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extracts from

Children's Christmas Baking Kit

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Festive cookies

Ingredients:

125g (4½oz) softened butter or margarine
50g (2oz) icing sugar
1 medium egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
225g (8oz) plain flour

For decorating:
225g (8oz) icing sugar
sugar sprinkles

You will also need 2 baking trays and some shaped cutters.

Makes around 35

Cut these vanilla cookies into festive shapes using star and Christmas tree cutters, then top them with sprinkles. Use other festive cutters too, if you have them.

1 Grease the baking trays (see page 8). Put the butter or margarine in a big bowl. Beat it until it is smooth. Sift in the icing sugar. Beat again.





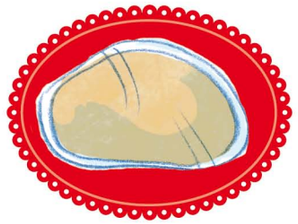
2 Break the egg into a small bowl. Add the vanilla extract and beat them together well with a fork.



3 Add the egg mixture to the large bowl, a little at a time. Beat well between each addition.



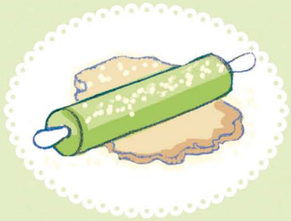
4 Add the flour and stir the mixture until it starts to come together. Then, use your hands to squeeze it into a ball. Flatten the ball slightly.



5 Wrap the dough in plastic food wrap and put it in the fridge for 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 180°C, 350°F or gas mark 4.



6 Dust a surface and a rolling pin with flour. Unwrap the dough and put it on the surface. Roll it out until it is just thinner than your little finger. Use the cutters to cut out lots of shapes.



7 Put the shapes onto the trays. Squeeze the scraps together and roll them out again. Cut out more shapes and put them on the trays.



8 Bake for 10-12 minutes until golden. Leave on the trays for 5 minutes, then put on a wire rack to cool.



9 For the icing, sift the icing sugar into a bowl and mix it with 2½ tablespoons of water. Spread it onto each cookie with a blunt knife. Scatter sugar sprinkles on top.

Other flavours

Instead of the vanilla extract, you could add 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon, or 2 teaspoons of ground ginger, or 2 teaspoons of finely grated orange zest. Add them at the same time as the flour.

Gingerbread cake

Ingredients:

275g (10oz) golden syrup
100g (4oz) dark muscovado sugar
100g (4oz) butter
225g (8oz) self-raising flour
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 medium eggs
2 tablespoons milk

For decorating:
100g (4oz) icing sugar

You will also need a 900g (2lb) loaf tin, measuring around 20 x 12 x 8cm (8 x 5 x 3½in).

Makes around 12 slices

This soft, loaf-shaped cake is flavoured with ginger, syrup, and brown sugar. If you keep it for a few days, it will become deliciously moist and sticky.

1 Heat the oven to 170°C, 325°F or gas mark 3. Grease and line the tin (see page 8).



2 Put the syrup, sugar and butter in a saucepan. Put it over a low heat. Stir now and then, until the butter melts. Take it off the heat.



3 Sift the flour, ginger and cinnamon into a big bowl. Make a hollow in the middle.



4 Break an egg into a cup. Tip the egg into a jug. Do the same with the other egg. Add the milk and beat with a fork until mixed.



5 Pour the syrup mixture into the flour. Start mixing. When half the flour is mixed in, add the egg mixture. Keep stirring until everything is well mixed.

The top of the cake may crack but this doesn't matter.



6 Pour the mixture into the tin. Bake for 50 minutes. Test with a skewer to check it is cooked.

When the cake is cool, peel off the parchment.



7 Leave to cool for 15 minutes, then turn the cake out of the tin onto a wire rack. Leave it upside down to cool.



8 To make the icing, sift the icing sugar into a bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of cold water and mix to a smooth paste.



9 Spoon the icing over the cake, so it dribbles down the sides (see page 58). Wait until it dries before you add any decorations.

Other flavours

For a richer, darker flavour, use just 200g (7oz) golden syrup and add 75g (3oz) black treacle at the same time.

For a zesty icing, replace the water with lemon or lime juice.

You'll find instructions on page 62 for making houses like these, to decorate your cake.

This roof was decorated with patterns piped in glittery writing icing.

For a snowy roof, spread on white writing icing, then scatter on white sprinkles or sparkling sugar.

Add details like these using the side or end of a cocktail stick.

You could scatter sparkling sugar on top of your cake and serving plate.

Christmas cupcakes

Ingredients:

3 clementines
90g (3½oz) caster sugar
90g (3½oz) softened butter
2 medium eggs
90g (3½oz) self-raising flour

For the icing:
175g (6oz) icing sugar

You will also need a 12-hole deep muffin tin and 8 paper cupcake cases.

Makes 8

These clementine-flavoured cupcakes look festive topped with holly decorations, but you could make star or Christmas tree decorations instead.





1 Heat the oven to 190°C, 375°F or gas mark 5. Put the paper cases in the tin. Grate the zest from the outside of the clementines.

2 Beat the sugar, butter and zest in a big bowl. Break the eggs into a cup. Put the eggs and flour in the bowl. Mix well.



3 Use a teaspoon to divide the mixture between the cases. Bake for 15 minutes until risen and firm.



4 Squeeze the juice from the clementines. Spoon it over the cupcakes while they are still warm.



5 Put the cakes on a wire rack. Leave them until they are completely cool, then make the icing.



6 Sift the icing sugar into a bowl and mix in 1½ tablespoons of warm water. Spread it onto the cakes with a blunt knife.



Use a holly leaf cutter to cut shapes from green ready-to-roll icing or marzipan (page 60). Marzipan contains nuts.

Instead of holly decorations, you could make Christmas trees or stars using the little cutters provided with this kit.

For holly berries, roll little balls from red ready-to-roll icing or marzipan.