



Florentine Lace Cookies

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 14: From an Italian Bakery

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

These wafer-thin almond cookies have a reputation for being fussy and unpredictable, but we ensure success by making just a few tweaks. Instead of temping the hot sugar mixture that forms the base of the dough, we remove it from the heat when it thickens and begins to brown. We substitute orange marmalade for the usual candied orange peel and corn syrup combo, producing a more complex citrus flavor. These cookies are baked much darker than most cookies, which enhances their delicate crispiness, and a flourish of carefully melted chocolate completes the professional pastry shop effect.

Makes 24 Cookies

It's important to cook the cream mixture in the saucepan until it is thick and starting to brown at the edges; undercooking will result in a dough that is too runny to portion. Do not be concerned if some butter separates from the dough while you're portioning the cookies. For the most uniform cookies, use the flattest baking sheets you have and make sure that your parchment paper lies flat. When melting the chocolate, pause the microwave and stir the chocolate often to ensure that it doesn't get much warmer than body temperature.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** cups slivered almonds
- 3/4** cup heavy cream
- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces
- 1/2** cup (3 1/2 ounces) sugar
- 1/4** cup orange marmalade
- 3** tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1** teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4** teaspoon grated orange zest
- 1/4** teaspoon salt
- 4** ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped fine

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Process almonds in food processor until they resemble coarse sand, about 30 seconds.

2. Bring cream, butter, and sugar to boil in medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until mixture begins to thicken, 5 to 6 minutes. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until mixture begins to brown at edges and is thick enough to leave trail that doesn't immediately fill in when spatula is scraped along pan bottom, 1 to 2 minutes longer (it's OK if some darker speckles appear in mixture). Remove pan from heat and stir in almonds, marmalade, flour, vanilla, orange zest, and salt until combined.

3. Drop 6 level tablespoons dough at least 3½ inches apart on each prepared sheet. When cool enough to handle, use damp fingers to press each portion into 2 1/2-inch circle.
4. Bake until deep brown from edge to edge, 15 to 17 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Transfer cookies, still on parchment, to wire racks and let cool. Let baking sheets cool for 10 minutes, line with fresh parchment, and repeat portioning and baking remaining dough.
5. Microwave 3 ounces chocolate in bowl at 50 percent power, stirring frequently, until about two-thirds melted, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove bowl from microwave, add remaining 1 ounce chocolate, and stir until melted, returning to microwave for no more than 5 seconds at a time to complete melting if necessary. Transfer chocolate to small zipper-lock bag and snip off corner, making hole no larger than 1/16 inch.
6. Transfer cooled cookies directly to wire racks. Pipe zigzag of chocolate over each cookie, distributing chocolate evenly among all cookies. Refrigerate until chocolate is set, about 30 minutes, before serving. (Cookies can be stored at cool room temperature for up to 4 days.)

TECHNIQUE

STEP BY STEP: HOW CONFECTION AND COOKIE BECOME ONE

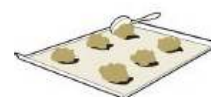
1. **MAKE CARAMEL:** Heat cream, butter, and sugar in saucepan until thick and brown at edges.



2. **MAKE DOUGH:** Off heat, stir in ground almonds, marmalade, flour, vanilla, orange zest, and salt.



3. **DROP AND SHAPE:** Spoon dough onto parchment paper-lined baking sheets and press into circles.



4. **BAKE AND COOL:** Bake cookies until uniformly brown; transfer on parchment paper to cooling racks. Let sheets cool for 10 minutes; repeat.



5. **"TEMPER" CHOCOLATE:** Microwave some chocolate at 50 percent power, stirring frequently, until two-thirds melted. Stir in remaining chocolate.



6. **PIPE AND CHILL:** Pour chocolate into zipper-lock bag, snip off corner, and pipe onto cookies. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to set chocolate.



