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It's Cookie Time!



There are thousands of cookie recipes in a variety of shapes, sizes, textures, and flavors. During the holidays, cookies are a special treat and everyone has a favorite. Let's see how a traditional chocolate chip cookie can be altered for a different look.

Chocolate chip manufacturers have made special holiday shapes. Simply replace the regular chips with these fancy chips. Try adding some frosting and colored sprinkles for extra sparkle.

To change the texture and color, try these tips, one at a time, from the book *CookWise* by Shirley O. Corriher:

For More Spread

- Use butter
- Increase liquid 1-2 tablespoons
- Increase sugar 1-2 tablespoons
- Warm cold ingredients to room temperature, don't refrigerate dough

For More Puff

- Use shortening
- Use cake flour
- Reduce sugar a couple tablespoons
- Use all baking powder
- Use cold ingredients or refrigerate dough

For More Tenderness

- Use cake flour
- Add a few tablespoons fat or sugar

2016 Urban Food Systems Symposium

Save the date for the 2016 Urban Food System Symposium! This event will be June 23-26, 2016 at the Kansas State University Olathe campus.

The goal is to share knowledge on urban agri-

cultural production, local food systems distribution, urban farmer education, urban ag policy, planning and development, food access and justice, and food sovereignty.

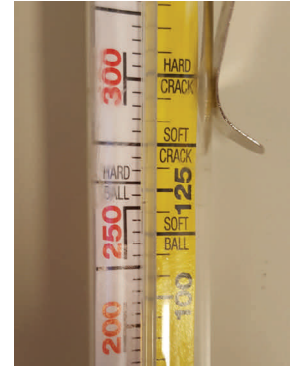
Learn more about this event at www.urbanfoodsystemssymposium.org/.



Equipment for Making Candy

Success in making candy can boil down to the equipment used. Here are some suggestions for equipment:

- A heavy, deep saucepan which distributes heat evenly over the cooking surface will minimize the danger of scorching the cooking sugar mixture.
- Measuring cups and spoons are most important. They enable one to keep the proportions of ingredients accurate.
- Wooden spoons are desirable utensils to use when stirring candy mixture. They do not leave dark marks on the kettle or discolor the candy. Wooden spoons are poor heat conductors. Remember to stir in a figure eight pattern for the most effective anti-sticking technique.
- An accurate candy thermometer will take most of the guesswork out of making candy.



<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/elrww/downloads/38877.pdf>

Candy Thermometer Tips

Using a candy thermometer is the most accurate way to determine when to stop the boiling of candy.

- Buy a thermometer with a clip to attach to the pan.
- Make sure the thermometer is clean and dry before use.
- Rest the thermometer in warm water and dry before use. This reduces temperature changes.
- Clip the thermometer to the pan so the numbers are visible and easy to read.
- The thermometer bulb must be covered with the liquid but not touch the pan bottom.

Source: <http://extension.uidaho.edu/twinfallscounty/files/2014/02/Candy-Making-Manual.pdf>

Beat the Cold with a Hot Bowl of Oatmeal

January is the month to celebrate oats and their many uses. More oats are purchased in January than any other time of year.

Oats are typically sold as rolled oats, quick oats, or instant oats. But steel-cut oats are also showing up on breakfast tables. These are chewier and sometimes referred to as Irish or Scottish oats.

Besides many human food uses, oats are also used for animal food and in cosmetics such as lotion because of its anti-itch properties.

Learn more about Oat month at <http://wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/oats-january-grain-of-the-month>.



Learn more about different types of oats at: <http://wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/types-of-oats>



What Makes Popcorn Pop?

Popcorn is a staple snack for watching movies. This fluffy snack makes a dramatic transformation when heated. Early Native Americans believed there was a spirit inside each kernel. When heated, the spirit got angry, burst out of its safe home, and left in an unhappy puff of steam. But, the science tells a different story.

Popcorn is the only type of corn that pops. The hull is thin enough to allow it to pop open. Inside each kernel is a small amount of water. The ideal popping moisture content is 13.5-14%. As the kernel heats up, the moisture expands and turns into steam. When the temperature reaches 347°F, the pressure inside the kernel reaches 135 pounds per square inch, and it explodes. A single kernel expands to 40-50 times its original size.

Popcorn is a healthful whole grain snack any time of year. But, the day to celebrate this crunchy snack is January 19. Learn more at www.popcorn.org/.



Butter and Fats for Candy

Butter and fats affect the sugar's final chemical structure and determine the brittleness, hardness, and flavor and texture (chewy versus crunchy).

Always use unsalted (or salted) stick butter in-

stead of margarine when you are making candy. Margarine contains a lot of water and different amounts of fat that will make your candy inconsistent and butter gives the best flavor.

Do not use vegetable oil spreads or tub products -so that candies will "set up" or have a nice brittle texture.

Source: <http://extension.uidaho.edu/twinfallscounty/files/2014/02/Candy-Making-Manual.pdf>

Candy making is really a scientific formula and is the least forgiving of all recipes. It's important not to substitute the main ingredients, such as sugar, butter, cream, etc. for something else.



What are Sugar Plums?

You hear it every holiday season, "visions of sugar plums danced in their heads," or the song "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy." But what is a sugar plum?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary and other candy historians, the sugar plum is a comfit. What is a comfit? It is a seed, nut, or spice coated with a layer of sugar. Whole spices, such as fennel, caraway and cardamom were sugar coated in the 17th century for a treat. Sugar plums were the snack of choice for aristocrats. If you've had candied citrus peel, you've had a version of a comfit. Another example of a comfit for today's consumer is candy coated chocolate or nuts.

Sources: <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2014/12/23/visions-of-sugarplums/>
<http://altonbrown.com/sugarplum-recipe/>

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Celebrate Spaghetti!



Spaghetti is America's favorite shape of pasta. While commonly paired with a red meat sauce, spaghetti is found in many other recipes including stir-fry meals, casseroles, and salads. And with whole grain pasta options, more nutrition can easily be added to a meal.

One of the hardest decisions to make when using spaghetti is how much dry spaghetti is needed. For

long shapes, including angel hair, linguine, vermicelli, and fettuccine, use this guide:

8 ounces dry long pasta =
a 1 ½-inch diameter bunch =
4 cups cooked

To cook pasta, use 4-6 quarts water per pound of pasta and bring to a boil. Add pasta, stir, and return to a boil. Stir occasionally. Perfectly cooked pasta is "al dente," or firm to the bite. For recipes with extra cooking time, undercook the pasta by 1/3 of the cooking time.

For more information and recipe ideas, visit <http://ilovepasta.org/> and www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/search/solr-results.



Karen Blakeslee, M.S.



On the Web at
www.rrc.ksu.edu



HITTING THE ROAD

If you're bringing a dish to a get-together with coworkers, family or friends, make sure you are transporting food



KEEP COLD FOOD COLD

When transporting cold dishes, place items in a cooler with ice or gel packs to keep food at or below

40 °F



KEEP HOT FOOD HOT

Keep hot foods at or above

140 °F

by wrapping dishes in insulation bags or towels and newspaper.

www.foodsafety.gov/ and <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/>