: “**Cooky**. A small, flat sweet cake. Also cookie.”² And here we have another situation – “cooky” is rarely seen now; the preferred 21st century spelling seems to be “cookie.”

The English language continues to evolve. If it didn’t, we would still be lumbering along with the language of Chaucer, or would we? Perhaps we would be using the language of Beowulf. But I digress. Let’s get on with making some cookies – or should it be biscuits? In this little collection, I have used whatever term is used in the original receipt. Or is it recipe? Well, my grandmother used “receipt” so that is what I use.³

Cookie Hints and Tips

Sometimes, an ungreased baking sheet is suggested and in other receipts, a “lightly greased” sheet is called for. We have found, with many thanks to Alyssa, that parchment paper is the best way to prepare cookie sheets. Between batches, wipe or shake crumbs off the parchment paper. It can be used again and again. Virginia suggests that if the parchment paper doesn’t appear too used at the end of a cookie baking event, it can be saved for the next time.

Here a few more baking tips:

- Don’t overcook! Cookies are soft when removed from the oven, but crisp up on cooling.
- Dull pans absorb radiant energy more readily and hence cook faster. Shiny pans take longer.
- To prevent cookies from burning on the bottom, we set the “top” oven rack in the middle of the oven with another cookie sheet on the lower rack as a “heat shield” between the element and the actual cookie sheet.

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¹ *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, London, 1946.

² *National Dictionary*, P.F. Collier & Son, New York, 1937

³ **Receipt**. Statement of ingredients & procedure for a dish . . . *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, London, 1933.

BOB'S BISCUITS

2

Belgian Cakes

These biscuits were originally called German Biscuits; but during the First World War, the name was changed to Belgian Cakes or Empire Cookies in much the same manner as Berlin, Ontario became Kitchener and sauerkraut became liberty cabbage. Even poor old King George felt compelled to change his last name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor.

The Sewell Family first came across Belgian Cakes at the Burlington Bakery in Burlington, Ontario in the mid 1950's. This bakery was located on the east side of Brant Street opposite Ontario Street. They called the biscuits "Belgian Cakes" so that is the name I have used.

Here is how to make German Biscuits, Belgian Cakes, Empire Cookies or whatever:

½ cup butter
½ cup fine sugar
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla
1½ to 1¾ cup all-purpose flour
1½ tsp baking powder
¾ cup raspberry jam (approx.)

Icing:

1½ cup icing sugar
½ tsp almond extract
1 to 2 Tbsp hot water
Candied cherries to decorate

Cream butter and sugar together. Beat in egg and vanilla. Combine flour and baking powder, gradually add to butter mixture to form a dough.

Divide dough in half for easier handling. On a lightly floured surface, roll ⅛ inch thick. Cut with floured 2 inch cookie cutter and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in preheated 350°F oven 10 to 12 minutes until very lightly browned around edges. Cool on rack,

Spread half the cookies with jam; top with remaining cookies.

Blend icing sugar, almond extract and enough hot water to make a thin icing. While icing is still soft, spread over top. Decorate with a small piece of candied or glazed cherry. Do not use maraschino cherries; they are too wet.

Makes 24 filled cookies.

*Courtesy of
Toronto Star Fare Exchange*

Shortbread Meltaways

Shortbread Meltaways contain toffee that partly melts during baking. It is absolutely necessary to use parchment paper to prevent sticking. These biscuits are a big favourite with Paul Donald Sewell.

1 cup butter, softened
½ cup icing sugar
2 tsp vanilla
1 ¾ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup corn starch
¾ tsp baking powder
1 cup "Chipits Skor®" toffee bits

Preheat oven to 350°F and line cookie sheets with parchment paper.

If the butter is hard, soften slightly in the microwave for a minute or so at 50%. Beat butter, icing sugar and vanilla until creamy. In a separate bowl, combine flour, corn starch and baking powder; stir half into butter mixture. Stir in toffee bits and remaining flour mixture.

Roll heaping tablespoonfuls of dough into balls. Place on prepared cookie sheets, spacing about 2 inches apart. Bake in centre of preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or so until lightly golden. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes. Makes 48 cookies.

