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All-Purpose Baking with The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion

By Chris, WebAdmin.

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Anyone from a beginning baker to the most experienced will get full use of The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion. With over 600 pages of content, complete with colour photos and hand draw illustrations, it truly is a must have in any kitchen.

Written by the bakers at King Arthur Flour, and who would know better, every aspect of the baking process is described in clear easy to understand language. Solid information and 450 recipes give you everything you need to become a true baker.

Ingredients, tools measuring techniques, even altitude are covered to ensure that none of their "fool-proof" recipes can go wrong. Truly if you can do it with flour, it is covered in this book.

The recipes are varied from the standards (like Basic Scones or Fruit Pie) to unique ideas (like Portable Pizza!) and even regional favourites (like Cassata or Kringle). All come complete with detailed instructions for every step of the process and even nutritional information.

Particularly fascinating and in my humble opinion valuable, where the shaded notes throughout the book with Tips, Suggestions, Cautions or Ideas for the various recipes. Everything from making your own Vanilla Extract to ideas on how to more easily fit bread baking into your day.

Truthfully I was hard pressed to choose just the recipe to include with this review, they were all so tempting. If you like the smell of baked goods, if you were too intimidated to try baking before, if you can never have enough foolproof baking recipes, this is the book for you.

Pumpkin Cheesecake

The rich flavor of cheesecake melds beautifully with the color and sweet, hearty taste of pumpkin. To make this cake even more indulgent, we've added a spicy gingersnap crust.

Crust

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4 tablespoons (1/2 stick, 2 ounces) butter
1 1/4 cups (6 3/4 ounces) gingersnap crumbs
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger (optional, if the snaps aren't strong flavored)
2 tablespoons (1 ounce) brown sugar

Cheese Filling

3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, at room temperature
1 1/4 cups (8 3/4 ounces) sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons (1/2 ounce) cornstarch
4 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 cup (8 ounces) heavy cream
1/2 cup (4 ounces) pumpkin puree (canned is fine)
1 large egg
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ginger
Pinch of allspice

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

For The Crust:

Use a food processor or blender to blend together the butter, gingersnaps, ginger and sugar until the mixture is evenly crumbly. Press the crumbs into the bottom and about 1/2 inch up the side of a 9" springform pan.

Bake the crust for 16 to 18 minutes, just until it's set. Set aside to cool. Reduce the oven temperature to 325 F.

For The Filling:

Using an electric mixer set on low speed, beat the cream cheese until it's soft and no lumps remain. Add the sugar, salt and cornstarch and mix until well blended. Beat in the 4 eggs one at a time, being sure the mixture is smooth and scraping the bottom of the bowl after each addition. Add the vanilla and the heavy cream, stirring just until the mixture is smooth.

Remove 1 cup of batter from the bowl and combine it with the pumpkin puree, 1 egg, and spices.

Pour the vanilla cheesecake batter into the cooled crust. Drop tablespoonfuls of the pumpkin batter over the vanilla batter. Use a knife to swirl the pumpkin through the batter.

Bake the cake at 325 F for 40 to 55 minutes. The internal temperature when measured an inch from the outside edge should be 165 F or above, and the middle should jiggle. Turn off the oven, open the door slightly and let the cheesecake cool slowly for 1 hour in the turned-off oven. Remove it from the oven, run a knife around the top edge of the pan to free the cake (so it can contract as it cools), then refrigerate overnight. Top with cinnamon-flavored whipped cream, if desired.

Per Serving (1 138g slice):

432 cal, 29g fat, 7g protein, 24g complex carbohydrates, 24g sugar, 1g dietary fiber, 147mg cholesterol, 307mg sodium, 321mg potassium, 499RE vitamin A, 2mg vitamin C, 1mg iron, 71mg calcium, 108mg phosphorus

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Christmas Cookies with The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion

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Everyone has fond memories of warm cookies straight from the oven. The warmth of the cookie, the sweet taste in your mouth, I have never met someone without a favourite cookie, many of them centered around the holiday season. Lets face it, even your real estate agent will tell you to bake cookies to sell your home faster and for more money. But with hundreds of different varieties of cookies, it can be just a little daunting trying to come up with something new for your holiday gatherings and/or the yearly cookie exchange.

Never fear, The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion is here. Subtitled "The Essential Cookie Cookbook" this tome is not only full of wonderful recipes but is stuffed full of tips, diagrams, and answers to all of your cookie questions. The recipes in the collection are not simply a hodge podge of interesting cookies, these recipes were carefully researched and tested with only the best and most sought-after, the essentials, included.

