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Decorate A Cookie Tree!

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WHAT BETTER TIME is there for cookies than Christmastime? You have all been eating cookies every holiday season for years, but this year try something new and decorate a tree with them.

The fun can begin with the baking. Children and cookies go together like bread and honey, so gather up a few before you head for the kitchen. Brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews will enjoy the fun, but if no young ones are on hand, a few “grown-up children” will do nicely.

The first thing you will need is a good basic sugar cookie recipe like the one found at the bottom of this page. If the helpers are too young to enjoy (or for us to enjoy them) mixing the ingredients, do this before they arrive on the scene. When the youngsters are ready to help, swath each in a smock or large apron, for cookie dough can get pretty well spread around with a bevy of young cooks on the job.

Cutting out the cookie shapes is the time for all to join in the fun. Roll out several pieces of the dough so everyone will have a spot to work. Plastic or metal cookie cutters may be used for a start; for quite young children these would be best. For originality though, you and your crew can design your own shapes and cut them out with a sharp knife that has been dipped in a little flour. Try a triangle turned into a tree, a tear-drop shaped tree ornament, and then a Christmas stocking. A simple square or rectangle can later be iced as a wrapped gift. A wreath shape can be made by cutting two concentric circles with glasses of different sizes. Poinsettia shapes are easily made with a paper pattern. If your imaginations wear them, suggest each child cut what he wants from Santa. Keep in mind, however, that the large, simpler shapes are easiest to handle and later ice.

Before putting the cookies in the oven, make a small hole in the top so later you can slip a ribbon through it and hang the cookies from the tree. This hole must be large enough so that it won’t bake closed; a little over one-fourth inch is about right. The holes can be punched with a plastic or glass drinking straw or something similar.

When the cookies have cooled, it is time to add the finishing touches with gaily colored icing. Make a batch of confectioners’ icing from the recipe and then divide into smaller bowls and tint each a different color with food coloring. In addition to icing, any number of clever touches may be added with colored or silver cake decorating sprinkles. These would make ornaments for a tree, while red hots would make clever holly berries on a wreath or a holly leaf shaped cookie. Gum drops can be cut in half to make a bell shape or cut in slivers for lines. A long sliver of green gum drop with a red triangle shaped gum drop above becomes a candle. See what you can do with crushed peppermint candy. Confectioners’ icing is too soft for written words such as “Noel.” You may wish to write on your cookies with a decorator tube. Here is one frosting recipe which can be used for this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPOON TOGETHER:</th>
<th>ADD TO:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 lb powdered sugar</td>
<td>1 cup shortening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 tsp. salt</td>
<td>2 tsp. egg white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 tsp. cornstarch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If no decorator tube is available, an envelope with the corner cut off can be used for making icing lines and frills.

When the cookies are all decorated, slip six-inch strips of paper ribbon through the holes and tie them to the tree. Your cookie-decorated tree is now completed, looking as if it just hopped of a page of a Hansel and Gretel book. Just one more thing—remember to wish everyone who comes to visit a Merry Christmas with a treat from the cookie tree.

RECIPES

COOKIES
CREAM:
¾ c. shortening
¾ c. sugar
ADD and BEAT:
1½ t. vanilla
½ t. grated orange peel
SIFT and STIR IN:
2 c. enriched flour
1½ t. baking powder
½ t. salt
STIR IN:
4 t. milk
CHILL for 1 hour. ROLL OUT ¼ inch thick, CUT, PLACE on greased cookie sheet, and BAKE at 375° for 12 minutes. Makes two dozen cookies.

ICING
Add sufficient CREAM TOP MILK to 2 cups of CONFECTIONERS’ SUGAR to make it of spreading consistency.
Add a dash of SALT and 1 teaspoon of VANILLA.