

Kay's Cut-Out Sugar Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour (gently leveled, not firmly packed)
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup unsalted butter softened at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Prepare your baking pans with parchment paper for best results.
- In a separate bowl, whisk together flour and baking powder.
- In mixer, beat together unsalted butter and sugar. Once this combination is mixed well, add in one egg. Mix again, then add in vanilla.
- With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture, one cup at a time. Mix until dough forms and begins to clump together.
- Gather up the dough with your hands and knead together into a nice, smooth ball. Wrap ball with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator to chill. I let mine chill about 30-45 minutes. You want it to be fairly firm, but not really hard. If it is too hard, just let it sit at room temperature on the counter a little while. Also, sometimes I create two balls and refrigerate them separately, so I can work with one at a time.
- Heat the oven to 350°.
- On a slightly floured surface, roll the dough out with a floured rolling pin to just about a ¼ inch thickness throughout.
- Using holiday (or any preferred) cookie cutters, cut out cookies and transfer them to a pan prepared with parchment paper. I usually dip my cookie cutters in flour before cutting out cookies to keep the dough from sticking. Spread cookies out on the pan about ¾ - 1 inch apart.
- **Very Important:** Put the pan of cut out cookies in the freezer for 10-15 minutes before baking. Then transfer each pan directly from the freezer to the oven for baking.
- Bake the cookies just until firm, not brown. They may be slightly tan around the edges, but really they just need to be risen evenly and beginning to turn a warm beige. Don't overcook. I usually bake mine about 9 minutes.
- Let baked cookies rest on pan for about 3-5 minutes on a wire rack. Then carefully lift cookies with a spatula onto a wired rack for cooling. Meanwhile, bake additional pans of cookies.
- You can ice the cookies once they are *completely* cooled. See *Best Sugar Cookie Icing Ever* recipe.

Best Sugar Cookie Icing Ever

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 6 tablespoons whole milk
- 6 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1 ½ tsp. almond extract
- Wilton Icing Colors

INSTRUCTIONS:

- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together powdered sugar and milk until smooth.
- Add in corn syrup and 1 ½ tsp. almond extract.
- Whisk together until the icing is shiny and smooth and drizzles off your whisk easily. There should be few to no lumps. You'll have to use some muscle here.
- The consistency you have at this point is what you'll use to *fill* within the borders of your cookies. Divide the icing into smaller bowls for as many colors as you plan to use in your decorations. I just use cereal bows for this.
- Color each bowl of icing with Wilton Icing Colors as needed and desired.
- Now you need to prepare your *outlining icing*. You'll be outlining your cookies so that the icing stays put and so that your decorations are crisp, clear and beautiful. Take a small amount – usually about ½ cup – of each icing color and put in additional bowls.
- Add more powdered sugar to each of these bowls, whisking it in until the icing is smooth. But this outlining icing needs to be pretty thick. It should be difficult to whisk by hand.
- Now, fill a quart size Ziploc freezer bag with each of the outlining icing colors. You want all the icing of one color in one bottom corner of a bag, so grab that corner in one hand, then roll the bag down over your hand. Now take a spoon and spoon the icing into the corner of the bag carefully. Squeeze the icing into the corner, twist the bag and snip off a very small tip of the corner of the bag. Be careful, you can always snip off more if needed, but you want a very small hole so that only a small stream of icing will come out and outline your designs.
- Line your cookies with the desired outline icings by carefully squeezing a thin consistency onto the tops of the edges of the cookies. **Let this outline icing dry completely.** It may need to dry for an hour or more.
- Now for the *filler icing*. Using the other bowls of icing, you may need to add a little milk and/or syrup to thin out again. You don't want it too thin, but you do want it to drizzle easily from a spoon or whisk.
- Pour this icing into a decorator squeeze bottle (available at craft stores, very inexpensive) or another Ziploc freezer bag if necessary.

- Carefully squeeze your thin consistency filling icing onto your lined and dried cookies. Using the tip of the squeeze bottle you can direct the thin icing as needed, filling the lined area completely, but not allowing it to flow over the borders. Careful!! Don't squeeze on too much. Take this slowly.
- Let the iced cookies dry completely. **Once they are dry**, you can go back and pipe on additional decorations, like garland on the Christmas tree or raised decorations on a snowflake.
- Let cookies dry completely in the open air before putting into a container. I put my dried cookies into tins or rubber containers with wax paper in between the layers. They store beautifully that way.
- Your cookies should have a beautiful shiny icing on them, and they should be tender and tasty when you bite into them. These are honestly THE BEST decorated sugar cookies I've ever eaten. I've been making them for years now, but they require practice. Mine always taste good, but they definitely look prettier every year. I use these recipes to make cookies for the fall, Christmas, Valentine's day and Easter.
- Most importantly, have fun! Invite a friend over or get your kids to help. I usually let this be an all-day affair.