The essential cookies were broken down into nine separate categories; Chocolate Chip, Sugar, Oatmeal, Molasses, Peanut Butter, Shortbread, Biscotti, Brownies and Decorated Cookies. So many different ways to bake a similar cookie required not just one or two different recipes but no less than 11 pages of recipes and tips per essential cookie type. The rest of the book is dedicated to Bars & Squares, Drop Cookies, Roll-Out Cookies, Shaped Cookies, Batter Cookies, No-Bake Cookies, The Finishing Touch and a detailed section on Ingredients.

As they did with

, the book is full of information to help

you along at every step. Detailed drawings demonstrate various techniques such as folding, freezing cookie dough, leveling and more. The multitude of available cooking utensils available are discussed and illustrated, there is even a step by step illustration for packaging cookies for transportation.

It is always, in my opinion, the little extras that make a cookbook great. The extras in this case are enough to justify the purchase of this cookbook, even if there were no recipes included. The incredibly

detailed drawings for how to decorated cookies make it easy enough for even the beginner baker to figure out. For anyone, beginner to expert, The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion will become your Essential Cookie Cookbook.

Looking for a special cookie for your holiday gathering or cookie exchange? Don't miss the Holiday Cookie Exchange online at:

Try this favourite:

Roll-Out Sugar Cookies

Often sugar cookies are fat and soft, the cumulus clouds of cookiedom. But when you roll out the dough rather than drop it from a spoon, you reach the other extreme: thin and crisp. Make them just a bit thicker, and you've got crunchy. These golden cookies pair nicely with ice cream or fresh fruit. The

dough is sturdy enough to be cut into fanciful shapes and decorated.

Yield: About 3-1/2 Dozen

Baking temperature: 350 degrees – Baking time: 10 to 12 minutes
1 cup (2 sticks, 8 ounces) butter

1 cup (7-1/4 ounces) sugar

3/4 teaspoon salt

1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon almond extract (optional)

1 large egg

1/4 cup heavy cream or sour cream

3 tablespoons (3/4 ounce) cornstarch

3 cups (12-3/4 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
In a medium-sized bowl, beat the butter, sugar, salt, baking powder and vanilla extract until light and fluffy. Add the egg and beat well. Add half the cream, all of the cornstarch, and half the flour; beat well. Add the remaining cream and the flour, mixing just until all of the ingredients are well incorporated. Divide the dough in half, flatten each half slightly, and wrap well. Refrigerate for 1 hour or longer, to facilitate rolling.

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) two baking sheets.

Lightly dust both sides of the chilled dough with flour. If you've just taken it out of the refrigerator, allow it to rest at room temperature for 5 to 10 minutes. When you pinch a piece of dough, it should feel pliable, not break off in a chunk. Trying to roll ice-cold dough is like trying to flatten an ice-cold stick of butter; it's more likely to crack and break into pieces than to roll flat and smooth.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured, clean work surface. Starting in the middle, and rolling out toward the edges, roll the dough into a circle 1/2- to 1/4-inch thick. Thinner cookies will be crisper, thicker cookies will be sturdier.

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Using a metal turner, pick up individual cookies, and place them on the prepared baking sheets. Edge the turner under the cookie, lift slightly, pull away the scraps around the edge, then give your hand a gentle jerk to slip the cookie onto the baking sheet.

Put the cookies in the oven, on racks set as close to the middle as possible. Halfway through the baking time, exchange the pans on the racks (top to bottom, bottom to top), and turn each pan around so the cookies that were at the back of the oven are now at the front. This will help counteract any hot spots you may have in your oven.

Bake the cookies for 10 to 12 minutes, until they're set but not browned. Remove them from the oven, and let them cool for 5 minutes on the baking sheet before transferring them to a rack to cool completely. Use a metal turner to pick up one cookie; if it seems fragile or breaks, let the cookies continue to cool till you can handle them easily. When the cookies are completely cool, store them in an airtight container or in a plastic bag, at room temperature.

Nutrition information per serving (1 cookie, 31g): 134 cal, 7g fat, 2g protein, 10g complex carbohydrates, 7g sugar, 26mg cholesterol, 81mg sodium, 21mg potassium, 69RE vitamin A, 1mg vitamin C, 1mg Iron, 18mg calcium, 22mg phosphorus.

About the Author: Chris Sadler is Owner and WebAdmin of The 1001Recipes2Send.com Recipes Database. Become a member to receive the weekly newsletter alert:

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Grandma's Sour Cream Cookies

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Apple Cheese Bread Recipe

Whole Wheat Raspberry Muffins

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