Robin Hood "Baking is Back 2006"

Crunchy Butterscotch Cookies

Crunchy butterscotch cookies are just that - - crunchy and butterscotch! Although the receipt appeared in the 2005 edition of *Baking is Back*, I didn't actually get around to trying it until November 2008. It instantly became a family favourite.

1 cup shortening
¾ cup white sugar
½ cup packed brown sugar
2 eggs
1 ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
3 cups corn flakes, slightly crushed
1 ½ cups butterscotch chips
1 cup flaked coconut

Preheat oven to 350°F and lightly grease cookie sheet or line with parchment paper.

Beat shortening, sugars and eggs in a large bowl until light and creamy. Combine flour and baking powder in a separate bowl and add to creamed mixture, mixing on low speed until blended. Stir in remaining ingredients.

Drop by spoonfuls on prepared cookie sheet.

Bake in centre of preheated oven for 9 to 12 minutes, until set and golden. Cool for 5 minutes, then transfer to rack to cool completely. Makes 5 dozen.

Robin Hood "Baking is Back 2005"

Black Forest Cookies

Black Forest cookies may just be the ultimate biscuit. When you see this receipt makes 6 dozen biscuits, you may be tempted to try halving it . . . but don't. These biscuits disappear very quickly! With the candied cherries and white chocolate, they aren't a cheap biscuit; but they are possibly the best biscuit ever.

Be sure to use "quick" rolled oats that are advertised to take about 5 minutes to cook. Biscuits made with long cooking "old fashioned" oatmeal don't hold together and "instant" oatmeal doesn't have enough texture.

1 cup shortening
1 cup packed brown sugar
¾ cup white sugar
2 eggs
2 Tbsp milk
1 tsp almond extract
1 ⅔ cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
**2 ½ cups "quick" (5 minutes to cook)
rolled oats**
1 ½ cups chopped red candied cherries
1 ¼ cup white chocolate chips
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
¾ cup slivered almonds

Preheat oven to 375°F and line cookie sheets with parchment paper if desired.

Beat shortening, sugars, eggs, milk and almond extract together in a large bowl until creamy.

Combine flour, baking soda and powder and add to creamed mixture. Mix on low speed until blended. Stir in oats and mix well. Stir in remaining ingredients. Drop dough by tablespoonfuls onto ungreased baking sheet.

Bake in centre of 375°F for 10 to 13 minutes until light golden. Allow to cool for 10 minutes, then transfer to rack to cool completely. Makes 6 dozen.

Robin Hood "Baking is Back 2004"

Spicy Raisin Cookies

These are a darker molasses flavoured spice and raisin biscuit. They are a bit chewy and are a big favourite (as are all biscuits!) in the Sewell household. Dark, cooking molasses seems to give the best result.

¾ cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
⅓ cup molasses
1 egg
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking soda
2 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp cloves
½ tsp ginger
1 cup raisins
coarse sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F and lightly grease cookie sheet or line with parchment paper. If the butter is

hard, soften slightly in the microwave for a half minute or so at 50%.

Beat butter and sugar in a large bowl until light and creamy. Add molasses and egg, beat until well blended.

Combine flour, baking soda and spices and gradually add to creamed mixture. Mix well. Stir in raisins.

Cover and chill in refrigerator for an hour for easier handling, then shape into 1 inch balls. Roll in coarse sugar to coat well. Place on prepared cookie sheet and press with a fork to flatten slightly

Bake at 350°F for 10 to 12 minutes until set. Makes 3 dozen.

Robin Hood "Baking Festival 2002"

Raisin Oat Cookies

Raisin oat cookies appeared first in Baking Festival 2001 as Cranberry Oat Cookies; and dried cranberries were used instead of raisins. We prefer the raisin version; it is a better flavour and is more frugal as well. As with Black Forest cookies, be sure to use "quick" rolled oats that are advertised to take about 5 minutes to cook.

