

Baking with Kids

Cupcakes, Cookies, and a Grandfather's Advice



Baking with Kids—Cupcakes, Cookies, and a Grandfather’s Advice

Proven recipes, advice, and tips to make baking with your kids a wonderful and memorable experience.

Table of Contents

The Joys and Rewards of Baking with Kids	3
10 Tips to Make Your Baking a Success.....	4
Bake What They Like and Other Recipe Choices	5
Cupcakes	6
Chocolate Peanut Butter Brownie Cupcakes Recipe.....	6
Chocolate Cheesecake Cupcake Recipe	7
Tip: Get the Last Drop	8
Tip: Brown Sugar a Little Hard?.....	8
Hand Formed Cookies	9
Cherry Chocolate Cordial Cookies.....	9
Chocolate Pintos Cookie Recipe	10
Related Cookie Mixes.....	11
How to Measure Properly	11
Sugar Cookies.....	13
How to Make the Very Best Sugar Cookies.....	13
Tip: The Proper Way to Cream.....	14
Related Cookie Mix.....	14
Drop Cookies.....	15
Peanutty Peanut Butter Cookies.....	15
Banana Rainbow Chippers	16
Tip: Refresh those Cookies.....	17
Refrigerator Cookies	18
Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookie Recipe	18
Related Cookie Mix.....	19
Tip: What’s the Difference between Baking Powder and Baking Soda?.....	19
No-Bake Cookies	20
Chocolate Peanut Butter Drops	20
More No-Bakers.....	20
Just Plain Fun.....	22
Make Your Own Play Dough.....	22
Party Face Paint	23
Kids’ Party Munch	23
Painted Cookies.....	24
Easy Meringue Frosting	26
Egg Yolk Based Paint (for decorating unbaked cookies)	26
Cornstarch Based Paint (for decorating unbaked cookies).....	26
Painted Peanut Butter Cookie Recipe	27

The Joys and Rewards of Baking with Kids

For my eighth birthday, my mother gave me a cookbook. It wasn't much of a cookbook, but it was mine. I can remember her helping me through those recipes until soon, I was confident enough to tackle many of them on my own. It changed my life. It started a lifelong love of cooking.

That cookbook also provided a wealth of shared experiences with my mother. The greatest conversations that I recall from my childhood and youth took place in that kitchen. The cookbook is long gone but the memories, the lessons that I learned from my mother, and my passion for baking remain. I'm glad that my mother had the wisdom to give such an unusual gift to an eight year old boy.

Recently, I was baking at my brother's house. Soon my nephew's three and four year-olds pulled up stools and pitched in. By the time the scones were mixed, there was a little flour on the floor, a lot on the kids, and we had dug a few egg shell pieces out of the dough but the gleeful chatter made it worthwhile. We were best buddies.

Cooking with small kids can be a joy-for them and for you. Cooking with older kids- especially a teenager- will pass on life skills and create memorable, shared accomplishments. Maybe, just maybe, a lot more will come out of the experience than a chocolate layer cake. We read about one smart mother who used the kitchen as a parenting tool. Whenever one of her daughters had a crisis--from a fender bender to a broken heart--she would head for the kitchen with that daughter in tow. There she would bake something with her daughter and make it all better. I'm sure the cakes and the pies were minor contributions. The conversations, the friendships, and the opportunity to mutually engage in a constructive conversation were invaluable.

Whether with your children, your grandchildren, or the neighborhood children, don't miss the opportunity to bake with kids. Our desire is that these recipes will come to represent many happy moments and memories for you and the kids in your life.

