

Pecan or Walnut Crescent Cookies

Makes about 48 small cookies

If you cannot find superfine sugar, you can obtain a close approximation by processing regular granulated sugar in a food processor for about 30 seconds. If you don't have a food processor, you can finely grind the copped nuts by rolling pin, applying moderate pressure, until broken down to a coarse cornmeal like texture.

2 cups (8 ounces) whole pecans or walnuts, chopped fine

2 cups (10 ounces) unbleached all purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon table salt

16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened

1/3 cup (2 1/2 ounces) superfine sugar (see note)

1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 1/2 cups (6 ounces) confectioners' sugar

1. Adjust the oven racks to the upper middle and lower middle positions and heat the oven to 325 degrees. Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. Whisk 1 cup of the chopped nuts, the flour, and salt together in a medium bowl; set aside. Process the remaining 1 cup chopped nuts in a food processor (see note) until they are the texture of coarse cornmeal, 10 to 15 seconds (do not over process). Stir the nuts into the flour mixture and set aside.

3. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and superfine sugar at medium low speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes; add the vanilla, scraping down the bowl and beater with a rubber spatula. Add the flour mixture and beat on low speed until the dough just begins to come together but still looks scrappy, about 15 seconds. Scrape down the bowl and beater again with a rubber spatula; continue beating at low speed until the dough is cohesive, 6 to 9 seconds longer. do no over beat.

4. Divide the dough into 48 portions, each about 1 tablespoon, and roll them between your hands into 1 1/4 inch balls. Roll each ball between your palms into a rope that measures 3 inches long. Place the ropes on the prepared baking sheets and turn up the ends to form a crescent shape. Bake until the tops are pale golden and the bottom are just beginning to brown, 17 to 19 minutes, switching and rotating the baking sheets halfway through the baking time.

5. Cool the cookies on the baking sheets for 2 minutes; using a wide metal spatula, transfer the cookies to a wire rack and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Place the confectioners' sugar in a shallow baking dish or pie plate. Working with three or four cookies at a time, roll the cookies in the sugar to coat them thoroughly; gently shake off the excess. (The cookies can be stored in an airtight container for up to 5 days). Before serving, roll the cookies in the confectioners' sugar again and tap off the excess.