

CITRUS CHOCOLATE BISCOTTI

1/3 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup candied mixed peel
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup whole unblanched almonds
4 oz chopped semi-sweet chocolate
2 tsp baking powder
1 egg white, gently beaten

In a large bowl, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy; beat in eggs and vanilla. Toss peel with 1 tbsp of the flour; stir into batter with almonds and chocolate. Whisk together the remaining four and baking powder; stir into batter until soft, sticky dough forms.

On lightly floured work surface, work dough into smooth ball. Divide in half; roll each into 12 inch log. Transfer to parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Brush tops with egg white. Bake in 350°F oven until tops are dry and golden, about 25 minutes. Let cool on sheet for 5 minutes.

Transfer to cutting board; with chef's knife, cut diagonally into 3/4 inch slices, wiping blade after each cut. Stand slices upright on baking sheet; bake until golden and crisp, about 20 minutes. (If a softer cookie is desired, do not cook for the full 20 minutes.) Let cool on rack. (Make ahead: store in airtight container for up to 2 weeks. Also freezes extremely well.) Makes about 2 dozen biscotti.

CRANBERRY GINGER BISCOTTI

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/3 cup margarine
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup dried cranberries (or other dried fruit e.g. cherries or blueberries)
3 tbsp candied ginger, finely chopped

In a medium bowl, mix together flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, cream together margarine and sugar for 1 minute. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Add vanilla. Stir dry ingredients into creamed mixture until almost mixed. Stir in cranberries and ginger.

Transfer dough to lightly floured surface, knead lightly into smooth ball. Place on lightly greased 11 x 17 inch baking sheet and form into log 3 x 15 inches, with slightly rounded edges. (If using a smaller baking sheet, divide dough into 2 pieces and place logs side by side.)

Bake in 325°F oven for 30 minutes, until golden and slightly firm. Let cool for 3 minutes. Transfer to cutting board. With serrated knife, cut into ½ inch thick slices, on slight diagonal. Return pieces to baking sheet, upright, about 1 inch apart. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F, bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until firm and dry (less for softer texture). Let cool, store in airtight container. Also freezes well.

Makes 24 biscotti.

HONEY SPICE ALMOND COOKIES

¾ cup butter, softened
¾ cup liquid honey
1 egg
½ tsp vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup ground almonds
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp ground ginger
¼ tsp each: ground allspice, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, black pepper
¾ cup coarsely chopped almonds
½ - ¾ cup sliced almonds for topping

In a large bowl, beat butter until fluffy; beat in honey, then egg and vanilla. In separate bowl, whisk together flour, ground almonds, baking soda, baking powder, ginger, allspice, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg and pepper; stir into butter mixture. Fold in chopped almonds.

Drop by level 1 tbsp of dough 2 inches apart, on parchment paper-lined rimless baking sheets; top each with generous ½ tsp of the sliced almonds laid flat. Bake in centre of 350°F oven until golden, 12 to 13 minutes. Let cool on pans on racks for 5 minutes; transfer to racks and let cool completely. Makes about 60 cookies. Cookies freeze well.