

Almond Chocolate Chunk Cookies

by Caitlin Schumacher



This recipe is adapted from the version I learned from my friend Michelle Polzine of 20th Century Café in San Francisco. The shaping process can seem tedious, but it's necessary to create the layers of melted chocolate and dough. My personal touch is using half almond paste and half butter—I enjoy the flavor and puff that the almond paste lends these cookies.

Makes 20 cookies

Ingredients:

17 ounces all-purpose flour
1 ¼ teaspoons baking soda
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt*
5 ounces butter, at room temperature
5 ounces almond paste, at room temperature*
16 ounces muscovado sugar*
1 teaspoon vanilla paste*
2 eggs, at room temperature
12 ounces 70% chocolate pistoles*
Coarse sea salt, for sprinkling

Directions:

Sift the flour, baking soda, and baking powder into a large bowl. Add the salt and set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, paddle the butter and almond paste until well combined. Add the muscovado sugar and vanilla paste. Paddle on medium speed for at least 5 minutes, scraping down around the sides and bottom of the bowl at least once. The mixture should be light and fluffy.

Scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the mixer running on medium-low speed, add the eggs, one at a time.

Stop the mixer and scrape down. Add the flour mixture to the mixing bowl. Paddle on low speed until almost incorporated. Stop mixing when there are still streaks of flour around the edges of the bowl.

Add the chocolate to the mixing bowl. Paddle on low speed for about 5 seconds—you will hear the (super satisfying) crunch, crunch, crunch of the chocolate pistoles breaking apart. Do not overmix! The pistoles should mostly be broken in half, and you want some to stay whole.

On a parchment-lined quarter sheet pan, scrape and pat the dough into an even layer. It should fully fill the pan to the corners and all the way up to the top edges. Wrap in plastic, and chill for several hours or until very firm.

Preheat oven to 350 °F.

Using a metal bench scraper, cut the cold dough (still in the pan) into 20 even pieces. If you like, you can then weigh each piece and adjust to reach a 3-ounce portion. Use the bench scraper to pop the dough blocks out of the pan. Using both hands, and without flattening the dough block (it should stay the same height as it was in the pan), press around the sides of the block to create a hockey puck shape. (It's OK to have a whole pistole on the top of your cookie.) Continue with the remaining dough.

Place pucks on a parchment-lined sheet pan, leaving plenty of space for spreading (I bake 8 cookies at a time on a half-sheet pan). Sprinkle the tops generously with sea salt.

Bake for about 15 minutes, or until the tops of the cookies look matte and are just starting to pick up golden brown color around the edges. (If using a convection oven, start checking at 11 minutes.)

Let cool completely on the pan. (They will be very fragile for at least an hour—it's mostly melted chocolate, after all!)

***Ingredient notes:** I use King Arthur all-purpose flour for most of my baking — it has a higher protein content than most other all-purpose flours. I only use Diamond Crystal salt, as other brands vary in salinity and coarseness. My preferred brand of almond paste is Mandelin; I also like American Almond. Muscovado sugar is worth seeking out for its deep, complex flavor, but dark brown sugar will do. If you cannot find vanilla paste, you may scrape the seeds from a vanilla bean or use vanilla extract. My favorite baking chocolate is Valrhona Guanaja 70%. Whatever brand you use, the chocolate should be in a pistole (disk) shape to achieve the layers and giant chocolate chunks in this cookie.

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