

'Perfect' Short Bread (2 sheets/80-100 small cookies)

Ingredients:

8 oz unsalted butter @ room temperature
2/3 c sugar
1/2 ts vanilla extract (optional)
2 1/3 c all purpose flour
1/2-1 ts slightly coarse sea salt (to taste)

For Green Tea Cookies: add ...

2 ts matcha green tea powder

For Ginger Cookies: add ...

4 oz candied ginger, cut into small cubes

For Pecan Coffee Cookies ... add:

4 oz pecans, cut into small pieces
2 ts instant coffee - OR - ground cinnamon



Directions:

Make sure the butter is really soft (best if left out overnight). In a large bowl, mix butter and sugar for about five minutes on high speed until fluffy and light in color. Add vanilla extract if desired.

If you're making any of the flavored variations, add the extra ingredient(s) to the butter mix at this point. Mix matcha powder or cinnamon until well combined. Ginger or nuts should be stirred in by hand with a spoon.

In a smaller bowl, mix flour and salt until well combined. Pour over butter mixture and mix on low speed until JUST combined. If the first small clumps form, stop mixing and use your hands to push the dough together into a soft, slightly crumbly ball.

Divide into four equal parts and form each into a log, about 1 - 1 1/4 inch in diameter. This may be a bit tricky because the dough is too soft to withstand any rolling or kneading. You can first squeeze it into the approximate long shape, then very gently roll it to smooth the surface into a round log. Cover in saran foil and chill in the fridge for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight.

When you're ready to bake, preheat the oven to 360°F (Convection heat: 335°F). Cover two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

Using a very sharp, thin knife, cut the logs into 1/4-inch slices. (Note: when cutting nuts or ginger, it is especially important to chill the dough thoroughly and use a very sharp knife). Place slices tightly on baking sheets, leaving about 1/2 inch space between cookies. Bake for 18-20 minutes or until the edges start to get golden (not brown). Cool down completely before storing in airtight containers.

(Based on Eli Zabar's mother's famous shortbread recipe)

LEGEND: ts = teaspoon tb = tablespoon c = cup (about 240ml)