

PEANUT PRALINE COOKIES

Makes 4 to 5 dozen, depending upon size.
By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe
found in a restaurant trade journal.

These cookies are made with peanuts and caramelized sugar, almost like making a peanut praline. In my research I learned a new trick (new for me): For thicker chewier cookies, refrigerate the dough before scooping onto the baking sheet.

Ingredients:

2 cups (400g) granulated sugar
½ cup (118ml) water
12 ounces (340g) peanuts, dry roasted and salted
1½ cups (340g) butter, preferably clarified and at room temperature (see note at end)
¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
1½ cups (225g) brown sugar, lightly packed
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
3 large eggs
3½ cups (500g) all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
7 to 8 ounces (200 - 225g) bittersweet (dark) chocolate; chopped

Directions:

Combine the 2 cups sugar and water in a saucepan and heat to boiling over medium-high flame. Reduce heat to medium low and simmer to evaporate the water and make a concentrated syrup. When the color changes to a golden brown, remove from heat. It is best to use a thermometer for this step, such as a candy thermometer. Heat to around 315°F (157°C).

While the sugar syrup is simmering, line a baking pan with parchment paper and arrange half the peanuts in the pan. When the sugar is caramelized, pour over the peanuts. Handle carefully, as it is very hot. Set aside to cool. When cool, chop the candied peanuts in a food processor to a coarse texture.

Cream the butter and sugars (¾ cup granulated and 1½ cups brown) together in a large mixing bowl (or mix with an electric mixer). If using a stand mixer, mix at medium-high speed until light and fluffy. Reduce speed to low (or mix by hand) and add the vanilla and eggs, combining thoroughly. Sift together the flour, soda, and salt. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture and blend just until combined and smooth. Add the caramel-peanut mixture along with the remaining peanuts and the chopped dark chocolate. Fold with a spatula or wooden spoon until combined. (I used my hands.)

Heat oven to 375°F (190°C). Using a #30 (1 fl. oz./30ml) or #24 (1½ fl. oz./44 ml) ice cream scoop (commercially called a *disher*), or a pair of spoons, drop dollops of cookie dough onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, leaving space between dollops to allow cookie dough to melt and expand. (I fit 8 to a standard baking sheet.) Bake 15 to 20 minutes until crisp and golden.

Allow cookies to cool a few minutes on the baking sheet and then transfer to a cooling rack. Store in an airtight container. Shelf life: 1 week.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.



STEP-BY-STEP

1



I think the most important ingredient in this *mise en place* is the chocolate. Buy the best you can afford. If we had a good chocolate shop in this city I'd find an even better chocolate. I am also using clarified butter rather than whole butter because here in the USA butter only needs to be 80% pure butter fat by law. The other ingredients are mostly water and a small portion of milk solids and salt. Clarifying your own butter (there is a procedure in the Recipe Archive of this web site, see "Basics") assures pure butter fat.

2



Line a baking pan with parchment paper and pour half the peanuts into the pan, reserving the remainder of the peanuts for adding, whole, to the cookie dough.

3

Heat the 2 cups of sugar with the water in a saucepan over medium heat until the liquid comes to a boil and the sugar dissolves.

4

Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the syrup turns a golden color. If using a candy thermometer, heat to 315°F (157°C). As the syrup starts to change color it should be watched closely and checked often. The temperature will climb rapidly and the sugar can easily burn if the temperature climbs too high.

5



To make the peanut praline: As soon as the syrup is caramelized, pour it over the peanuts. (The pan will be coated with crystallized sugar, but soaking it in hot water for a while will dissolve the sugar and make cleaning easy.) Allow to cool.

6



When the peanut praline is cool, break up the hard sugar and then process in the food processor. It might need to be processed in batches if your food processor doesn't have a large bowl. Process until there are no large chunks of sugar.

7



Cream the butter, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, and brown sugar in a mixing bowl until smooth, light, and fluffy.

8



Add the eggs and vanilla extract and combine until smooth.

9



Sift together the flour, baking soda, and salt in a separate bowl.

10



Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture and combine until smooth.

11



Chop the chocolate bars into chunks about the size of chocolate chips for cookies. Refrigerated chocolate will chop easily.

12



Finally, fold the peanut praline, chocolate, and whole peanuts into the cookie dough. Mix until the solid ingredients are evenly distributed.

13

Line baking sheets with parchment paper and arrange scoops of dough on the pan with plenty of room in between to allow for the dough to melt and expand. A #24 (1½ fl. oz./44ml) commercial disher (ice cream scoop) or #30 (1 fl. oz./30ml) makes quick work of the task and assures cookies of equal size.

14

Bake at 350° (177°C) 15 to 20 minutes until crisp and lightly browned. Let cool on the baking sheet for a few minutes and then use a spatula to transfer to a cooling rack to cool thoroughly. Store in an airtight container. Storing in the refrigerator will help harden the chocolate. Shelf life is about 1 week if properly stored.

15



Conclusion

These cookies turned out light and crisp with a satisfying texture of chocolate chunks and whole peanuts.

Notes

The original recipe called for 1 cup of shortening and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of butter. Many people are too health conscious to put hydrogenated oils containing trans fat in their body. Butter is high in saturated fat. If I must use an unhealthy fat product, I choose butter over shortening. The flavor is better.