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Classic Chocolate Chip Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 16 LARGE COOKIES

Avoid using a nonstick skillet to brown the butter; the dark color of the nonstick coating makes it difficult to gauge when the butter is browned. Use fresh, moist brown sugar instead of hardened brown sugar, which will make the cookies dry. This recipe works with light brown sugar, but the cookies will be less full-flavored. For our winning brand of chocolate chips, see page 607. If you're using smaller baking sheets, put fewer cookies on each sheet and bake them in batches.

1¾ cups (8½ ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
14 tablespoons (1¾ sticks) unsalted butter
¾ cup packed (5¼ ounces) dark brown sugar (see note)
½ cup (3½ ounces) granulated sugar
1 teaspoon table salt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1¼ cups (7½ ounces) semisweet chocolate chips or chunks (see note)
¾ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, toasted (optional)

1. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 375 degrees. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Whisk the flour and baking soda together in a medium bowl; set aside.
3. Heat 10 tablespoons of the butter in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat until melted, about 2 minutes. Continue cooking, swirling the pan constantly until the butter is dark golden brown and has a nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Transfer the browned butter to a large

heatproof bowl. Add the remaining 4 tablespoons butter and stir until completely melted.

4. Add the sugars, salt, and vanilla to the melted butter; whisk until fully incorporated. Add the egg and egg yolk; whisk until the mixture is smooth with no sugar lumps remaining, about 30 seconds. Let the mixture stand 3 minutes, then whisk for 30 seconds. Repeat the process of resting and whisking two more times until the mixture is thick, smooth, and shiny. Using a rubber spatula, stir in the flour mixture until just combined, about 1 minute. Stir in the chocolate chips and nuts (if using), giving the dough a final stir to ensure that no flour pockets remain.

5. Divide the dough into 16 portions, each about 3 tablespoons. Place the cookies on the prepared baking sheets, spacing them about 2 inches apart.

6. Bake one sheet at a time, rotating the sheet halfway through the baking time, until the cookies are golden brown and still puffy, and the edges have begun to set but the centers are still soft, 10 to 14 minutes. Transfer the baking sheet to a wire rack; cool to room temperature.

THICK AND CHEWY CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Nowadays, chocolate chip cookies sold in gourmet shops and cafés always come jumbo-sized (think saucer plate). These cookies are incredibly appealing and satisfying—thick and chewy rounds loaded with as many chocolate chips as they can hold. We wanted our own version that retained the soft and tender texture of these café cookies, even after a day or two (not that they'd be hanging around that long).

One key element in achieving this cookie was melting the butter, which creates a product with a chewy texture. But to keep the cookie from becoming tough, we had to add a little extra fat, which we did in the form of an egg yolk; the added fat acts a tenderizer and prevents the cookies from hardening after several hours. The usual suspects of all-purpose flour, baking soda, an egg, brown sugar, and granulated sugar made an appearance in our cookie recipe, and vanilla provided a light flavor. A good amount of chocolate chips guaranteed that every bite was rich and chocolaty. Finally, we formed the dough into balls, then pulled the dough into two pieces and rejoined them with the uneven surface facing up; now our cookies had the rustic, craggy appearance we wanted.