Dennis and Merri Ann Weaver
The Prepared Pantry

10 Tips to Make Your Baking a Success

1. **Keep it safe.** Teach your kids safety. Keep younger children away from a hot stove and sharp knives. Even very young children will want to put the flour in the mixing bowl or break an egg. Turn the mixer off and let them do it.
2. **Keep it simple.** Choose simpler recipes and quicker recipes for young kids. Kids love to get their hands in the dough. Consider a cookie recipe, like [snickerdoodles](#), where the cookies are hand-formed.
3. **Make it feel good.** Overlook boo-boo's like egg shells in the dough. Praise often even if the product isn't perfect. When a mess happens, take it in stride and don't voice blame.
4. **Build kids not cookies.** The kitchen makes an excellent classroom. Help the child read and interpret the directions--learning to follow written instructions is an important life skill. Help the child understand the fractions found in most recipes. With older kids, use the opportunity to pass a little wisdom along—even if it slows down the project.
5. **Take your time.** Neither you nor your kids will enjoy the experience if you're fighting the clock. It takes twice as long to bake with kids--it's just worth it.
6. **Keep it clean.** Teach good hygiene habits. Teach kids to wash their hands often and to clean and disinfect the counters. Help them use clean sponges and dishtowels.
7. **Teach ingredients.** Teach them the basics of ingredients. Explain how yeast works or baking soda. Show them the difference between granulated sugar, brown sugar, and confectioners' sugar.
8. **Keep that food safe.** Teach them food safety principles. Make them aware of dangerous bacteria and how they thrive. Teach them to keep hot foods hot (over 140 degrees) and cold foods cold (under 40 degrees).
9. **Consider mixes.** Have a few mixes on hand for cooking with kids. With a mix, there is less that can go wrong. Since it takes less time to bake, a mix may be more suitable for a child's attention span or may better fit an available block of time.
10. **Clean it up.** Teach them to clean up as they go and afterwards. Let them know that the job is not done until the kitchen is clean.

Bake What They Like and Other Recipe Choices

It's pretty hard to get the kids excited about something they don't like. So our first rule in selecting recipes for this collection was: "Is this something Johnny will like?" Kids have different tastes but generally they like simple flavors—chocolate, peanut butter, bananas—and often don't care for nuts and dried fruit. So most of these are straightforward, kid-proven flavors and we left the nuts and dried fruit out.

These recipes have differing degrees of complexity. But then we should be cooking with our kids from little tykes through the teenage years. If your youngster wants to tackle a more complex recipe, that's okay—it will just require more hands-on involvement from you.

We selected a range of recipe types. When you find one that suits you and your kids, look for similar recipes on our website or elsewhere on the internet.

Oh, and just for the fun of it, we included some recipes for children's activities—recipes like play dough, face paint, and painted cookies. Your kids will love these.

Cupcakes

There's something about having your own individual little cake that is exciting. It's neat, it's scrumptious, and it's yours. You can make cupcakes with any cake batter but we've included a couple surprises—cupcakes with peanut butter or cream cheese-like fillings.

At a birthday party, consider a large cake with candles for the lighting and blowing out ceremony and then cupcakes for each of the guests. Stick a candle in each cupcake and let the guest blow his or her candle out.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Brownie Cupcakes Recipe

Not only does each kid get his own little cake but this combines youngsters' favorite flavors: Peanut butter and chocolate brownie. And it's an easy recipe. Simply drop a spoonful of peanut butter on each cupcake before baking.

Note: This recipe can be doubled.

Ingredients

2/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup butter
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup all-purpose flour

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. In a medium bowl, melt the chocolate and butter together in the microwave, stirring as needed.
2. Stir the sugar into the chocolate mixture. Stir the eggs and vanilla into the mixture. Stir in the flour.
3. Line nine muffin cups with paper liners. Divide the batter between the nine liners. Put a half teaspoon of peanut butter in the center of each.
4. Bake for 20 minutes. Do not over bake. A toothpick should still have gooey crumbs on it if tested. Cool on a wire rack.



Chocolate Cheesecake Cupcake Recipe

This is a fun cupcake that doesn't need to be frosted. It's a wonderful combination of double chocolate and cheesecake filling made into a moist, scrumptious cupcake. It's kind of a surprising little cupcake. The tops and the bottoms are made of moist chocolate cake. The middle is marbled with cheesecake filling. Inside, you will find a sprinkling of chocolate chips.



Ingredients

6 ounces light cream cheese
1 large egg
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

2 ounces unsweetened baking chocolate

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

6 tablespoons cold butter
1 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 large eggs

powdered sugar for dusting (optional)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees

1. For the filling, mix the cream cheese and egg together until smooth. Add the sugar and vanilla and blend well. Stir in the chocolate chips by hand. Set aside.
2. For the cake, melt the baking chocolate in the microwave.
3. Mix the flour, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl.
4. Cream the butter and sugar together. Add the melted chocolate. Add the vanilla and beat in the eggs, one at a time until light and fluffy. Add the dry ingredients and beat in.
5. Line 12-14 muffin tins with paper liners. Place a spoonful of chocolate batter into each cup. Divide the cheesecake filling between the cups, spooning the filling over the chocolate batter. Place a spoonful of chocolate batter on top of the filling so that the bottom and top of the cups are chocolate. (Don't worry about covering the filling—let the oven do that for you as the chocolate batter expands.)

