



Pecan Shortbread

These delicate, buttery cookies, which get their crunchy texture from toasted pecans and a sugar coating, practically melt in your mouth. Corn flour adds a toasty surprise (you'll never be able to guess) that complements the deep flavor of pecans. Dip in tempered chocolate for an extra special treat.

Makes about 2 dozen 2x2 inch square cookies

Ingredients

1 cup butter, room temperature
¾ cup light brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or bourbon (optional)
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup flour
½ cup corn flour (if you can't find corn flour, you can substitute all-purpose flour)
¼ cup cornstarch
¾ cup pecans, toasted and coarsely ground or chopped
Granulated sugar for sprinkling

½ pound bittersweet chocolate, 60-72%, tempered (optional)
¾ cup pecans, toasted and coarsely ground or chopped (optional)

Equipment

Baking sheet
Silpat
Cookie cutters
Rolling pin

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 325° F. Line a flat baking sheet with parchment paper or a nonstick silpat.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together the butter and brown sugar until smooth. Add the vanilla extract and salt and mix on low just until combined. Mix in the flour, corn flour, cornstarch and chopped nuts just until completely incorporated.

Divide the dough into two equal pieces and set one half aside in the refrigerator. Roll one half of the dough until about ¼ - ½ inch thick, and then, with a lightly floured 2-inch square cookie cutter, cut out cookies and place onto the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough, rerolling and cutting any scraps. Refrigerate the cut cookie dough until firm, at least 10 minutes, or up to two days. (The dough can also be frozen at this point until ready to bake; thaw in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before using).

Sprinkle the tops lightly with sugar and bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes, until golden. Carefully transfer cookies to a cooling rack and cool completely.

Once cookies are cooled, you can begin tempering your chocolate. Diagonally dip one half of each cookie into the chocolate and sprinkle with remaining chopped pecans. Let set in the refrigerator for 30 minutes once all are assembled, and then they are ready to eat.

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[Chef's Note: Tempering is a melting and cooking technique that allows the cocoa butter crystals in chocolate to solidify and produces a stabilized chocolate with a dark glossy appearance and a firm consistency. Without tempering, chocolate will not harden properly or be as smooth and glossy because the cocoa butter separates.]

To temper chocolate, melt 2/3 of the chocolate over a double boiler or in 30 second increments in a microwave until the chocolate reaches a temperature of about 110-113° F. Remove from the double boiler or microwave and stir in handfuls of the extra unmelted chocolate stirring continuously to cool the chocolate to: 87° F for semi/bittersweet chocolates, 84° F for milk chocolate and 82° F for white chocolate. The chocolate will appear smooth and glossy when it is in temper. It should remain in temper, but if it begins to get too thick to dip, reheat slightly by microwaving for 7-9 seconds. You will not need all of the tempered chocolate for dipping cookies, but any leftover chocolate can be scraped onto a piece of wax paper or parchment and left to solidify and can be used again for tempering.]

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