

everything you need to know to make your
favorite cookies and bars



ZOË
BAKES
cookies

Zoë
François



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Print production designers: Mari Gill and Faith Hague

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148085660

To my aunt Kristin and her legendary love of shortbread cookies!

And

to my two poodles: Rafman, who is my constant companion in the kitchen, and his late brother, Miles, who *loved* butter. RIP my sweet pood! Here's a treat for all the dogs, to distract them from the butter as you bake cookies.



Dog Biscuits

½ cup / 130g peanut butter

½ cup / 124g mashed ripe banana

1 cup / 100g rolled oats

¼ cup / 60g peanut flour (or oat flour)

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp ground turmeric

Line a baking sheet with a silicone mat or parchment paper.

In a large bowl, mix together the peanut butter, banana, oats, peanut flour, cinnamon, and turmeric with a wooden spoon, until well combined.

Place the mixture on the prepared baking sheet, cover with plastic, and spread evenly using your hands to a thickness of ¼ inch / 6mm.

Freeze until firm, about 15 minutes. Preheat the oven to 350°F / 175°C.

Use a 3½-inch / 9cm bone-shaped cookie cutter to shape the dough. If it gets sticky, return it to the freezer until firm, about 5 minutes. Gather any scraps and use for training treats (see Baker's Note).

Spread the cut cookies on the same baking sheet and bake for about 15 minutes, or until golden brown.

BAKER'S NOTES

Roll the extra dough into tiny balls, about ¼ inch / 6mm thick, and bake for 8 minutes. These make excellent training treats for your puppies.

Check with your veterinarian to make sure this is a healthy snack for your pup.





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Introduction

Cookies started my wonderfully wild voyage into baking. I got hooked as a child, and it's easy to see why: They're pretty simple to make, and they require less equipment, specialty ingredients, and know-how than cakes and other intricate pastries. But I didn't realize what moved me to bake in the first place until I started writing this book. As the cookies formed into chapters, I realized this wasn't just a collection of delicious cookies, but also an ode to my ancestors who baked before me. This group of incredibly strong and determined women all baked for different reasons—some to create moments of joy in a hectic life, others to express love at the holidays, and a few for survival. All the reasons my grandmothers and great-great-grandmothers baked have become a part of me and my cookie DNA.

One of my earliest and fondest food memories involves me buying cookies with my mom, Bubbe (my mom's mom), and my two great-aunts, Sylvia and Rose Berkowitz, in Brooklyn. It was the 1970s and I was about five years old. I still remember walking into a tiny Jewish bakery where the rows of steamy glass cases were overflowing with poppy seed-speckled mohn kichel, triangle-shaped hamantaschen filled with apricot and prune ([this page](#)), and still warm, buttery rugelach ([this page](#)). We left loaded with bags of cookies, the sweet smell clinging to our clothes. I devoured as many as I could on our walk back to my great-aunts' apartment along the Brighton Beach boardwalk.

I recently returned to that neighborhood, hoping to step through a looking glass mirror of those sugar-dusted memories and found far fewer Jewish bakeries. But the ones that remained greeted me with those familiar aromas—the nutty-stuffs, jammy centers, and sugar crackles—and delivered that rush of sweet nostalgia. The baked goods carried a life full of stories with their tantalizing smells—in the recollections of past generations and the promise of sweet days ahead.

LOVE AND HONEY

This lovely memory stands out so strongly for me because of its contrast to my everyday life growing up in a commune with my parents, who fed me homemade tempeh, alfalfa sprouts on everything, and brewer's yeast-topped popcorn as a treat. They were earnest hippies, and "sugar" was treated like a four-letter word. While there was plenty of cooking and baking in our Vermont communal kitchen back then, it looked very different. It came with a soundtrack of Bob Dylan and loaves of sturdy, heartfelt twelve-grain bread, pans of crunchy granola, and a lot of food assembled for fuel rather than pleasure. If there were cookies on the commune, they'd be

full of brown rice, wheat germ, and “mighty mush” (the name of that cereal says it all) baked into lumps that tasted way too healthful for you and resembled something closer to tree bark than sweetness and joy. Honestly, I kinda love those flavors now, but they were less exciting to the frazzly-haired wild-child (my nickname in the commune was Frazzy Bringle) that I was back then. I’ve since learned to bake with these healthier ingredients and create delicious cookies that are full of love and honey.



GRANNY NEAL'S CHRISTMAS COOKIE TIN

Sugary, buttery cookies—and definitely anything with candy, caramel, chocolate, or sprinkles—were reserved for rare special occasions. And these moments of sugar in my early childhood were always connected with my grandmothers. Every holiday season, we visited my dad’s mom, Granny Neal, in New Jersey. I don’t ever remember her baking any other time of the year, but

she sure pulled out all the stops for Christmas. When we walked into her house, dozens of holiday tins perched on every surface and were filled with all of the classic Betty Crocker holiday sweets—robustly buttery shortbread, powdery Mexican wedding cookies, thumbprints with jam, zigzag spritz cookies, and layered coconut bars—plus a few Norwegian family recipes tossed in. I still have and treasure Granny’s Betty Crocker cookbook from the 1950s. I know which recipes she loved most, because they are spattered with chocolate, butter, and oleo (another name for margarine). The book is falling apart, some pages are lacquered together from sticky fingerprints, and her notes are jotted in the margins, but I love it just the same. I also have her recipe box filled with a family recipe for krumkaker ([this page](#)) from Norway and recipe clippings from the many, many newspapers and magazines she subscribed to, plus the beautifully scripted gift recipes she collected from her sister and close friends.

My Granny Neal also owned a bookstore, and I remember trays of cookies—likely pulled out of the freezer after her holiday baking extravaganza—next to the chairs and sofas set up around the store. This was the 1970s and 1980s—an era before chain bookstores—but even then, she knew that a cookie and coffee helped people linger and browse the shelves and leave with a new book and a smile. I remember sitting in an overstuffed chair with her cat in my lap, eating shortbread cookies and reading YA novels, all while watching customers do the same: They’d drop into a couch with a stack of books and then reach for the cookie tray. Granny Neal had it figured out.