6. Bake for 20 minutes or until done. A toothpick inserted in the cake portion will come out clean. Remove the cupcakes to wire racks to cool. If you choose, dust the tops with powdered sugar.

Tip: Get the Last Drop

To get the last drop of the honey, syrup, or molasses from the measuring cup, heat the cup for five to ten seconds in the microwave. The remaining warmed syrup will run right out.

Tip: Brown Sugar a Little Hard?

If your brown sugar has become hard, stick a slice of bread in the container and seal it back up. The syrup in brown sugar is hygroscopic, that is it draws moisture from the air rather than becoming drier. Because it is hygroscopic, it will draw moisture from the bread and become soft again. Discard the bread slice.

Hand Formed Cookies

Little kids like playing in the dough. Every mom, dad, or grandparent ought to be armed with a few recipes that they can make with junior where he or she can get their hands in the dough. If they can make little round balls with the dough and then roll the ball through some sticky sugar, so much the better. Here you will find suggestions for a couple of hand-formed cookies.

Cherry Chocolate Cordial Cookies

Ingredients

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
3 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup light corn syrup

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup shortening
3/4 cup granulated sugar
3 eggs
1 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 teaspoon cherry flavor/extract

turbinado sugar
maraschino cherries

Note: Turbinado sugar is an amber, large crystal sugar. (See photo inset.) You will use this sugar to roll the dough balls in before baking. If you prefer, use large crystal (AA) white decorating sugar. Both are available from The Prepared Pantry.

See [Turbinado Sugar](#) here >>

See [White Decorating Sugar](#) here >>



Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees

1. Melt the chocolate chips with the butter in the microwave. Add the corn syrup and set the mixture aside to cool.
2. Mix the flour, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl.
3. Cream the shortening and sugar together. Add the eggs and extracts and beat after the addition of each egg. Continue beating until light and fluffy. Add the

- chocolate mixture. Add the dry ingredients and beat in. Chill the dough for several hours.
4. Form round balls about the size of walnuts. Roll them in the turbinado sugar and place them on a lightly greased cookie sheets about two inches apart. Press your thumb into each to form a depression then press a maraschino cherry into the depression.
 5. Bake them for eleven minutes or until done. (Do not over bake. They will still be soft and puffy.) Move them to wire racks to cool.

A Story in Recipe Development

We found a chocolate mint cookie recipe that looked good. We tried it. It wasn't. Maybe if we used almond instead of mint? We added the turbinado sugar for texture and interest. Too dry. We added a little butter, an egg, and cut back on the flour. It tasted good but was too cake-like and not enough spread. We didn't like the cinnamon and eliminated that. We added more sugar to increase the spread and cut back on the flour again. Now we had a good cookie but we thought it could be better. We substituted bakers unsweetened chocolate for the semi-sweet chocolate chips to make it darker and richer. We substituted brown sugar for the granulated sugar for more flavor and just a touch more spread. We added maraschino cherries. Perfect. We called them Cherry Chocolate Cordial Cookies.

Chocolate Pintos Cookie Recipe

Though this recipe has very different origins, it is similar to the previous recipe except that it is rolled in powder sugar and doesn't have corn syrup or the cherries. The resulting cookie is softer and more fudge-like and powdered sugar keeps the cookie soft while the crystals in the previous recipe gave the cookies crunch.

Ingredients

2 cups all purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup shortening
4 ounces unsweetened baking chocolate

2 cups sugar
4 large eggs
1/2 tablespoon vanilla

powdered sugar



Directions

1. Mix the flour, baking powder, and salt together in a small bowl.
2. Place the chocolate in a microwave-proof bowl. Add the shortening and microwave until the chocolate melts, stirring once or twice.
3. Add the sugar to the chocolate mixture and stir until smooth or mix in a stand-type mixer with a paddlewheel attachment.
4. Add the eggs one at a time, beating between each egg until combined. Add the vanilla. Chill the dough for several hours.
5. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Form round balls about one inch in diameter from spoonfuls of the chilled dough. Roll the balls in powdered sugar. Place them on a lightly greased baking sheet with room to expand.
6. Bake for ten or eleven minutes. The cookies will still be soft. (Do not over bake.) Remove them to a wire rack to cool.

Makes four to five dozen cookies.

