



# Molasses Cookies with Browned Butter Icing

Story by SHAULA CLARK

**W**HEN HER GRANDMOTHER'S molasses cookie recipe became so tattered she no longer could read key ingredients, Milk Street fan Jane Yunginger, of Rochester, Minnesota, asked for our help filling in the blanks.

We soon realized this particular cookie likely dates to the late 19th century. We experimented with similar-sounding vintage recipes and ultimately produced a chewy, cakey, buttermilk-rich cookie that matched Yunginger's description. From there, we tweaked the flavors for the modern palate, adding sweet complexity with a browned butter icing. Mystery solved and improved.

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## Molasses Spice Cookies with Browned Butter Icing

*Start to finish: 1 hour 25 minutes (25 minutes active), plus cooling | Makes 18 cookies*

**T**HESE GENEROUSLY SIZED COOKIES are soft and cake-like, and their flavor is mostly about the bittersweet, subtly smoky notes of molasses. Use either mild or "robust" (or "full") molasses, but avoid blackstrap molasses; its potent flavor will overpower the spices and make the cookies taste harsh and bitter. A browned butter icing gives the cookies a rich, elegant finish. Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to three days.

**Don't ice the cookies until they have cooled** to room temperature. If they are still warm, the icing may become too soft to spread.

—ROSE HATTAUGH

### For the cookies:

390 grams (3 cups) all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon baking soda  
329 grams (1 cup) molasses (see note)  
66 grams (½ cup) packed dark brown sugar  
4 tablespoons (½ stick) salted butter, melted  
¼ cup buttermilk  
2 large eggs, well beaten

### For the icing:

4 tablespoons (½ stick) salted butter, cut into 4 pieces  
248 grams (2 cups) powdered sugar  
¼ cup buttermilk, plus more if needed  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

▪ **To make the cookies**, heat the oven to 350°F with racks in the upper- and lower-middle positions. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with kitchen parchment. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder and baking soda; set aside.

▪ **In a large bowl**, combine the molasses, brown sugar and melted butter. Whisk to combine, then whisk in the buttermilk. Add the eggs and whisk until smooth. Add the flour mixture and fold with a silicone spatula just until no streaks of flour remain; the dough will be thick.

▪ **Using a ¼-cup dry measuring cup** or a 1½-inch ice cream scoop, drop scant ¼-cup mounds of dough onto the prepared baking sheets, arranging them in 3 rows of 3 and spacing them evenly. Bake until the cookies are domed and a toothpick inserted at the center comes out clean, 12 to 15 minutes, switching and rotating the baking sheets about halfway through. Cool completely on the baking sheets on wire racks, about 30 minutes. Using a metal spatula, transfer the cookies directly to the racks.

▪ **To make the icing**, in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high, melt the butter. Cook, swirling the pan frequently, until the milk solids at the bottom are golden brown and the butter has a nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl. Whisk in the powdered sugar, buttermilk and vanilla until smooth. The icing should have the consistency of smooth peanut butter; if it is too thick, whisk in additional buttermilk 1 teaspoon at a time until spreadable.

▪ **Using the back of a spoon** or a small spatula, spread 1 tablespoon of icing evenly onto each cookie. Let the icing dry for about 30 minutes before serving.