¾ cup butter, softened
1 cup packed brown sugar
⅓ cup white sugar
1 egg
2 Tbsp water
2 tsp vanilla
¾ cup all purpose flour
¾ tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
3 cups "quick" (5 minutes to cook) rolled oats
1 cup raisins
½ cup chopped pecans, optional

Preheat oven to 350°F and lightly grease cookie sheet or line with parchment paper. Beat butter, sugars, egg, water and vanilla until light and creamy. Combine flour, baking soda and cinnamon; and add to creamed mixture and beat until blended. Stir in oats, raisins and nuts.

Drop by heaping spoonfuls onto prepared cookie sheet and press down slightly. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes until edges are golden brown. Don't over bake. Makes 4 dozen

Robin Hood "Baking Festival 2001"

Eggnog Cookies

The receipt for eggnog cookies was shared by Sandi Norwood of California who I met through the Sewell Family of Redbird, Missouri. This is a great Christmas season favourite.

2 ½ cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
1 ¼ cups sugar
¾ cup butter
½ cup eggnog
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 egg yolks
1 tablespoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 300°F. In a medium bowl combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg. mix well with a wire whisk and set aside.

In a large bowl, cream sugar and butter with an electric mixer to form a grainy paste. Add eggnog, vanilla and egg yolks and beat at medium speed until smooth. Add the dry ingredients and beat at low speed just until combined. Do not over mix.

Drop by rounded teaspoons onto ungreased baking sheets, 1" apart. Sprinkle lightly with nutmeg. Bake at 300°F for 23 to 25 minutes or until bottoms turn light brown. Transfer to cool, flat surface immediately with spatula.

Courtesy of Sandi Norwood

Chocolate Chip Cookies

When posted at Scott Park Secondary School in the late 1990's during my final years of teaching, I had one exceptionally rowdy grade nine class (first year high school) in the second semester. They were so difficult to control during the first semester that the class was split in two for the second semester – only 15 pupils per class; and they were assigned to older, more experienced (grouchy) teachers. They were still a real handful!

One fine day during break, a couple of students came roaring into the Science lab and asked if the class could please stay in the Family Studies room for a few minutes; they were baking cookies and they weren't quite ready. Always suspicious, I went across the hall to check. Sure enough, the poor, frazzled Family Studies teacher actually wanted them a bit longer if I didn't mind; and I most certainly didn't!

When they finally did come to Science class, they brought me some biscuits to sample. They were so good I asked for the receipt. This is likely the easiest biscuit receipt I have. There is no "beat until light and creamy" or "combine dry ingredients in a separate bowl" or anything like that; you just mix everything up. This is also possibly the best chocolate chip cookie I have come across . . . it is light, crisp and delicious.

½ cup white sugar
½ cup packed brown sugar
⅓ cup margarine
⅓ cup shortening
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla
1 ½ cup flour
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 cup chopped pecans
1 cup (or more) chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Mix sugars, margarine, shortening, egg and vanilla.

Stir in remaining ingredients.

Drop dough by rounded teaspoons about 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake until light brown, about 10 to 12 minutes.

Cool slightly before removing from cookie sheet.

Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

Jamie Fowler, student at Scott Park School

Scottish Shortbread

We have always enjoyed what I refer to as “Scottish Shortbread”, i.e., thick, triangular shaped pieces of really rich, buttery shortbread. I found this receipt in a small, locally published book from rural Temiskaming, Ontario.

4 cups cake and pastry flour
6 Tbsp rice flour
1 cup white sugar, finely granulated
1 pound soft butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 egg yolks
Coarse red and green sugar (optional)

Set the “top” oven rack in the middle of the oven with another cookie sheet on the lower rack as a “heat shield” between the element and the actual cookie sheet and preheat oven to 280°F.

If the butter is hard, soften slightly by microwaving for a minute or so at 50%.

Cream butter with an electric mixer until smooth and soft. Add sugar. Add egg yolks. Beat well.

Add vanilla and salt. Add 6 Tbsp rice flour and gradually add pastry flour 1 cup at a time.