Related Cookie Mixes

Sometimes a mix is the best answer when time is limited or when a child's attention span is short. Consider these hand-formed cookie mixes.

- [Chocolate Sugarsnaps](#)
- [Pennsylvania Dutch Sugar Cookies](#)
- [Old-Fashioned Spice Cookies](#)
- [Country Farm Snickerdoodles](#)
- [YoYo Cookie Kit](#)

How to Measure Properly

There's a right way and a wrong way to measure and by measuring right, you will get the consistent results you are looking for.

To measure liquids: Use a clear glass measuring cup, one designed for liquids. Fill it to the mark and set it on the counter or on a shelf at eye level and look through the glass. Never try to hold the glass up to your eyes--it will never be as level and steady as on the counter.

To measure dry ingredients: Use a dry measure of the capacity you wish to measure--either a spoon or a cup. For a cup, stir to loosen and unpack the ingredients then lightly spoon them into the cup. Level the top with a spatula or the back of a knife. Except for brown sugar,



never pack the ingredients into the measure. When using a measuring spoon, scrape the top level as you do when measuring with a cup.

To measure herbs: Lightly fill the spoon to the top with herbs but do not level with a spatula as you would with powdered ingredients. Dump the herbs into your hand and crush them to release the flavors before adding them to the recipe.

To measure shortening: Pack the shortening into a dry measure with the back of a spoon or spatula pressing to force out any air pockets, then level it by scraping the top of the cup.



Flour can be tricky to measure. We always use a scale to get accurate, consistent measurements. If you use a dry measuring cup, stir the flour to fluff and loosen it--packed flour will weigh considerably more than loosened flour--then spoon it into the measuring cup.

Also, scooping the flour out of the bag with the measuring cup rather than spooning flour into the cup will give you significantly more flour--enough more that the results of the recipe may vary considerably.

Sugar Cookies

Kids may log more hours in the kitchen with sugar cookies than any other type of cookies. The appeal is threefold: they like to cut them out, they like to decorate them, and with simple flavors and frosting, they like to eat them.

Everyone has their favorite cookie recipes. Regardless of the recipe, there are guidelines that you can follow to make the very best sugar cookies. We've included those guidelines.

How to Make the Very Best Sugar Cookies

Everyone loves sugar cookies. But sugar cookies don't always turn out right. We've compiled this list of tips and techniques to help you make the very best sugar cookies.

1. Measure ingredients accurately, especially the flour. Too much flour will make your cookies hard and dry. If you scoop the flour with the measuring cup instead of spooning sifted flour into your cup, you are likely to have 20% too much flour.
2. Sugar cookies are made by the creaming method. This is the most important step in making sugar cookies—it incorporates the air into the dough that acts as a leavening agent. Use the paddle attachment of your electric mixer to cream the sugar, salt, and spices with the butter or shortening. Cream the ingredients together at low speed, not high. For light cookies, cream the mixture until it is light and fluffy. For a denser, moister cookie, cream only until the mixture is paste-like.
3. Add the eggs and liquid after creaming, beating these in at low speed.
4. Mix the flour into the creamed mixture only until it is combined. If you over-mix, you will develop the gluten and make a tougher cookie.
5. Choose a low protein flour, preferably pastry flour, for your sugar cookies. Avoid bread flours with their high protein content. All purpose flour is an acceptable compromise.
6. If the dough is too soft to work easily, chill it until firm. The dough should be pliable but not squishy soft. Handling of the dough with warm hands will make the dough soft.
7. Use no more flour than necessary to dust the counter. The flour will work into the dough for a drier, tougher cookie.
8. Too much re-rolling will make for tougher cookies. Not only does successive re-rolling work the dusting flour into the dough, the continued working of the dough develops the gluten.
9. When cutting shapes, make the cuts as close together as you can to minimize the amount of dough that will be re-rolled.

10. Most recipes call for the dough to be rolled to 1/8 inch in thickness. This creates a crisp cookie. For a moister, less crisp cookie, roll the dough to 1/4 inch only.
11. Remove the cookies from the counter with a thin metal spatula.
12. When garnishing cookies with sprinkles, drop the decorations from a height of eight or ten inches for a more even distribution.
13. The size of the cookies will affect bake times. Put like-sized cookies on the same sheet.
14. Do not over bake cookies. Thin cookies will bake in seven or eight minutes at 350 degrees. Thicker cookies will take ten or twelve minutes. Cookies on darker pans will bake in less time. When done, the cookies will still be pale-colored with just a tinge of brown at the edges.
15. Cool cookies on a wire rack. Do not frost them until they are completely cooled.

