

Gingersnaps

From America's Test Kitchen episode: *Spicy Fall Sweets*.

Makes 80 1½-inch cookies

For the best results, use fresh spices. For efficiency, form the second batch of cookies while the first batch bakes. And no, the 2 teaspoons of baking soda is not a mistake; it's essential to getting the right texture.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2** cups (12 1/2 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2** teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2** teaspoon salt
- 12** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2** tablespoons ground ginger
- 1** teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4** teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4** teaspoon pepper
- Pinch cayenne
- 1 1/4** cups packed (8 3/4 ounces) dark brown sugar
- 1/4** cup molasses
- 2** tablespoons finely grated fresh ginger
- 1** large egg plus 1 large yolk
- 1/2** cup (3 1/2 ounces) granulated sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk flour, baking soda, and salt together in bowl. Heat butter in 10-inch skillet over medium heat until melted. Lower heat to medium-low and continue to cook, swirling pan frequently, until foaming subsides and butter is just beginning to

brown, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer butter to large bowl and whisk in ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, and cayenne. Cool slightly, about 2 minutes. Add brown sugar, molasses, and fresh ginger to butter mixture and whisk to combine. Add egg and yolk and whisk to combine. Add flour mixture and stir until just combined. Cover dough tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.

2. Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 300 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Place granulated sugar in shallow baking dish or pie plate. Divide dough into heaping teaspoon portions; roll dough into 1-inch balls. Working in batches of 10, roll balls in sugar to coat. Evenly space dough balls on prepared baking sheets, 20 dough balls per sheet.

3. Place 1 sheet on upper rack and bake for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, transfer partially baked top sheet to lower rack, rotating 180 degrees, and place second sheet of dough balls on upper rack. Continue to bake until cookies on lower tray just begin to darken around edges, 10 to 12 minutes longer. Remove lower sheet of cookies and shift upper sheet to lower rack and continue to bake until cookies begin to darken around edges, 15 to 17 minutes. Slide baked cookies, still on parchment, to wire rack and cool completely before serving. Cool baking sheets slightly and repeat step 2 with remaining dough balls.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 1 month. Let dough stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before shaping. Let frozen dough thaw overnight in the refrigerator before proceeding with recipe. Cooled cookies can be stored at room temperature for up to 2 weeks in airtight container.

TECHNIQUE

LOADING UP ON LEAVENING

Using a full 2 teaspoons of baking soda in our cookie dough instead of the more typical ½ to 1 teaspoon not only helped create desirable fissures in the final cookie but also helped it dry out. Baking soda is an alkaline substance that weakens the gluten (the network of proteins that gives most baked goods their structure) in a dough or batter. Weaker gluten means a more porous structure

from which air bubbles and moisture can burn off. It also means that the dough will collapse after its initial rise in the oven, leading to cracks that also allow more moisture to escape.

TECHNIQUE

PUTTING THE SNAP IN GINGERSNAPS

The hallmark of gingersnap cookie texture—big crunch—came down to one key factor: drying out the dough.

BROWN THE BUTTER Butter is 16 percent water. Browning it before whisking it with the sugar, eggs, and flour eliminates moisture.



CUT BACK ON SUGAR The brown sugar in our recipe holds on to water, even after baking. Our solution? Use just 1 1/4 cups.



TURN DOWN THE OVEN Baking the cookies in a low (300-degree) oven gives the dough ample time to gradually—but thoroughly—dry out.





STAGGER THE BAKING Baking each tray on the top rack before moving it to the cooler bottom rack creates fissures that allow moisture to escape.



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