

Pumpkin Cookies

Makes about 8 or 9 dozen cookies

- 2 c. Unsalted butter, softened to room temperature (4 sticks)
- 1 ½ c. Firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 ½ c. Granulated sugar
- 3 c. Pumpkin purée
- 2 Large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. Pure vanilla extract
- 4 c. All-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. Baking soda
- 2 tsp. Baking powder
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 2 tsp. Cinnamon
- ½ tsp. Nutmeg
- ½ tsp. Cloves
- ½ tsp. Allspice
- 2 c. Currents (optional)
- 2 c. Finely chopped nuts (pecans, walnuts or hazelnuts or a combination of nuts, optional)
- 2 c. Finely diced candied orange rind (optional)

Peneche Icing (recipe follows)

Pre-heat oven to 375 ° F.

Sift together flour, baking soda, baking powder, spices and salt. Using the paddle attachment of an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugars until smooth and fluffy. Add pumpkin, vanilla and eggs and continue to beat until thoroughly incorporated. Slowly add sifted flour mixture until just combined. Add the currents or orange rind and/or nuts if using and again blend until evenly mixed. This dough is really soft so chill, covered, until it is firm enough to scoop and form, for at least an hour.

Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper or a silpat. Using a heaping Tablespoon or preferably a small ice cream scoop, shape the dough into rounded mounds and place about 1 inch apart on sheet. The dough only spreads slightly, so lightly flatten the dough with your finger which you have dampened with water. Bake until lightly browned around the edges, about 10 – 12 minutes. As these are a cake like cookie, take care not to under bake. If in doubt, remove one and break it in half to check if the cookie falls apart or crumbles. If so, bake a few minutes more. Cool 5 minutes on cookie sheet and then with a flat metal spatula, remove to wire rack and cool completely. Let cookie sheet cool completely before reusing. Covered and chilled, this dough keeps for 3 days.

For Icing:

- 12 Tbl. Unsalted butter (1 ½ sticks)
- 4 Tbl. + 4 tsp. whole milk (or half and half or cream)
- 2 c. Firmly packed light brown sugar
- 4 c. Sifted confectioners sugar
- 1 ½ tsp. Pure vanilla extract
- 2 – 3 drops Orange extract or orange oil or hazelnut extract (optional)

While cookies are cooling, combine butter, milk and brown sugar in a saucepot set over medium heat until butter is melted and sugar is completely dissolved, stirring frequently. Cool to just room temperature. Place confectioner's sugar in a bowl and whisk in brown sugar mixture and vanilla and orange extract or hazelnut extract if using, with either a wire whip or an electric mixer, until smooth. If the icing is a bit too thick to spread, add just a little milk (or half and half or cream) until it is a spreading consistency. It should be similar to cake frosting. If necessary, let stand covered with plastic touching the surface of the frosting until needed to prevent the icing from setting. Using a small off-set spatula, spread a generous teaspoon or so of icing on top of cookie and spread in a swirling pattern to even and cover the top of the cookie. Let sit for about 30 or 45 minutes to allow icing to firm up before storing in an airtight tin.

♥When storing prepared dough or icing for any length of time, use plastic wrap that touches the surface and a second piece of plastic wrap to cover the container.