

Recipes:

2. Christmas Cookies II 2023

Snow Wreath Cookies

About 22 cookies

Ingredients:

Meringue wreath tops:

- 4** egg whites – room temperature *
- 3 TBSP** of confectioners' sugar
- 1 1/3 cups** of confectioners' sugar
- 1 TSP** of vanilla extract
- 1 TSP** of lemon juice

*if egg whites are not at room temperature, it may significantly increase preparation time.

Vanilla bottoms:

- 1 ½ cups** of all-purpose flour + **Extra flour** for flouring surface
- ¾ cups** of confectioners' sugar
- ¼ TSP** of baking powder
- Lemon zest from one lemon
- 1 stick (4 OZ)** of butter - soft (room temperature)
- 4** egg yolks
- 1 TSP** of vanilla extract

Filling:

About **1 cup** of peach preserve -- adjust if needed (optionally substitute for strawberry or other preserve)

Tools:

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups
Mixer with Flat and Whisk Attachment
Whisk
Silicone Spatula
4 Medium Size Baking Sheets with Parchment Paper or Silicone Mat
Pastry Tips and Pastry Bags *
3" Round Cookie Cutter
Small Hand Grater or Zester
Plastic Wrap
Rolling Pin
Icing Spatula

*Use a large pastry tip, preferably open or closed star.

Directions:

1. Meringue wreath tops:

1.1. **Set oven to preheat to 250° F (preferably on the convection bake program).**

1.2. **Meringue Wreath Top Batter:**

1.2.1. Place into your kitchen mixer bowl:

4 egg whites – room temperature

3 TBSP of confectioners' sugar

Whisk on medium speed to get more air into the egg whites and to make the egg whites foamy (about 2 - 3 minutes).

1.2.2. Add:

1 1/3 cups of confectioners' sugar

1 TSP of vanilla extract

1 TSP of lemon Juice

Increase the speed to high and whisk until done – medium to stiff peaks are formed (about 4 - 10 minutes).

Note: If your egg whites were taken directly from the fridge (they aren't room temperature), this step can take 20 minutes or even significantly longer!

1.2.3. Fill the pastry bag with pastry tips with all the batter for the upcoming piping.

Note:

You may need to use a couple of pastry bags if your pastry bags are smaller.

1.3. **Pipe out wreath tops:**

1.3.1. Pipe out round wreath shapes on a baking sheet.

Important:

- Pipe out a round shape slightly smaller in diameter than 3" since the meringue wreath tops will expand during baking.
- Do not try to pipe it out too high; a height anywhere between ½" to 1" is perfect. It will grow in height too.

- During piping, focus on keeping the center of the wreath open, preferably at least ½”.
- The amount of the piped-out batter should be adjusted to reach the two previously mentioned points.
- Each medium-sized baking sheet (18 x 12”) can accommodate up to 12 wreaths.
- Make sure that the wreaths are not touching each other on the baking sheet – leave equal spaces open.

1.4. Baking:

Note: Air-drying wreaths before baking is unnecessary but can be performed as you wish (for example, if you are waiting for your oven to finish baking something else).

- 1.4.1. Bake in a preheated oven until fully baked – the top is light beige and looks crunchy (about 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes).

Important:

Try to avoid opening the oven during baking as much as possible to reach proper results.

- 1.4.2. Let fully cool before the next.

Tip: The best is to cool them at room temperature, but if you are in a hurry, you can place them after the first 10 minutes to continue cooling in the refrigerator.

Important: Do not proceed with the next step to assemble before the wreaths are thoroughly cooled. The cream topping prepared in the next step must be piped out immediately (it will slightly harden within minutes after preparation).

2. Vanilla bottoms:

Tip: To make the preparation most effective, start preparing the dough, resting, and even cutting the vanilla bottoms right when the wreaths get into the oven.

2.1. Dough:

- 2.1.1. Place into a kitchen mixer with a flat beater attachment:

1 ½ cups of all-purpose flour
¾ cups of confectioners’ sugar
¼ TSP of baking powder
Lemon zest from one lemon

Shortly stir together using a hand whisk until nicely combined (about 1 minute).

2.1.2. Add:

1 stick of butter - soft (room temperature)

4 egg yolks

1 TSP of vanilla extract

Process at a slow speed until all ingredients are partially combined.

2.1.3. Then increase the speed to medium-high and process until the dough is formed (about 2 - 3 minutes).

Note: The cookie dough will be sticky after processing. It will harden during the following resting time in the fridge.

2.2. **Resting time:**

2.2.1. Wrap the dough with plastic wrap (scoop it on the wrap and then cover it with the wrap).

Tip:

If you want to work with the dough soon, form it into a disk, not a roll shape.

2.2.2. Let cool in the refrigerator until partially, but not totally, hardened (about 30 minutes).

Important: If the dough in the refrigerator fully hardens (if left for a longer time, for example, overnight), remove from the refrigerator about an hour before cutting into the vanilla bottoms.

2.3. **Preheat the oven to 350°F.**

2.4. **Cut the vanilla bottoms:**

Important:

Work one-by-one on a floured surface. The dough needs to always sit on a floured surface during flattening to be able to separate the cut vanilla bottoms that are ready to bake.