Tip: The Proper Way to Cream

One of the keys to consistently good cookies is controlling the temperature of the butter that you cream together with the sugar. Butter can act as a liquid or a solid depending on its temperature and how it is handled. When the butter behaves as solid, you will have a lighter, more tender cookie. When the butter acts as liquid, you will have a crisper cookie with more spread.

Most cookies are designed for cold butter that acts as a solid. Use only cold butter. (Yes, I know—many recipes call for “softened butter”.) Cut the butter into chunks, beat it for a moment with the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer, and add the sugar. The sugar will cut into the butter leaving tiny air pockets that will help leaven the cookie. If you beat the sugar and butter mixture for too long, friction will warm the butter until it becomes soft and begins to melt. Using cold eggs will help keep the butter solid.

Related Cookie Mix

Consider this proven cookie mix for both vanilla and chocolate sugar cookies.

- [The American Classic Cookie Kit](#)

Drop Cookies

Drop cookies make great kid cookies. There is not a lot of precision involved though it is nice to have all the cookies of similar size though that they will bake evenly). There is usually a nice margin of error with most recipes in case junior doesn't measure quite accurately. And there is immediate gratification—the cookies are done and on the rack in a hurry so that your apprentice can savor the cookies of his or her labors.

There are lots of good drop cookie recipes. We included a couple here that we felt were kid favorites.

Peanutty Peanut Butter Cookies

These peanut butter cookies have two characteristics that make them outstanding. They have enough butter to be smooth without the “sandy” texture of many peanut butter cookies and they are loaded with snack-type peanuts. We designed these as kids' cookies but they may be even better as adult cookies.



Peanutty Peanut Butter Cookie Recipe

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup butter
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup peanut butter
1 tablespoon honey
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 large eggs
1 1/2 cups salted snack-type peanuts

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees

1. Mix the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl.

2. Cream the butter and sugars together. Add the peanut butter, honey, eggs and vanilla and beat until light and fluffy. Add the dry ingredients and beat in. Add the peanuts.
3. Spoon the batter onto greased cookie sheets about two inches apart. With the back of the spoon, flatten the dough to 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch in thickness. Bake them for nine to ten minutes or until done. (Do not over bake.) Let them sit on the baking sheet for one minute and then move them to wire racks to cool.

Baker's Notes: This is a very good cookie. The honey was added as a hygroscopic agent to help keep the cookies moist.

We used Adams® brand 100% peanut butter with chunks in our testing. This made a very good cookie. Your favorite peanut butter should work fine.

Banana Rainbow Chippers

Kids love chocolate and kids love bananas. Why not put the two together? This soft, cake-like drop cookie has added appeal with its rainbow of colors. The rainbow of colors is the result of M&M® chocolate candies that have started to bleed. If the mottled colors are a little too gruesome for your tastes, you can use milk chocolate chips. If you choose, you can add nuts but often little types like the smooth texture of cake-like cookies.



Ingredients

3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

2/3 cup shortening
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 ripe bananas
1 1/2 cups M&M® chocolate candies

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees

1. Mix the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl.

2. Cream the shortening and sugar together. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until light and fluffy. Add the bananas and beat until combined. Add the dry ingredients and beat in. Add the candies.
3. Spoon the batter onto greased cookie sheets about two inches apart. Bake them for twelve minutes or until done. (Do not over bake.) Let them sit on the baking sheet for one minute and then move them to wire racks to cool.

To get the rainbow effect:

When moisture comes in contact with the sugar coating on the candies, the colored coating dissolves and bleeds. If you want a rainbow effect, stir until you just start to get streaks of color. If you want to minimize the running, minimize the mixing after the candies are added.

As an alternative, you can press the candies onto the cookies just before baking. Little fingers love to do so. You will have no running and you can press the candies in any color pattern. (See photo to the right.)



Tip: Refresh those Cookies

It's hard to believe but sometimes those cookies in the cookie jar get a little stale. Don't despair. Staling means that they have dried out, that they have lost moisture. There is a way to add that moisture back. Simply slip a moist slice of bread in the cookie jar. The dry cookies will draw moisture from the slice of bread and overnight the cookies will be moister. Discard the slice of bread.

