

SPECULOOS COOKIES

Makes about 36

Gingerbread is the go-to choice for Christmas baking, but I never liked eating the cookies after decorating them. Speculoos is the sweeter, more buttery version of gingerbread-more fun to eat, but just as easy to decorate.

- *1/2 cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- *1/2 cup (110 grams) firmly packed brown sugar
- *1/4 cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
- *2 tablespoons (42 grams) molasses
- *1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- *1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- *2 1/4 cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
- *1 tablespoon (6 grams) ground cinnamon
- *3/4 teaspoon (1.5 grams) ground ginger
- *1/2 teaspoon (1.5 grams) fine sea salt
- *1/2 teaspoon (1 gram) grated fresh nutmeg
- *1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
- *Royal Icing (recipe follows)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes,

*stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add molasses, egg, and vanilla, beating until combined.

*2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cinnamon, ginger, salt, nutmeg, and cloves. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined. (Dough should be quite tacky at this point.) Divide dough into thirds, and shape into disks. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

*3. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

*4. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disk of dough to 1/8-inch thickness. Using desired holiday cutters, cut dough, and place on prepared pans. Freeze while rolling and cutting remaining two disks of dough. (Shape and design of cookies will retain better if frozen before baking.)

*5. Bake until golden brown and centers are almost firm, 11 to 13 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Using a pastry bag fitted with a piping tip, pipe Royal Icing onto cookies. Let icing harden completely before stacking. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

ROYAL ICING

Makes about 1 cup

- *2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar
- *3 tablespoons (45 grams) warm water (105°F/40°C to 110°F/43°C)

*1 tablespoon plus 1/4 teaspoon (10 grams) meringue powder

1. In a medium bowl, stir together all ingredients until combined. Use immediately.

Note: The Royal Icing will be quite stiff and thick, allowing you to better control the speed of your piping but requiring quite a bit of force. If you would like a thinner Royal Icing, try adding warm water, 1 teaspoon (5 grams) at a time, until you reach your desired consistency.

ROSE, WHITE CHOCOLATE, AND PISTACHIO WREATH COOKIES

Makes 18 to 20

These cookies are light and crisp yet still very buttery. A simple rosewater glaze covers the topside of the cookie and is then garnished with dried rose petals, chopped pistachios, and white chocolate.

*1/2 cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened

*1/2 cup (60 grams) confectioners' sugar

*1/2 teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt

*1/2 teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract

*1 cup (125 grams) all-purpose flour Rosewater Glaze (recipe follows) Garnish: chopped pistachios, chopped white chocolate, dried rose petals, coarse sanding sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at low