

CHOCOLATE-PEPPERMINT SHORTBREAD COOKIES

makes about 72 cookies

This is quite a sweet cookie—nearly candy like. If you'd like to cut back on its treacly nature, leave off the peppermint or cut it down to just the ends of the cookies. Dip each end in the thin icing and then into the crushed peppermint. Follow with the chocolate drizzles as below.

- 3/4 pound soft unsalted butter
- 1 cup white, granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 1/2 cups unbleached flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt (no salt if you used salted butter)
- 1/2 cup (more) crushed peppermint candies (I like **Hammonds**, made in Denver, an used 2 2-ounce large peppermint candy canes that I crushed with a rolling pin in a plastic storage bag.)

Instructions to make cookie dough:

Mix together the butter and the sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer or in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade until just combined. Add vanilla, mixing.

Sift the flour and salt and add it to the butter and sugar. Mix or pulse until the dough starts to come together.

Dump dough on a floured board and shape into a flat disc or rectangle. Refrigerate, tightly wrapped, for 30 minutes. If you leave the dough in longer --even overnight--that's fine. You'll just need to let it sit out a little while until it's easy to cut.

Cutting and Baking: *Preheat oven to 350 F.*

Divide the dough into half and roll each piece of dough out into a rectangle approximately 6" x 12"x1/4" thick-a bit thicker is ok- on a floured surface. Cut into 1 inch X 3 inch bars, carefully placing each bar on an ungreased baking sheet.

Bake 13-15 minutes– just until edges show the faintest signs of gold. Remove sheets with cookies to cooling rack; let sit a minute or so.

With a sharp-edged spatula, remove the cookies to a cooling rack and cool to room temperature.

Decorating:

Spoon a little thin glaze (*recipe below*) evenly on the top of each piece of shortbread (or dip cookie into icing) and then dip firmly and briefly into the bowl of crushed peppermint. (CONTINUED)

Place cookies back on rack and let sit to dry a few minutes. Drizzle (*recipe below*) lightly with melted chocolate and then white chocolate drizzle "icing." Let sit another hour or so or until dry.

Store in tightly sealed containers layered between sheets of waxed paper for 2 days at altitude or perhaps 4-5 days at sea level OR freeze for up to a month.

About freezing: Cookies will, of course, keep longer than a month stored at 0 degrees F, but they will lose much of their taste as they dehydrate in the freezer for longer periods of time. A self-defrosting freezer is not a good place for cookies or any baked goods -- or anything to my mind. If you buy a big freezer, make sure you buy one you must defrost yourself, as the self-defrosting models continually turn off and on to keep the freezer defrosted. The ice crystals in your baked goods form, melt, and reform, ruining their taste and texture. Check the temperature periodically to make sure it's at 0 degrees F.)

THIN GLAZE AND CHOCOLATE DRIZZLES

Thin Glaze: Whisk together 1 cup confectioner's sugar with 2 tablespoons of water until smooth in a small mixing bowl.

White Chocolate Drizzle: 1 cup white chocolate chips. Melt in microwave at power level 5 for 1 minute in a glass measuring cup.* Stir well and repeat for 10 more seconds at a time until chocolate beats smooth. Spoon or scrape with a narrow rubber spatula into a small decorating bag with plain small tip or into small plastic storage bag. (I put the bag in a large mug, pulling the sides of the bag over the edges of the mug, and fill it there.) Squeeze icing down into corner of the bag and twist bag, making sure it's nearly closed. Make a very tiny clip made in the corner (if using a plastic storage bag like Ziplock--otherwise follow directions for piping bag) and pipe/drizzle onto cookies as desired. ([A basic video here using just a fork--no bag.](#))

*Alternately, warm and melt the chocolate pieces in a double boiler (a smaller pot that is set on top of a another pot of simmering water) on the stovetop until melted.

Chocolate Drizzle: 1 cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips. Melt in microwave at full power for 30 seconds in a covered glass measuring cup. (Or follow alternate directions above.) Stir well and repeat for 10 more seconds at a time until smooth. Use above directions for filling bag and piping/drizzling on cookies.

Cook's Notes: 1. The tinier the hole in your bag, the skinnier the drizzle will be. 2. The warmer the chocolate, the easier it will come out of the bag. 3. Some people melt chocolate directly in a plastic storage bag. I'm iffy on plastic in the microwave, so choose to melt my chocolate in a glass-measuring cup and use a thin rubber spatula to get it from the cup into a bag. Leftover drizzle can be stored in the fridge; just make sure you put it in another bag before refrigerating or you'll have drizzle all over your shelves.