Refrigerator Cookies

Refrigerator cookies as kids' cookie have advantages. You build refrigerator cookies in stages first mixing the dough, then refrigerating the dough, then baking. Mostly, kids want immediate results and mixing cookie dough that doesn't turn into cookies right away doesn't work.

We included this recipe because it is so good and combines two of kids' favorite flavors—chocolate and peanut butter. Consider mixing and baking the cookies and have the kids help fill them and put them together. This is a very good grown-up cookie so make plenty.

Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookie Recipe

This is really a recipe for peanut butter yoyo cookies—thin peanut butter wafers sandwiched with a creamy chocolate filling. This recipe is bound to be a hit at your house. It's one of our favorite recipes.



Ingredients

1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup peanut butter

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda

Directions

1. Cream the butter and sugars together with the paddle attachment of your mixer. Add the salt, egg, and vanilla and beat until smooth. Add the peanut butter and mix.
2. Add the flour and baking soda and beat until combined.
3. Refrigerate the dough for 20 minutes to firm up slightly.
4. Divide the dough into two portions. Using wax paper, roll each portion into logs 1 1/2-inches in diameter. Refrigerate for two hours or until firm
5. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Cut cookies into slices just thicker than 1/4 inch. Place them on a greased baking sheet and bake 12 to 14 minutes or until the cookies just start to brown on the edges. Cool on a wire rack.

For the filling:

Mix 1/2 cup whipping cream, 2 tablespoons butter, and 2 tablespoons of light corn syrup in a heavy saucepan. Heat until it simmers. Remove the pan from the heat and immediately add one cup of semi-sweet chocolate chips. Spread the chocolate chips in the pan and let them melt for several minutes and then whisk the chips into a smooth sauce. The filling will thicken as it cools.

Related Cookie Mix

Sometimes a mix is the best answer when time is limited or when a child's attention span is short. Consider this sandwich cookie mix.

- [YoYo Cookie Kit](#)

Tip: What's the Difference between Baking Powder and Baking Soda?

Baking powder and baking soda are not interchangeable. Baking soda is a very powerful chemical leavener. It is an alkaline that reacts with an acid in the presence of water. (Remember those chemistry sets that we used to get at Christmas? When we mixed an alkaline with an acid, we got lots of fizzing and bubbles.)

Recipes calling for baking soda must contain an acid in order to react and leaven. Buttermilk, molasses, and fruit juices are common acids used in recipes. When baking soda is mixed with buttermilk--for example--in a batter, bubbles are formed. These bubbles lighten the batter and when heated in an oven, expand even further.

Baking powder is a self-contained leavener. It is mixture of baking soda and a dry acid. When water is added, the chemical reaction occurs creating bubbles. In double-acting baking powder, a secondary reaction occurs when the batter heats in the oven.

No-Bake Cookies

No-bake cookies are wonderful kids' cookies. They provide an almost immediate reward—perfect for a youngster's short attention span--and as a parent or grandparent, you don't have to navigate a hot oven with your young friend. If it's summertime, you don't need to heat up the kitchen to whip up a batch of cookies.

There are two major types of no-bake cookies: stovetop cookies and microwave cookies. Stovetop cookies are almost foolproof but because many are mixed right on the range—like Rice Krispie® treats—care must be taken that Johnny doesn't get burned.

The secret to microwave cookies is the cook time. Microwaves cook so rapidly that the timing must be right on to make perfect cookies. Cooked a little too much and the cookies are hard. Too little and they are sticky and gooey.

Nearly all no-bake recipes are easy. The following were selected because they appeal to kids tastes.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Drops

Ingredients

2 cups sugar
1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup butter
1/3 cocoa
2 1/2 cup quick oats
1/2 cup peanut butter
1/2 tablespoon vanilla extract



Directions

1. Combine sugar, milk, butter, and cocoa in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture comes to a boil. Cook for two more minutes stirring constantly and then remove the pan from the heat.
2. Stir in the peanut butter and vanilla, then the oats.
3. Let cool for several minutes and then drop spoonfuls onto waxed paper. Let the cookies cool completely before removing them from the waxed paper.

Editors note: Patty from San Francisco made these and reported excellent results. She added nuts to the recipe. Another baker, Peggy, reported adding miniature marshmallows successfully.