Put the dough on a big cookie sheet and pat into two big disks, about 9 inches in diameter. Try using a 9 inch cake tin as a big cookie cutter to get it nice and neat. Cut each disk into twelve triangular slices and sprinkle with coarse red and green sugar. Pat slightly to make sure the sugar sticks.

Bake at 280 to 300 °F for an hour, depending on your oven. Take care not to overcook or the butter starts to brown resulting in a less tender product with a less buttery flavour. The shortbread should be a very pale gold colour when removed from the oven; and it seems to darken slightly as it cools. Cut again immediately after removing from the oven. Allow to cool for ½ hour before loosening with a spatula.

Mrs. K. Mitchell of Box Grove, Ontario
Country Classics Cookbook, Mrs. Willy Dirks, Ed.

Buffi's Shortbread

Cousin Buffi wrote in December 2007 that she was about to prepare many dozens of her famous Christmas shortbread. She gives this as a gift and it is always highly popular. I asked if she would share the receipt; and Buffi responded that it was from the back of a “Canada Corn Starch” box.

I prefer the idea of chilling the dough for 45 minutes or so, rolling it ¼ inch thick, cutting into Christmas shapes and topping with red and green coloured sugar prior to baking. This is how my grandmother presented shortbread.

However, this shortbread is delicious (and easier) shaped into balls, flattened slightly and topped with a bit of candied cherry. Why not try all the variations presented below?

½ cup corn starch
½ cup icing sugar
1 cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup butter, softened
Optional: candied cherries, coloured sugar, nuts, etc. Read for variations below.

Sift together corn starch, icing sugar and flour. With wooden spoon, blend in butter until soft, smooth dough forms. Shape into 1 inch balls. If dough is too soft to handle, cover and chill 30-60 minutes. Place 1 ½ inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet; flatten with lightly floured fork.

Alternatively, roll dough to ¼ inch; cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Decorate with candied cherries, coloured sprinkles or nuts if desired. Bake in 300°F oven 15 to 20 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on wire rack. Makes about 24 cookies.

Crescents: Add ½ cup ground almonds or hazelnuts to flour mixture. Shape into logs about ½ inch thick and 3 inches long. Twist into crescent shapes. When baked and cool, dip ends in melted chocolate.

Buffi Basso
From the back of “Canada Corn Starch” box

Chocolate Cranberry Biscotti

This Italian favourite isn't exactly a cookie, but it isn't a cake either. It is sort of a twice baked biscuit. Read carefully below: first you bake a sort of flat, rich cake; then slice and return to the oven to dry the pieces. This is really delicious and is good served with ice cream.

Many thanks to Alyssa for all her work in developing this receipt to make it easier.

2 cups flour
1 ½ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
½ cup butter, softened
¾ cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 ½ cups "Post Selects Cranberry Almond Crunch®" cereal (or similar cereal)
½ cups white "chocolate" chips
¾ cup chocolate wafers, melted

Preheat oven to 325°F. Mix flour, baking powder and salt; set aside. Beat butter and sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy. Blend in eggs and vanilla. Gradually add flour

mixture, beating well after each addition. Add cereal and white chocolate chips; stir until well blended.

Divide dough in half. Shape each half into 14 inch long "log" with lightly floured hands; place on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper. Pat each log down to make it maybe 2 ½ to 3 inches wide.

Bake 30 min. or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and cool for 5 min. Using a sharp knife, cut each log into 12 slices trying not to cut the parchment paper. Turn each slice on its side. Try to have the slices about ½ inch apart. Bake an additional 15 to 18 min. or until slightly dried. Remove from baking sheet. Cool on wire racks.

Dip in or drizzle with melted chocolate. Let stand until set. Store in tightly covered container at room temperature. Makes 2 dozen.

Alyssa Sewell

From a Kraft cookbook no longer in print.

Chocolate Bark

This really isn't a biscuit or cookie, but it is made on a cookie sheet! It is also perhaps the best home made candy that we have come across. I found this receipt in a small, locally published book from Temagami, Ontario.

Soda Crackers
1 cup white sugar
1 cup butter
1 ½ cups (8 oz) chocolate wafers
Slivered almonds

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a small 9 by 13 inch cookie sheet with 2 layers of aluminium foil. Line the pan with soda crackers.

