

Cherry, Chocolate, and Macadamia Cookies

Makes 18

Hands-on Time 20 minutes plus chilling (overnight)

Baking Time 16 minutes

Ingredients

130g Dried cherries
100g Dark chocolate
250g Unsalted butter (softened)
225g Light brown sugar
150g Caster Sugar
1 tsp Vanilla extract
1 tsp Almond extract
2 Eggs, large
350g Plain flour
50g Ground almonds
1 tsp Bicarbonate of soda
1 tsp Fine salt
100g Macadamia nuts (halved)

Equipment

Breadknife
Freestanding mixer with paddle
Spatula
Baking sheet (ideally aluminium)
Baking parchment
Clingfilm
Wire rack

Set aside 18 cherries.

Chop the chocolate up into small pieces. Trust me, it easier to do this with a bread knife. Chop though, don't saw.

Add the butter and both sugars to the bowl of the mixer and beat on a medium-high speed for 5 minutes until you have a very light and fluffy mixture.

Add the vanilla and almond extracts, and eggs and beat for a couple of seconds until combined.

Add the flour, ground almonds, bicarb, and salt, and again beat for a couple of seconds until combined. Scrape the sides down using a spatula to make sure everything is incorporated.

Finally add the remaining cherries, chopped chocolate, and macadamia nuts to the bowl and mix one last time. You shouldn't need to run the mixer for more than 10 seconds. The key thing is not to over-mix.

Put the bowl into the fridge for at least an hour to firm up the dough. It is possible to do this in the freezer to speed things up but don't forget about the dough!

Line a baking sheet with parchment.

Remove the dough from the fridge, take a portion (approx 80g) and roll into a ball.

Press a cherry on top of the ball and place it onto the baking sheet. Repeat until you have used up all of the dough. At this point if you want to bake the cookies at a later time you could put the balls, with the parchment, into a Tupperware box and freeze. Otherwise, cover the balls with clingfilm and leave in the fridge to get really firm, ideally overnight.

Preheat the oven to 170°C/150°C (Fan)/325°F/Gas mark 3.

Slide the baking sheet out of the fridge and leave the dough balls on the shelf.

Once the oven has warmed up line the baking sheet with another piece of parchment.

Place approx 6/8 balls spaced about 10cm apart from each other onto the baking parchment.

Pop the tray into the oven on a middle shelf for 16 minutes. You should find the cookies will be golden but the centres will still look gooey.

Remove the tray from the oven. Slide the parchment carefully, with the cookies, onto the worktop. Re-line with more paper and bake your next batch.

After the cookies have rested for a couple of minutes they should be firm enough for you to transfer onto a wire rack to fully cool. Don't forget they will get firmer as they cool, as tempting as it is to immediately eat them straight from the oven. Like some things in life, patience pays off.

Enjoy!