

Linzer Heart Cookies

Makes 20 sandwich cookies



“These decorative cookies make beautiful and tasty gifts. An important tip: be sure to chop the nuts and chocolate very fine in a food processor (pulse to chop so the friction doesn’t warm them), or the dough will be too rough-textured to roll out smoothly. You need a graduated set of heart-shaped cookie cutters to make these.”

Kathleen King

Ingredients

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

1 cup cornstarch

1/4 teaspoon salt

3/4 pound (3 sticks) salted butter, at room temperature

1 cup confectioners’ sugar

1 large egg, at room temperature

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 cups toasted, skinned and finely chopped hazel nuts

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, very finely chopped

1/2 cup seedless raspberry jam

1/2 cup confectioners’ sugar for sifting

Directions

Sift the flour, cornstarch, and salt into a medium bowl. In a large bowl, beat the butter and confectioners’ sugar with an electric mixer set on high speed until combined, about 1 minute. Beat in the egg and vanilla, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. With the mixer on low speed, mix in the flour mixture, just until combined. Mix in the hazel nuts and chocolate.

Gather up the dough and shape it into a flat disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until chilled, at least 2 hours. (The dough can be refrigerated for up to 1 day. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes to soften slightly before rolling.)

Line 2 large rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough to a round about 1/4 inch thick. Use a 3 1/2 inch heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut out the cookies as close as possible to excess scraps. Arrange the hearts about 1 inch apart on the prepared baking sheets. Gather up the dough scraps and gently knead together, and cut out more cookies. If the dough becomes too soft to roll out, refrigerate until chilled. You should have 40 cookies. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour. (Don’t skip this step or the cookies will lose their shape during baking.)

Position the oven racks in the top third and center of the oven and preheat the oven to 325°F.

Use a 1-inch heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut out the centers of 20 cookies. These will be the cookie tops. (You can bake the mini hearts to nibble on later. Don’t throw away or reroll.) Bake, switching the position of the baking sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking, until the cookies begin to brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Sift some of the 1/2 cup of confectioners’ sugar over the hot cut-out cookies. Let cool completely on the baking sheets.

Spread the jam on the cookie bottoms, leaving an 1/8-inch border around the edges. Add the tops, sugared sides up, and press together gently. Just before serving, sift the remaining confectioners’ sugar over the cookies.

Toasting Nuts

Toasting nuts really brings out their flavor, so do so whenever you have the time. Be sure to cool the nuts before adding them to the batter or dough. For a real time-saver, I toast nuts ahead of time and freeze them in zip-tight plastic bags.

To toast and skin hazel nuts, bake them for about 10 minutes, or until the skins crack. Wrap the nuts in a kitchen towel and rub off the skins with the towel. (Don’t worry if some of the skins stay on.) Let cool on a plate.