

Chocolate Spice Cookies

For the cookie:

3 pounds flour
1½ pounds sugar
5 ounces best-quality cocoa, sifted
3½ tablespoons baking powder
1 tablespoon ground cloves
Pinch salt
½ pound cold unsalted butter
½ pound cold vegetable shortening
¾ pound chopped walnuts
6 eggs
1 pint milk
Juice and grated rind of one large orange
¼ cup Grand Marnier, brandy, rum, or other orange liqueur

For the icing:

1 box powdered sugar, about 4 cups
About ⅓ cup scalded milk
3 teaspoons vanilla

In a very large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, sifted cocoa, baking powder, cloves, and salt. Whisk together gently until well mixed. Work in the butter and vegetable shortening with a pastry blender and the fingers of your hand, until coarse crumbs are formed. Stir in the chopped walnuts.

Beat the eggs well, then beat in the milk, the orange juice, the grated rind, and the liqueur. Pour the liquid into the dry ingredients, and combine with a heavy wooden or metal spoon or heavy rubber spatula, until a smooth ball is formed. The dough will be extremely sticky. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or longer until you can work the dough with your hands without sticking.

Roll dough in the palm of your hands to form a smooth ball about the size of an unshelled walnut. Place the balls on an ungreased baking sheet. I find that I need to rechill the dough about halfway through the rolling process because it starts sticking to my hands.

Bake on the bottom shelf of a 350° preheated oven for about 10-12 minutes. Some people prefer these cookies hard all the way through. I like them with a hard exterior and a softer center. You may have to experiment by testing the first batch to see which you prefer (a hard exterior forms only after the cookies have cooled).

When done remove to a rack to cool. When the cookies are thoroughly cooled, prepare the icing, which is essential because the cookies are too bitter without it. Sift ⅓ of the powdered sugar into a shallow bowl. Add enough hot, scalded milk to create a thick

smooth glaze. Add in 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Dip the tops of each cookie into the glaze until well coated. Continue with the remaining powdered sugar and milk.

Place a wire rack on top of some waxed paper to catch the drippings, then place the glazed cookies on the rack to dry thoroughly. It's very important to allow the cookies to dry for several hours before storing them in a closed container. If they are stored before fully dry, they will begin to sweat and then mold in a couple days. Makes about 120 cookies.