

WORLD PEACE COOKIES

There is no way to describe the World Peace Cookie without resorting to what would be considered hyperbole by anyone who hasn't tasted one. They're flat-out phenomenal. And hundreds of thousands of people agree with me. Just do an Internet search for "World Peace Cookie," and you'll see — the last time I checked there were over ten million references!

WPCs, as we call them at our house, are basic chocolate sablés of the slice-and-bake variety. The dough is made with cocoa — splurge on good cocoa, it's worth it with these (I use Valrhona) — and has fleur de sel in it, enough to be truly present. And then there are pieces of chopped bittersweet chocolate. Again, splurge — this is a cookie that's all about the chocolate, so the chocolate should be great. (You could use store-bought mini chips, but I hope you won't.) I know it sounds simple and it might even sound like a cookie you've made before, but even top-of-the-pack veteran bakers shake their heads in wonder when they first encounter the WPC.

The recipe came to me from Pierre Hermé, France's most renowned pastry chef. When he taught me how to make these, sometime in the late 1990s, he called the cookie Korova, because he had created it for a restaurant of that name. I included it in my book [Paris Sweets](#). A few years later, a neighbor was telling me how much he loved the cookies and how he'd changed their name. "At home," he said, "we call them World Peace Cookies." I renamed them immediately and included them with that name in my book [Baking: From My Home to Yours](#).

When we baked them at Beurre & Sel, we rolled the dough 3/8 inch thick and cut cookies with our rings so that they'd be uniform and fit into our signature packaging. At home, I bake them as I did from the start: I shape the dough into logs and then slice and bake the cookies as I need them.

A word on mixing, log rolling and patience: This dough can be different from batch to batch. It always seems to turn out well no matter what, but the inconsistency can be frustrating. I've found that it's best to mix the dough for as long as it takes to get big, moist curds that hold together when pressed and then knead if necessary so it comes together. When you're rolling it into logs, keep checking that the logs are solid (see page 12). Again, the dough can be capricious and it may not always roll into a compact log on the first (or second or third) try. Be patient.

Makes about 36 cookies

1 ¼ cups (170 grams) all-purpose flour

1/3 cup (28 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 stick plus 3 tablespoons (11 tablespoons; 5 ½ ounces; 155 grams) unsalted butter, cut into chunks, at room temperature

2/3 cup (134 grams) packed light brown sugar

¼ cup (50 grams) sugar

½ teaspoon fleur de sel or ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

5 ounces (142 grams) best-quality bittersweet chocolate, chopped into irregular bits

Sift the flour, cocoa and baking soda together.

Working with a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or in a large bowl with a hand mixer, beat the butter and both sugars together on medium speed until soft, creamy and homogenous, about 3 minutes. Beat in the salt and vanilla. Turn off the mixer, add all the dry ingredients and pulse a few times to start the blending. When the risk of flying flour has passed, turn the mixer to low and beat until the dough forms big, moist curds. Toss in the chocolate pieces and mix to incorporate. This is an unpredictable dough: Sometimes it's crumbly and sometimes it comes together and cleans the sides of the bowl. Happily, no matter what, the cookies are always great.

Turn the dough out onto a work surface and gather it together, kneading it if necessary to bring it together. Divide it in half. Shape the dough into logs that are 1 ½ inches in diameter. Don't worry about the length — get the diameter right, and the length will follow. (If you get a hollow in the logs, just start over.) Wrap the logs in plastic wrap and freeze them for at least 2 hours, or refrigerate them for at least 3 hours.

GETTING READY TO BAKE: Center a rack in the oven and preheat it to 325 degrees F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

Working with one log at a time and using a long, sharp knife, slice the dough into ½-inch-thick rounds. (The rounds might crack as you're cutting them — don't be concerned, just squeeze the bits back onto each cookie.) Arrange the rounds on the baking sheets, leaving about 2 inches between them. (If you've cut both logs, keep one baking sheet in the fridge while you bake the other.)

Bake the cookies for 12 minutes — don't open the oven, just let them bake. When the timer rings, they won't look done, nor will they be firm, and that's just the way they should be. Transfer the baking sheet to a cooling rack and let the cookies rest until they are only just warm, at which point you can munch them, or let them reach room temperature (I think the texture's more interesting at room temperature).

Bake the remaining dough on cool sheets.

STORING

The dough can be refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for up to 2 months. If you've frozen the dough, you needn't defrost it before baking — just bake the cookies 1 minute longer. Packed in a container, the cookies will keep at room temperature for up to 3 days; they can be frozen, well wrapped, for up to 2 months.

PLAYING AROUND

Rolled-and-Cut World Peace Cookies. WPC dough has a mind of its own and it's hard to corral it into perfect rounds no matter how you handle it. If you're on a quest for a neater, rounder cookie, roll the dough to a thickness of 3/8 inch and refrigerate or freeze as you would for logs. If you have 2-inch baking rings, use a cookie cutter that's slightly smaller than 2 inches, cut out rounds and center the rounds in the baking rings. (Muffin tins won't work for these cookies.)

Alternatively, you can cut out the dough and bake it on lined baking sheets — it's how we made the beautiful cookie in the photograph. The baking time remains the same no matter how you cut the cookies.

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