

Basic Rolled Sugar Cookies

- 1 cup salted butter, softened
- 1 cup superfine granulated sugar
OR 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tsp. Vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. Almond extract or emulsion, optional
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour.

Cream butter, sugar and salt until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes with mixer set at medium speed. Add yolk, beat well. Add whole egg, vanilla and optional almond extract and beat until well-incorporated. Add flour; beat at low speed just until flour is mixed in; do not overmix. Divide dough in halves or thirds and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, at least one hour and up to 2 days. If dough is refrigerated more than one hour, let dough soften at room temperature for about 10 minutes before rolling.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Dust work surface and rolling pin with flour. Roll dough to 1/4" thick, sprinkling with additional flour as needed to prevent sticking. Cut into desired shapes and place on parchment or silicone-lined pans. Bake in preheated oven until cookies appear dry on the surface and are light golden brown on the edges, about 10 minutes (very large cookies may take up to 12 or 13 minutes). Remove from cookie sheets to cooling racks and cool.

Meringue Powder Buttercream

- 1/3 cup water
- 3 to 4 T. meringue powder
OR dried egg whites
- ½ cup shortening or butter
- 4 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract (use clear vanilla if you want a pure white icing)
- ¼ tsp. almond extract

Place the meringue powder and half of the powdered sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer. Whisk together well. Turn on mixer (use whip attachment) and, while motor is running, slowly stream in the water. Mix until everything is incorporated. Turn mixer to high speed and whip until stiff peaks form. Add flavorings and mix well. Change to paddle attachment (for stand mixer) or dough hook (for Bosch). If using a hand mixer, use the same beaters you were using before. Add remaining powdered sugar and shortening and whip for 2-3 minutes more.

Note: Don't skimp on the whipping time after adding the shortening. You really need to whip it well to prevent separation later.

Royal Icing

- 3 T. meringue powder
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 6 T. water
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract (use clear vanilla if you want a pure white icing)
- ¼ tsp. almond extract

Beat all ingredients together until stiff peaks form (about 10 minutes). To vary the consistency, add water to thin and add powdered sugar to thicken.

Making Glaze

Add water to frosting a few drops at a time, stirring after each addition. A basic rule of thumb for a good consistency is that a drop of the icing should disappear into the mass on the count of 6 or 7. It will be similar in consistency to Elmer's glue: fairly runny, but not so thin that it's hard to control.

The glaze will separate as it sits, so you will need to stir the glaze well before and during use.

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