

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

Belgian Spice Cookies (Speculoos)

SERVES Makes 32 cookies

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Speculoos are Belgian cookies with a crisp, light, open-crumbed texture and a blend of caramelized sugar and warm spice flavors. To achieve the appropriate texture, we rolled the dough thin so it would bake up dry and crisp, used only enough sugar to lightly sweeten the dough since sugar is hygroscopic and makes cookies moist, and added baking powder along with the usual baking soda to produce an open, airy crumb. For a subtle caramel taste, we chose turbinado sugar rather than molasses-based brown sugar or traditional (but hard-to-find) Belgian brown sugar. To nail the spice flavor, we used a large amount of cinnamon along with small amounts of cardamom and cloves for complexity.



INGREDIENTS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

✦ For the proper flavor, we strongly

- ☐ 1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- ☐ 5 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ☐ 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon salt
- ☐ ¾ cup (6 ounces) turbinado sugar
- ☐ 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- ☐ 1 large egg

recommend using turbinado sugar (commonly sold as Sugar in the Raw). If you can't find it, use ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (6 ounces) of packed light brown sugar and skip the sugar grinding in step 2. In step 3, use a rolling pin and a combination of rolling and a smearing motion to form a rectangle. If the dough spreads beyond the rectangle, trim it and use the scraps to fill in the corners; then, replace the parchment and continue to roll. Do not use cookie molds or an embossed rolling pin for the speculoos; they will not hold decorations.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Whisk flour, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, baking soda, baking powder, and salt together in bowl. Using pencil and ruler, draw 10 by 12-inch rectangle in center of each of 2 large sheets of parchment paper, crisscrossing lines at corners. (Use crisscrosses to help line up top and bottom sheets as dough is rolled.)

2 Process sugar in food processor for 30 seconds (some grains will be smaller than granulated sugar; others will be larger). Add butter and process until uniform mass forms and no large pieces of butter are visible, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Add egg and process until smooth and paste-like, about 10 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Add flour mixture and process until no dry flour remains but mixture remains crumbly, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed.

3 Transfer dough to bowl and knead gently with spatula until uniform and smooth, about 10 seconds. Place 1 piece of parchment on counter with pencil side facing down (you should be able to see rectangle through paper). Place dough in center of marked rectangle and press into 6 by 9-inch rectangle. Place second sheet of parchment over dough, with pencil side facing up, so dough is in center of marked rectangle. Using pencil marks as guide, use rolling pin and bench scraper to shape dough into 10 by 12-inch rectangle of even 3/8-inch thickness. Transfer dough with parchment to rimmed baking sheet. Refrigerate until dough is firm, at least 1½ hours (or freeze for 30 minutes). (Rolled dough can be wrapped in plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 5 days.)

4 Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 300 degrees. Line 2 rimless baking sheets with parchment. Transfer chilled dough to counter. Gently peel off top layer of parchment from dough. Using fluted pastry wheel (or sharp knife or pizza cutter) and ruler, trim off rounded edges of dough that extend over marked edges of 10 by 12-inch rectangle. Cut dough lengthwise into 8 equal strips about 1¼ inches wide. Cut each strip crosswise into 4 equal pieces about 3 inches long. Transfer cookies to prepared sheets, spacing them at least ½ inch apart. Bake until cookies are lightly and evenly browned, 30 to 32 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Let cookies cool completely on sheets, about 20 minutes. (Cookies can be stored at room temperature for up to 3 weeks.)