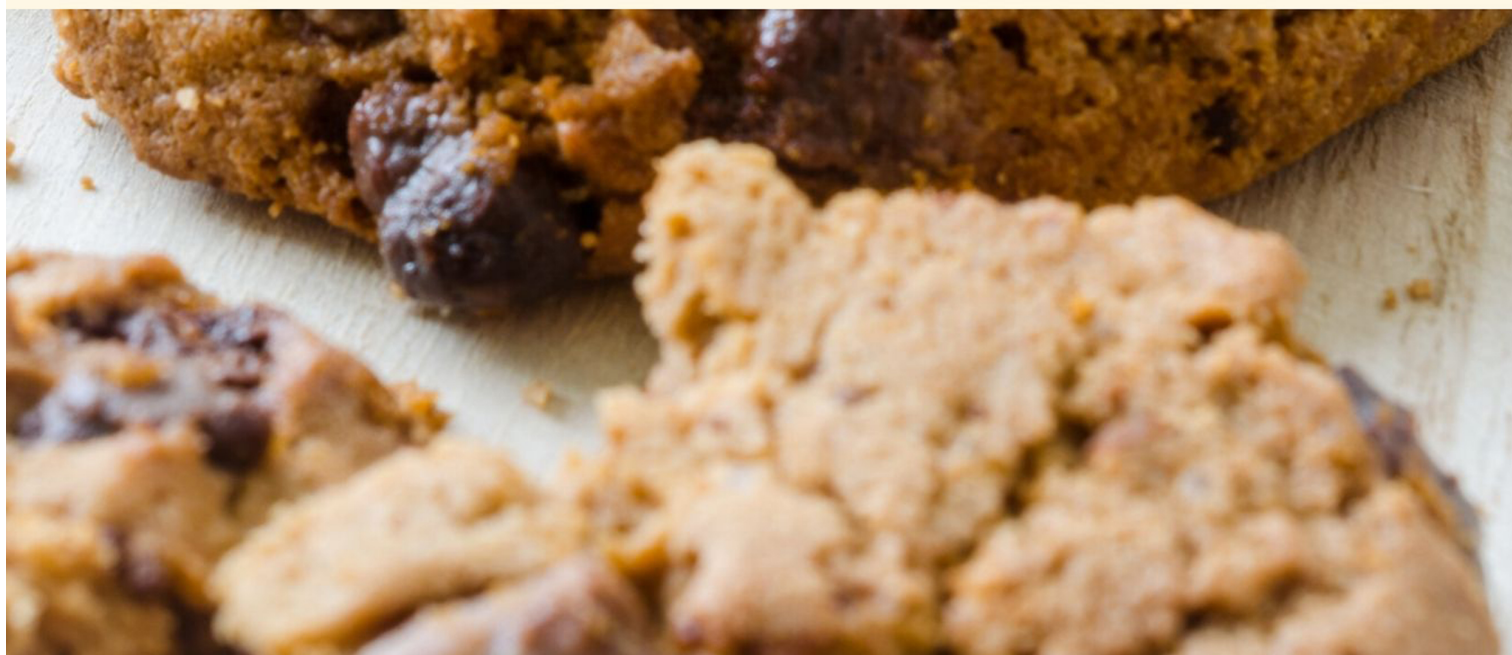




The Art of Cookie Making

CHEF'S HANDBOOK

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO BAKING PERFECT COOKIES



BY CHEFS OF TRUFFLE NATION

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Introduction to Cookies

Mostly the terms 'cookies and 'biscuit' are used interchangeably and generally substituted for each other, but there are point that differentiate between the two items. A cookie is commonly known so in the USA, while in the UK it is known as a biscuit.

For instance, the Dutch made small tidbits from leftover cake batters and called them koekje, which meant little cake.

The word 'cookie' is understood to have derived from 'koekje' in North America. Biscuit, on the other hand, is understood to have come from the Latin word 'panis biscotus', which meant bread cooked twice.

Leftover bread or cakes were baked until crisp and eaten as biscuits. Even in France, biscuit means to Cook twice.

A cookie is a product that is soft centered, usually made in the style of preparing cake batter and is traditionally sweet. A biscuit, on the other hand, is crisp and hard like a cheese cracker, which can be savory.

TEXTURE

Some cookies are soft whereas some are crispy in texture, some cookies spread while baking while some hold their actual shape. For understanding the texture firstly we should understand the role played by ingredients that we use:

1. CHEWY TEXTURE

A chewy cookie needs a high moisture content, which can be provided by eggs and other liquid ingredients. Eggs must be in higher proportions and fat should be low. Brown sugar is also used to provide chewy texture. There must be some gluten formation while mixing the dough.

2. CRISP TEXTURE

For a crisp cookie the dough must contain low moisture content. Size of the cookie should be thin which will help them to dry easily when they are baked. It must be high in sugar and fat content. It should not contain any hygroscopic (tendency to attract moisture from air) ingredient like nuts as they can absorb moisture and soften the crisp texture.

3. SOFT TEXTURE

The dough of soft cookies requires a high proportion of liquid and low of sugar and fat content. They are generally thick and large in size. They usually contain corn syrup, honey or molasses which are hygroscopic. These cookies are left slightly unbaked and should be stored in covered container or else they will dry out.

CREAMING

Creaming is a technique used in most of the baked goods. It is the method of mixing ingredients with high fat content in order to incorporate air. It involves beating butter/shortening & sugar together to give aeration to the product.

It can be done either mechanically (using stand mixers or hand beaters) or manually (using spatula). During creaming fat is beaten with sugar with the help of spatula or hand beater along the sides of the bowl, creating air pockets with every turn. The network becomes strong as we keep on beating it.

