

TOP 10 COOKIE-BAKING SECRETS

from the Betty Crocker® Kitchens

Try these insider tips to great cookie-baking. From what ingredients to use and how to measure them to what kind of baking sheets are best, you'll find it all here.



1 Start with the best ingredients.

Our recipes call for butter or margarine. Avoid using light, whipped or spreadables. If using margarine, select one that contains at least 80 percent vegetable oil. When only butter is listed in a recipe, do not substitute margarine. Use all-purpose flour unless otherwise specified in the recipe.



2 Measure accurately.

Use nested metal or plastic measuring cups ranging from 1/4 to 1 cup for dry ingredients like sugar and flour, and for shortening. For flour and sugar, lightly spoon the ingredient into the cup, then level it off with a straight-edged spatula.

For butter and margarine, cut the sticks at the appropriate marking. For shortening and brown sugar, spoon into the cup and pack down firmly with a spoon, then level off.

Use glass or see-through plastic measuring cups to measure liquids. Place the measuring cup on a flat surface, and read the measurement at eye level. Before measuring sticky liquids such as molasses, honey or corn syrup, lightly spray the inside of the cup with cooking spray, or wipe lightly with vegetable oil to make cleanup easier.



3 Chill dough if needed.

Follow recipe directions for chilling the dough. This step, especially on shaped or cutout cookies, ensures easier handling. For cutout cookies, work with half of the dough at a time, and keep remaining dough chilled.

4 Use the best cookie sheet.

You'll get the best baking results with shiny, smooth-surface or textured aluminum cookie sheets. Dark-surface sheets can result in overbrowned cookies. Insulated cookie sheets can lead to underbrowned cookies.



There should be at least 2 inches space around your cookie sheet and the oven wall so heat can circulate.

For even baking, bake cookies on the middle oven rack and bake one sheet at a time. Cool cookie sheets between batches; cookie dough placed on warm cookie sheets will spread.

5 Prepare cookie sheets when needed.

If recipe directions require greasing, use shortening, cooking spray or use parchment paper. Just tear parchment paper the length of the cookie sheet and place curled side down. Once the cookies are baked, just slide the baked cookies along with the paper onto a cooling rack.

6 Bake a test cookie.



Before baking an entire sheet of cookies, take the time to bake a test cookie. If the cookie spreads too much (becomes very flat during baking), add additional flour to the dough, 1 tablespoon at a time, until dough feels a bit firmer.

If the test cookie is too firm and/or dry, fix the dough by mixing in 1 to 2 tablespoons milk until the dough holds together better.

7 Mix, bake and decorate in stages.

Most cookie doughs can be refrigerated or frozen for baking later. This allows you to do your baking in shorter time slots. Store cookie dough in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator up to 3 days, or freeze up to 6 months. Once cookies are baked, cover them tightly and decorate within a few days, or freeze them and decorate when you have time.

8 Line pans for easy bar cutting and fast cleanup.

To line a pan, turn the pan upside down. Tear off a piece of foil longer than the pan, and shape the foil over the pan; carefully remove foil. Flip pan over and gently fit shaped foil into the pan. When bars are completely cool, just lift them out of the pan by the foil "handles," peel back the foil, and cut the bars as directed.

9 Freeze with ease.

Freeze baked cookies, tightly wrapped, for up to 6 months. Do not freeze meringue, custard or creme-filled cookies. Place delicate frosted or decorated cookies in a single layer in freezer containers, and cover with waxed paper before adding another layer. Thaw most cookies in the covered container at room temperature for 1 to 2 hours. For crisp cookies, remove from the container to thaw.

10 Store different types of cookies separately.

Store different kinds of cookies in separate containers so the flavors don't mix. Store crisp and soft cookies separately. If stored together, all the cookies will



become soft. Store soft and chewy cookies in a tightly covered container.

Store crisp cookies in a loosely covered container, like a cookie jar without a tight seal.



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