More No-Bakers

When thinking of no-bake cookies, don't forget the perennial favorites, Rice Krispie® Treats and Frosted Graham Crackers. We're assuming everyone has the recipe for Rice Krispie Treats. Consider adding chocolate chips, dried fruit pieces, or cinnamon candies for a little pizzazz.



To make Chocolate Rice Krispie Treats, melt $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chocolate chips (for a recipe calling for six cups of cereal) with the marshmallows and butter. This is a real favorite—our kids like these more than regular Rice Krispie Treats and they are no more difficult to make.

For Frosted Graham Crackers, simply pick your favorite frosting and sandwich that between two graham cracker squares. Pick a frosting with a powdered-sugar base that will set up firm and won't be messy.

Just Plain Fun

Sometimes you can lure kids into the kitchen with craft-type projects instead cookie dough. Kids have a ball making their own play dough or painting cookies. (In fact, some of these projects are pretty fun for adults.) You'll have lots of fun with these.

Make Your Own Play Dough

When we were children growing up in a farming community, our parents were pretty self-sufficient. I don't know whether children's commercial play dough was available but we never saw any. Instead, my mother made homemade play dough with flour and salt. There are still advantages to making your own: It's inexpensive, you can make it in larger quantities for Johnny's party, and Johnny can help make his own play dough. When you make your own, Johnny has a sense of self-sufficiency and you demonstrate that everything fun does not have to come from the store. Besides, you know what is in this play dough and when it ends up in a kiddy's mouth, there's no reason to be concerned—everything is edible.



The following recipe is a big batch recipe. It is intended to be enough for a party or group of kids and makes about ten cups of play dough—the equivalent of twelve commercial Play Doh® containers. If you want a smaller batch, divide the recipe in half. If you are having a really big party and want more play dough, make two batches--this recipe is about all that can be made in a stand-type mixer at one time. You can also make this play dough by hand.

If you want multiple colors, divide the dough and knead in the food coloring after the dough is made. If one color is sufficient, add the food coloring with the water and save the step of kneading in the coloring.

7-8 cups all-purpose or bread flour
3 cups salt
3 tablespoons cream of tartar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
4 cups hot water
food coloring

Mix seven cups of flour together with the salt and cream of tartar in the bowl of your stand-type mixer. Add the oil and water and knead with a dough hook in your electric

stand-type mixer for five to six minutes. (If you are kneading by hand, knead for eight to ten minutes.) Add more flour to get a soft, workable dough.

Store the dough in a sealed container to keep it from becoming dry. If it becomes too dry, place it back in the mixer bowl and knead in a dribble of water.

Party Face Paint

At birthday parties or at Halloween, kids love to paint their faces. Here's an easy, safe recipe costume face paint.

1 teaspoon cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon water
1/2 teaspoon cold cream
2 drops food coloring

In a small mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients and mix well.

Recipe used by permission, [Nancy's Kitchen](#)

Kids' Party Munch

This works as an after-school snack, as trail mix, or as an after-lunch dessert. Collaborate with your child to use the ingredients that he or she likes best.

2 cups Chex®-type cereal
1/2 cup raisins or dried cranberries
1/2 cup M&M's
1/2 cup roasted peanuts

Options: Any of the following may be added or substituted in the recipe—other nuts, coconut, miniature marshmallows, peanut M&M's, dried fruit, or miniature pretzels.

Mix the ingredients together in a large bowl. Store in a tightly covered container.

Painted Cookies

This is one of the most fun kitchen projects that we have found. It's both artsy-crafty and baking. It's not just a kid's project—though Johnny will love it. Painted cookies are also a fun craft for older kids and adults. We have seen pictures of painted cookies that are truly beautiful. Carefully painted cookies make wonderful decorations for Christmas or holidays. And since they are painted with edible paint, you can eat those creations that you don't keep.



There are two ways to paint cookies—before and after they are baked. We would like to acquaint you with both methods.

We usually think of painting cookies as a kid's activity—and it is. Kids can spend hours making cookies into shapes and painting them. It addresses two passions—cookies and creativity. Allow kids imagination to run both in the shapes they make and the colors they paint.

Painting Cookies before They are Baked

Raw cookie dough can be painted because it is fairly dense and the paint stays on the surface rather than soaking in. We have tried both egg yolk based paints and cornstarch based paints. The egg yolk based paints are dense and opaque and create a colored “skin” on the cookie. When the cookie expands in the oven, the colored skin does not expand with the cookie and therefore does not leave complete coverage. Because of the pigment in the yolks, the colors are yellow tinted. Use egg yolk based paints and paint cookies before they are baked when the yellow tint from the yolk is acceptable and when the edges of the cookie do not have to be covered. The antique looking flower on the left in the accompanying picture was painted on a peanut butter cookie with egg yolk based paints. You can check out the recipe for the peanut butter cookies later in this article.