When we start creaming fat and sugar, initially it is dense and looks like wet sand. When we cream it for 1 minute it becomes a paste more like a clay. Another minute later it becomes soft.

SCIENCE BEHIND CREAMING METHOD

- Sugar crystals have sharp edges that 'dig' into butter when beaten together, creating tiny pockets of air that are trapped in fat. The smaller the crystals, the larger quantity of small air pockets there are, resulting in a very light and fluffy texture.
- This is the reason caster sugar is preferred as its crystal size is small and sharp enough to hold more air pockets than granulated sugar & icing sugar.

IMPORTANCE OF AIR POCKETS

- The air pockets created while creaming expand during baking giving a lighter and fluffy texture.
- Air pockets expand when:
 - subjected to heat.
 - filled with steam created from liquid ingredients in batter.
 - carbon dioxide released from reaction of chemical leaveners i.e. baking soda & baking powder.

WHEN TO STOP CREAMING?

- Initially when you start beating butter and sugar together, butter does not stick to sides of the bowl. But when you keep on mixing it, it starts to stick to the sides and becomes pale in colour. It also looks fluffier in texture. This is when you should stop creaming, or else it results in over creamed butter.
- Over creaming results in dense, flat and greasy baked products.

CURDLING OF CREAMED MIXTURE

Curdling is separation of fats and liquids. When curdling happens, it is a water in fat emulsion. It usually happens when -

- Fats and liquids are not at same temperature
- Eggs/ liquids are added too quickly to creamed mixture

While adding eggs to creamed mixture, it is important to add them slowly. This is because yolks (fat) in eggs coat air cells formed during creaming and help in their expansion enabling them to hold liquid ingredients (egg whites or milk, etc.) without curdling. When we add eggs too fast, yolks are unable to coat air cells properly resulting in lesser air cells capable of holding liquid ingredients. This results in curdling of mixture.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

When creaming butter/ shortening, it is important to use these at room temperature i.e. around 21°C. This is because cold butter is not soft enough to entrap air quickly and warm butter (24°C or more) is too soft and air pockets formed easily burst due to friction created by mixing.

Creaming using hand beaters or stand mixers should be done at medium speed as high speed can burst air pockets.

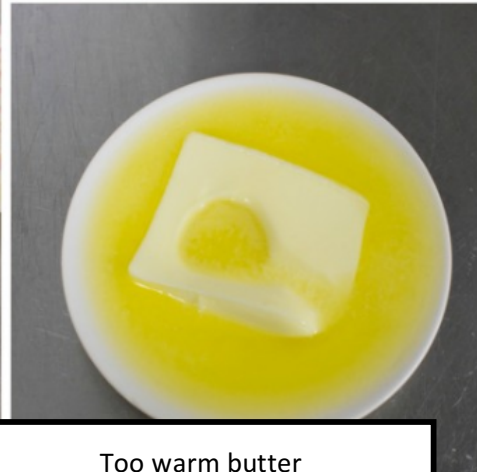
Different States of Butter

Too cold butter



Ideal room temperature butter

Too warm butter



METHODS OF COOKIE MAKING

There are various ways of making cookies and biscuits which usually depends upon the type of cookie that we are making. Some of the common methods of preparing cookies are discussed below:

1. STRAIGHT METHOD

This method is also known as one stage method as it is one of the simplest methods in which all the ingredients are put in bowl and mixed together until a uniform dough is obtained. Mostly cookies that have no or very less moisture follow this method.

2. CREAMING METHOD

It is the most common method of making cookies or biscuits. In this method, butter and sugar is creamed until fluffy and pale in color. Then the liquid ingredients such as eggs, milk or cream are added gradually and mixed properly. Lastly the dry ingredients such as flour are folded in.

3. SANDING METHOD

This method utilizes the technique of rubbing-in. The fat is rubbed with the flour with fingertips until the fat is fully incorporated. The liquid ingredients are then mixed to create a dough. This method is used for cookies with short texture.

4. SPONGE METHOD

This method of cookie making is similar to that of cakes. Eggs and sugar are whipped together until light and fluffy and dry ingredients are then folded in to prepare batters.

TYPES OF COOKIES

1. DROP COOKIES

Soft dough is used for making this type of cookie. The cookies dough is dropped with a spoon or a piping bag. For making large cookies, one can use an ice cream scoop also. Cookies should be spaced out appropriately to allow them to spread.

Examples: Oatmeal raisin cookies, Macaroon, Florentine.

2. PIPED COOKIES

In this method, the cookies are piped through a piping bag onto the baking tray. We have to make sure that the dough is of right consistency as a thick dough would be too difficult to pipe and a soft dough will spread too much. Different designs can be piped by using different shapes of the nozzle. Examples: Jeera cookies, Savoiaridi.

3. HAND ROLLED COOKIES

These types of cookies are usually made with a stiff dough which is easy to roll, such as sweet paste dough, short crust dough. If the dough is soft, then it can be put in the refrigerator to obtain stiffness. Hand rolled cookies are shaped into rounds between the palms and then put on the baking sheet. Examples: Melting moments, Nankhatai.

4. CUTTER CUT COOKIES

These cookies are made by rolling the dough to a desired thickness and then cutting it with cutters of required shape. These cookies are much more symmetric and look neat as they are cut with cutters. Examples: Shortbread, bull's eye.

5. BAR COOKIES

These types of cookies are shaped in bars or long ropes and then half baked. Then the cookies are sliced to the desired thickness while the dough is still warm and placed again on the baking sheets and baked until crisp. This type of baking is known as baking twice or 'Biscotti' in Italian. We can also freeze the half-baked bar and use a knife for cutting thin slices and then bake them.

Examples: Biscotti, Raisin spice bars.

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