Bring sugar and butter to a boil in a sauce pan, stirring so it doesn't burn. Pour over the soda crackers and bake at 350°F until golden brown.

Melt the chocolate wafers over hot water and spread over crackers. Sprinkle with slivered almonds and store in refrigerator. Don't attempt to slice; just break in pieces.

Note: For larger cookie sheets, increase the ingredients proportionally. For a medium 10 by 15 inch sheet, use 1 ½ cup sugar and butter; and 2 cups or 11 oz chocolate. For a large 11 X 17 inch sheet, use 1 ⅔ cups sugar and butter; and 2 ½ cups or 13 oz. chocolate.

Aliette Kitts, Temagami

"Temagami Cooks"

Temagami Lakes Association, 2002

Tea Biscuits

The receipts on this page are for those who thought this little collection was about what is referred to in the U.S.A. as "biscuits"; namely bread leavened with baking powder and baked in small pieces.

2 cups all purpose flour

3 Tbsp baking powder

6 Tbsp (¾ cup) Crisco® shortening

¾ cup cold milk

1 cup old cheddar, shredded. (optional)

For cheese biscuits, add 1 cup shredded old cheddar to the dry ingredients prior to adding milk. (Thanks to Bunnie Bailey for this idea.)

Set the "top" oven rack in the middle of the oven with another cookie sheet on the lower rack as a "heat shield" between the element and the actual cookie sheet and preheat oven to 450°F.

Short Instructions:

If you know how to make biscuits, you likely don't need these instructions, but here they are:

Mix dry ingredients into shortening; add milk, mix and knead gently. Pat out on a board and cut into biscuit shape. Bake 10 to 12 minutes at 450°F.

Detailed Instructions:

Read these instructions if you require more detail.

We can almost guarantee good biscuits if you follow these instructions.

"Whisk together the first three ingredients and then cut in shortening using two knives or preferably a pastry blender until the mixture looks like coarse bread crumbs. Note especially during warm weather that it is important that everything remain fairly cool and that the shortening not melt or form a paste with the flour.

"Add milk all at once and mix quickly with a fork just until the flour mixture is just moistened. With a lightly floured hand, gather the dough into a ball and knead it gently against the sides and bottom of the bowl 5 to 10 times; turning and pressing any loose pieces into the dough each time until they adhere and the bowl is fairly clean.

"Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface. With a lightly floured rolling pin or your fingers, roll out or pat the dough ½ to ⅝ inch thick. Cut 1 ¾ to 2 inch rounds using a drinking glass or cookie cutter dipped in flour; push the cutter straight down and pull it out without twisting for biscuits that will rise evenly. Re-roll the scraps and cut additional biscuits. The final biscuit(s) will be a bit irregular.

"Place biscuits at least 1 inch apart on a baking sheet, brush tops with milk, and bake until golden brown on top and a deeper golden brown on bottom; about 10 minutes for a dark pan and 12 minutes for a shiny pan. Serve hot."

Irma Rombauer: "The Joy of Cooking"

Peggy's Rock Cakes

These tea cakes or muffins are a favourite with the Orchard Family. We lived close to the Orchards in Ontario, but lost contact when they moved out west in the 1960's. Peggy "found" me while searching the internet in 2005.

2 cups flour

2 Tbsp baking powder

1 cup sugar

⅓ cup shortening

¼ to ⅓ cup raisins or currants

2 eggs, beaten

¾ cup milk

1 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare the muffin tin by using paper muffin cups. You can also use non-stick pans and/or grease with butter or shortening.

Mix flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Cut in shortening using knives or a pastry cutter. Add raisins or currants.

Mix beaten eggs, milk and vanilla. Add all at once to the dry ingredients and mix gently.

Fill prepared muffin cups about ⅔ full and bake in preheated 350°F oven 25 to 30 minutes until a bit darker than "golden". Makes about 12 muffins. Serve warm or cold; on their own or with butter, marmalade or jam.

Courtesy of Peggy Orchard, Calgary, Alberta.