The same paints were used to paint the lighter-colored cookie on the right. This is a sugar cookie made with our [American Classic Sugar Cookie Kit](#). Notice that the sugar cookie did not expand as much as the peanut butter cookie and therefore has more coverage.



The flowers in the above picture were created by molding bits of dough as you would clay. Kids will have a great time molding animal shapes and characters. Help them press the shapes to a uniform thickness so that the cookies will bake uniformly. The seams formed by pressing the bits of dough together act as lines to guide your child in his or her painting.

Edible paint can also be made with cornstarch. The red heart to the right was made with a simple cornstarch-based paint. The cornstarch does not cover as well nor create the skin that egg yolks do but the colors are true and the paint seems to expand with the cookies a little better.

Cookie dough can be used as a canvas and kids can paint scenes or designs with egg yolk based paint. The rectangular cookies to the right are chocolate shortbread cookies painted with egg-yolk based paints. We tried a shortbread recipe because shortbread is dense and expands very little. Interestingly, the paint left an embossed effect on the surface of the cookies.

Painting Baked Cookies

Once the cookie is baked, the surface has risen and is much more porous. To paint baked cookies, the porous surface is covered with a hard shelled frosting, usually a frosting with meringue powder added to create a smooth, firm surface. On the frosted surface, bright colors and crisp lines are painted using undiluted food coloring. Just dip the tip of the paint brush right in the food coloring bottle.



To the right, are sugar cookies that are frosted and then painted with food colors. We used an [American Classic Sugar Cookie Kit](#) to produce both the cookies and the frosting but you can use your own recipe. The cookies come in both chocolate and vanilla and the royal



icing mixes contain meringue powder. We also carry [meringue powder for icings](#) if you care to do your own.

Whether painting on unbaked cookies or frosted cookies, simple water color brushes work well. They are inexpensive, you can buy them in different widths, and they clean up with hot water.

Here you will find the recipes that you need to paint your cookies. We hope that you and your kids have a wonderful time.

Easy Meringue Frosting

Meringue powder is made with powdered egg whites (plus starches and flavors). Reconstituted egg whites dry hard leaving a shell on the frosting. You can purchase meringue powder at baking supply stores, on the internet, or at The Prepared Pantry. (Click here for [meringue powder](#).)

3 tablespoons meringue powder for icing
1/4 cup water
2 1/2 cups powdered sugar, more or less

Stir the meringue powder and water together until smooth. Add enough of the powdered sugar to obtain the desired consistency for spreading. Completely cover any leftovers.

Egg Yolk Based Paint (for decorating unbaked cookies)

2 large egg yolks
1 teaspoon water
food coloring

Stir the yolks and water together until smooth. Add the food coloring. Clean up with water.

Cornstarch Based Paint (for decorating unbaked cookies)

3 tablespoons cornstarch
water
food coloring

Stir enough water into the cornstarch to make a slurry. Add the food coloring.

Painted Peanut Butter Cookie Recipe

This peanut butter cookie recipe was developed specifically for painted cookies. Because it has a dense dough, it works well to paint cookies before they are baked and leaves a smooth surface if you choose to paint your cookies after baking. Because of the peanut butter in the recipe, the cookie is a bit fragile and will not withstand rough handling.

Ingredients

3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup shortening
1 cup peanut butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees

1. Mix the flour, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl.
2. Cream the shortening, peanut butter, and sugars together. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat after the addition of each egg. Continue beating until light and fluffy. Add the dry ingredients and beat them in. The dough should be a soft clay-like consistency. If it is too moist, add a little flour a tablespoon at a time.
3. Form the cookies. You can either roll the dough to 1/4-inch thickness and cut shapes with cookie cutters or you can roll the dough into round and long shapes and form characters, animals, flowers or other shapes. If desired, paint them with an edible paint designed for unbaked cookies.
4. Bake cookies on ungreased sheets. Place cookies of similar sizes and thicknesses on the same sheet so that the cookies on each sheet will bake uniformly. Bake them for ten minutes or until done. Move them to wire racks to cool.