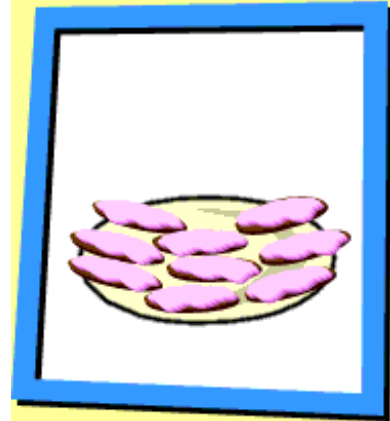




Cut-Out Cookies

Biscuits and cookies are always a firm favourite at parties and birthdays (or even as an after-school treat).

This recipe will show you how to make a basic biscuit mix which you can start with to design and make your own cookies.



Equipment

1. One hundred grams (4oz) of softened butter or margarine.
2. One hundred grams (4oz) of caster sugar.
3. One egg that you have cracked into a bowl and beaten.
4. A few drops of vanilla essence (you can buy vanilla essence in any supermarket or good grocery store).
5. Two hundred and twenty five grams (about 8oz) of sieved plain flour.

Safety Stuff

Be especially careful when you try any of these projects. Kitchens are very dangerous places: most things seem to be very hot or very sharp! Always check with an adult before you begin, and make sure they know what you're going to make.

Read through the recipe before you start. Write out a list of what you need, but have a look in the cupboards before you go shopping, in case there are any ingredients that you already have and so won't need to buy. If there are, check with an adult before you use them. Otherwise you might have eaten somebody else's tea! Before you start cooking, make sure that where you're going to be working is clean and tidy. Have everything ready that you'll need, but clear away any extra items so that you have plenty of space to work in. Successful cooking requires a lot of time and patience, so you need to be well organised and prepared right from the start.

Always wash and dry your hands before you begin. If your hair is long, tie it back while you're cooking. You should also wear an apron to protect your clothes (plastic ones work very well) and remember to roll up your sleeves!

It will be very useful to have an adult around to help you when you work. You'll often need to use sharp knives, scissors or electrical equipment when preparing food, so make sure you're especially careful with these as they can be dangerous.

You should also ask an adult to help you when you're transferring food to or from the oven or stove top. Always turn saucepan or frying pan handles to the side of the cooker, so you don't catch yourself on them, and use oven gloves when you're handling hot

things. Otherwise you're likely to drop your food all over the floor, as well as burn your fingers!

Don't touch electrical equipment, plugs or switches when your hands are wet as you might get an electric shock, and never leave the kitchen when something is cooking - you don't know what might happen whilst you're gone!

If you spill things, clear it up straight away (use a clean, damp cloth to wipe work surfaces). You should also clear up anything that is spilt on the floor so it doesn't become slippery. (Don't use the same cloth to wipe your work surfaces and the floor.) Keep a rubbish bin nearby when you're cooking, so that you can easily put things in it as you go along, rather than letting the rubbish pile up.

Leave the kitchen tidy when you finish, otherwise you might not be allowed back in for a while!

Steps

Step One

Start by asking an adult to preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6 for you. The oven will then be ready to use when you've finished making your cookies.

Next, make the cookie dough. Put the softened butter and the sugar into a mixing bowl and use a wooden spoon to beat it until it is light and fluffy.

Beat the egg with a whisk (or ask an adult to help you do this with an electric whisk) and add the egg to the mixture. Add a few drops of vanilla essence and keep beating the mixture until it is smooth. Stir in the flour, making sure it is mixed in well. The mixture should start to form a stiff dough in the bowl.

Step Two

Spread some flour over a board, or directly onto the work surface you are using, if it's clean. Put some flour on your hands, to stop the dough sticking to your hands or the work surface.

Remove the dough from the bowl and knead it with your hands until it is smooth.

Sprinkle out some more flour, and use a rolling pin to roll out the dough until it is quite thin (about 2-3 mm thick). Keep putting flour on the rolling pin as you do this, to stop the dough from sticking to it.

Step Three

Having rolled out the dough, use some pastry cutters to cut out the shapes for the biscuits. You can use any size and shape cutter and this will give you a variety of biscuits when you finish.

Next, prepare a baking tray by greasing it with some butter or margarine and then putting a sheet of greaseproof paper on it. Put the cut-out biscuits on the baking tray.



Step Four

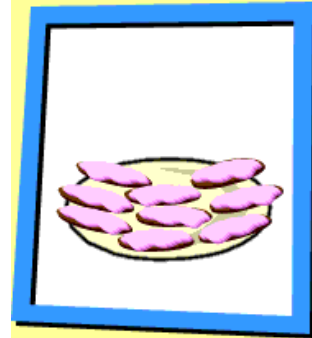
When you've cut out the biscuits from the rolled out dough, you'll be left with lots of trimmings and odd bits of dough. Collect them up and make them into a ball.

Use the rolling pin to roll them out again and then cut more biscuits from the dough. Keep doing this until you have used up all the biscuit dough.

When all the biscuits are on the baking tray, ask an adult to put them in the preheated oven for you. They will need to be cooked for about 10 minutes.

Step Five

When they are done, ask an adult to put the biscuits onto a wire rack to cool. Be careful, because the biscuits (and the baking tray!) will be hot.



Step Six

What can you add to the basic biscuit mix to make the biscuits taste nice? You could add ginger, sultanas, raisins, glacé cherries or cinnamon, for example.

When you have made the biscuits, test them by tasting them. Do you like the taste?

What do other people think of them?

Next, think about packaging your biscuits. If you were going to sell your biscuits on a charity stall, for example, how would you package them?