

SHORTBREAD COOKIES WITH CANDIED ORANGE AND TANGERINE OIL

These cookies are everything wonderful about shortbread, but more. The addition of the oil made the dough taste just like those orange and vanilla sherbet cups I used to devour as a kid, one wooden scoopful at a time. Once baked the creaminess mellowed into a warm, buttery flavor that nestled in happily alongside the tangerine flavor. Smack in the middle of each cookie, a gently pressed candied orange peel lies waiting. It breaks up the flaky texture of the cookie with a gummy, sugary treat. This recipe leaves you with about 30 cookies which is plenty to share with neighbors or friends; if you can manage to get any out the door. You could use the zest of an orange or tangerine in place of the tangerine oil too, but the oil is definitely something special.

Cookie Ingredients.

3 sticks unsalted butter, softened
1/2 cup granulated sugar (plus more for topping)
1 cup confectioner's sugar
1/2 teaspoon fine salt
3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 egg yolk
5 drops tangerine oil

Candied Orange Peel Ingredients.

3 medium navel oranges, preferably with smooth peels
2 1/2 cups granulated sugar, 1 cup set aside
1 1/2 cups water
3 drops tangerine oil

Directions.

In a stand mixer, whip the butter for a few minutes until it's glossy and light. Add in the granulated sugar and mix on medium-high for 3-4 minutes, until it has creamed into a frosting like consistency. Add in the cup of confectioner's sugar and mix until combined. Add in the tangerine oil, vanilla, and egg yolk and mix until combined. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour and salt, then add it, one cup at a time, to the wet ingredients, mixing until blended.

Transfer the dough to a large piece of plastic wrap, shape it into a log and seal it up. Chill the dough in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes... the cooler the dough, the easier it is to work with.

While the dough chills, make your candied orange peels! Cut the tops and bottom ends off of the oranges. Score vertically through the peel to the flesh on all four sides of the orange, and peel the four large pieces from the fruit. Slice each peel section into thin strips. Place the strips in a small pot of cold water, bring to a simmer for one minute and

drain. Repeat this blanching process two more times. In a large pan add the 1 1/2 cups of sugar and water. Turn the heat up to medium and allow it to slowly come to a simmer while you stir, dissolving the sugar. Once the sugar is dissolved, add in the orange peels and keep on a very low simmer, stirring gently very occasionally, for about 45 minutes, or until the syrup has reduced to a thick, bubbly, fragrant syrup and the pith part of the peel is translucent.

While the peels simmer, pour the remaining cup of sugar into a large casserole dish. Add 3 drops of tangerine oil and toss it all together with a fork.

Once the peels are finished simmering, drain them in a fine mesh strainer. Let the excess syrup drip off, then quickly dump the peels into the tangerine oil-sugar mixture. Toss quickly, coating the peels in sugar. Remove the peels and lay them out in a single layer on a cooling rack. Allow them to cool.

Preheat your oven to 350 °F. Flour your work surface and working with half of the dough at a time, use a rolling pin to spread the dough out into a sheet that's about 1/4 inch thick. Using a sharp knife, cut the dough into 3.5" x 2.5" rectangles. Continue until all the dough has been cut out. I found it easiest to bake one batch (two sheets) while I kept cutting out cookies for the next round. I laid the cut out cookies on parchment paper and then transferred them to the baking sheet.

Lay the cut cookies 1 inch apart on a parchment paper covered cookie sheet. Gently press one of the candied orange peels into the top of each cookie. Sprinkle each cookie with a pinch of granulated sugar.

Bake two sheets of cookies at a time on the upper and lower middle racks of the oven for 20 minutes, or just until the cookies begin to very slightly brown on the sides. Rotate them halfway through baking. It's important to note that if you have a little dough leftover and only have one rack in the oven, the cookies will bake a bit faster, so keep an eye on them!

Move the cookies immediately to a cooling rack, keeping them on the parchment paper.

The cookies will store well for a few days in an airtight container.

Yield: 30 cookies

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