

## “Chocolate-Covered Cherry” Oatmeal Cookies

Makes 26-28 3 – 3 ½-inch cookies

*Check your oven thermometer if you haven't done so recently. These cookies are lusciously simple, but the devil is in the details.*

- 1 1/4 cups salted butter at room temperature
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose, unbleached flour
- 1 teaspoon **EACH** kosher salt and baking soda
- 3 cups old-fashioned oats (not quick-cooking)
- 1/2 cup dried cherries, chopped
- 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips or chopped chocolate
- 1 cup toasted nuts, chopped (I like a combination of almonds, walnuts and pecans)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Place rack at center.

**BEAT BUTTER AND SUGAR:** With an electric mixer\*, beat butter and sugars at medium-high speed until light and fluffy--about 2-3 minutes. Scrape down sides of bowl. Add egg and extracts; beat 1 minute. Scrape bowl again. Tip in the flour, salt and baking soda on top of the butter mixture and lightly mix while still on top. Beat all on medium speed for 1-2 minutes until well-mixed. Slowly add oats, cherries, chocolate, and nuts one ingredient at a time until dough is thoroughly combined.

**MAKE COOKIE BALLS :**Using your hands or a small scoop, roll cookies into balls about 1 1/2- 2 inches in diameter, making sure balls are totally firm and solid. Place dough balls 2 inches apart on an ungreased baking sheet without parchment paper and press down quite firmly into rounds using the palms of your hands or a lightly-floured flat glass bottom.

**BAKE** one sheet at a time\*\* in center of oven for 10 minutes **or** until golden brown and crispy at edges. Don't under bake. Cool sheet on a rack for one-two minutes (any more and they'll stick—back to the oven for a minute, then) and using a thin metal spatula, remove cookies to rack until cool. Store at room temperature in Tupperware-type or glass containers with tight lids for 2 days or in freezer for 4 weeks. Plastic bags will not keep these cookies fresh.

\*I had no electric mixer for many years of baking and made hundreds of these with a wooden spoon. I recommend the electric mixer!

\*\*Of course you can bake two sheets at a time, switching and turning them mid-way through if you're short of time. I do think these cookies bake better one sheet at a time as the obtainable crispness is increased.

**BAKER'S NOTES:** *For more intense cherry flavor, decrease chocolate chips by 1/2 cup and increase chopped dried cherries by 1/2 cup; use 1/2 teaspoon each almond and vanilla extract.*