- It is essential to work fast with the dough.
- If it becomes hard to work with the dough after a while (it will start melting during cookie cutting), place it on a plate and cool it before proceeding.

- Optionally, you can keep placing scraps from the dough into the fridge before further processing to prevent the dough from softening.

2.4.1. Place the dough on a floured surface and lightly flour the top of the dough.

2.4.2. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough into about 1/8" – ¼" thickness (based on your preference). If the dough starts sticking, add flour.

2.4.3. Cut the vanilla bottoms using a 3" round cookie cutter.

2.4.4. Place the vanilla bottoms on the baking sheet with parchment paper.

Important:

Make sure they are not touching each other (about 12 - 15 on each baking sheet).

Tip:

Make manipulation with the vanilla bottoms easier by using an icing spatula.

2.4.5. With the leftovers from the cut dough: quickly form the dough from them (with your hands) and roll them again with a rolling pin to cut more cookies.

2.5. **Bake:**

2.5.1. Bake in a preheated oven until fully baked. The surface turns from a doughy texture to solid but slightly fluffy (about 8 - 10 minutes). Rotate the baking sheets in the middle of baking.

Notes:

- If flattened unevenly (even slightly), each cookie can have a slightly different baking time, so closely watch when you get close to the end of baking and remove each, one by one if necessary.
- Right after baking, the cookies have a soft texture, which can confuse some people and make them think it is a sign of underbaking; this is why some people tend to extend the baking time and overbake cookies. To ensure cookies are properly baked, watch the surface texture and bake the cookies for at least 8 minutes.

2.5.2. Let cool on the baking sheet before assembly (or using an icing spatula, move to the cooling rack).

3. Assemble the cookie:

- 3.1. Spread part of the preserve on the vanilla bottom and cover it with a meringue top.
- 3.2. Serve immediately or let rest at room temperature for 24 hours for better results (all ingredients will nicely settle together).

Note:

Refrigeration of the cookies is optional but not necessary.

Fruit Preserve

About 1+ cups

I was planning to prepare peach preserve with you, but since peaches are out of season, I decided to switch to strawberry preserve.

Ingredients for preserve preparation:

Preserve

1 LB of fruit of your choice

¼ cup of water - adjust if needed

1 cup of granulated sugar

3 FL OZ of liquid fruit pectin *

Thickener:

¼ cup of water

1 TBSP of cornstarch

* The best is to use one of the following fruits:

- Peaches, nectarines, plums, or prune – rinsed, pitted, chopped to large pieces; peeling is not necessary
- Strawberries – rinsed with calyx removed, large pieces cut into small pieces
- Blueberries – rinsed, skip cornstarch with additional water (blueberries are rich in natural pectin, which will thicken the preserve)
- Berries – rinsed

Tools:

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups

Medium Sauce Pan or Small Pot

Wooden Spoon or High-Temperature Silicone Spatula

Whisk

Small mixing bowl

Immersion Blender or Food Processor or Blender

Directions:

1. Simmering:

1.1. Place a small saucepan on medium-high heat and add:

1 LB of fruit of your choice
¼ cup of water - adjust if needed

1.2. Cover with a lid and bring it to a light simmer.

1.3. Then cook with occasional stirring until the fruit softens (about 5 minutes).

1.4. Quickly process with an immersion blender (while still cooking) until partially or smooth (the decision is up to you).

1.5. Add:

1 cup of granulated sugar

Immediately stir using a whisk.

1.6. Cook with the removed lid while stirring until the preserves thicken (about 10 minutes).

2. Prepare & add thickener:

2.1. Place into the small mixing bowl:

¼ cup of water
1 TBSP of cornstarch

Thoroughly stir with a whisk until fully combined.

2.2. Then immediately and slowly pour into the preserve while vigorously stirring the preserve to make sure that the thickener becomes part of the preserve.

2.3. Cook until the preserve thickens (about 2 – 5 minutes).

Note:

The preserve will thicken more after thoroughly cooled.

3. Finishing Phase:

3.1. Skim away and dispose of the foam if present.

3.2. When done, place in a clean jar or food container.

3.3. Canning:

3.3.1. While still hot, proceed with canning according to canning standards.

3.3.2. Shelf stable after canning for years to come (or until seal gets compromised).

3.4. Not canning:

3.4.1. To reach a proper thickness, let it partially cool at room temperature and then let it cool in the refrigerator before usage.

3.4.2. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

Disclaimer:

All steps in this recipe are just suggestions, and the author and/or publisher of this recipe is not responsible for the following:

- outcome of preparation
- any health risk related to the incorrect handling of food and/or not following USDA recommendations, such as but not limited to, following the minimum safe serving temperatures
- provide health and dietary advice to readers
- safety during preparation, including incorrect handling of equipment and the equipment's suitability for food preparation, improper cooking techniques, sourcing of ingredients, and anything related to the preparation and consumption of the products of this recipe

All readers are responsible for evaluating if the recipe and its' ingredients and steps fit with their dietary restrictions and can adjust accordingly.