

Column 672 – Sarah’s Signature Cut-Out Sugar Cookies

It is the 13th anniversary of this column, and I can’t think of a better recipe to celebrate the occasion than my Signature Cut-Out Sugar Cookies. With their crisp edges and wonderfully soft centers, these sugar cookies are a hallmark in my [SarahBakes micro-bakery repertoire](#). They are the specialty most requested by my family, friends and customers, and I am delighted to share my recipe with you, just in time for the holiday baking season.



Baking has always been a passion of mine, but I had little experience with sugar cookies before I launched [SarahBakes](#) in the fall of 2020. I never imagined how much I would enjoy this creative outlet. The possibilities of shapes and designs with these cookies are endless, and they spread very little in the oven, which means even intricate shapes come out crisp and neat.

I love how simple this cookie recipe is. It requires just eight ingredients, all of which are pantry staples: salted butter, sugar, baking powder, salt, vanilla extract, almond extract, eggs, and flour. The almond extract is optional and can be omitted if necessary; the cookies will still be delicious without it.

I use an unconventional method in this recipe to ensure that the cookies maintain their shape and light color. Instead of mixing the dry and wet ingredients separately, I begin by beating the butter for a minute until it softens. Then, I add the sugar, baking powder, salt, and extracts all at once, creaming them together for several minutes until they are well combined. Next, I mix in the egg, and finally, I add the flour. I've tried the traditional method, but I achieve the most consistent results with this approach.

I roll the dough out between two sheets of parchment paper until it is ¼-inch in thickness. For evenness, I use an adjustable rolling pin with measuring rings (which I love), but any rolling pin will work. I chill the dough before cutting out the cookies and bake them for about 10 to 12 minutes until the tops are dry and the edges are set, but still pale.

The cookies are excellent on their own, or you can decorate them with buttercream frosting, glaze, royal icing, sanding sugar, sprinkles, or candies. Additionally, the dough can be dyed with gel or powder food coloring to give the cookies a seasonal touch. You can freeze the dough for several months, as well as the cut-out cookies, baked or unbaked.

These Classic Sugar Cookies are one of my all-time favorite recipes and my special gift to you this holiday season. I would love to bake a batch for you, so be sure to check out my Thanksgiving and Christmas menus on my website at [SarahBakesND.com](#). Stay tuned, because next week you will have the chance to win a dozen of these delicious cuties, along with a variety of my favorite local goodies. Happy baking and thank you for 13 fantastic years together!

Sarah’s Signature Cut-Out Sugar Cookies

Makes: About 30 (2½-inch to 3-inch) cookies

Ingredients:

1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter, room temperature (but not soft)
1 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon almond extract (optional)
1 egg, room temperature
3 cups all-purpose flour

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

In a large bowl, use a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a handheld mixer) to beat the butter on medium speed until soft, about 1 minute.

Add the sugar, baking powder, salt, vanilla extract, and almond extract. Beat on medium speed for 90 seconds, then use a rubber spatula to scrape down the bowl and beater. Beat again on medium speed for 2 minutes, until the mixture is well creamed.

Scrape down the bowl and beater again. Add the egg and beat on medium speed for 1 minute. Add the flour, one cup at a time, mixing on the lowest speed after each addition just until the flour is incorporated.

Turn the dough out and form it into a ball. Divide the ball into two halves and shape each half into a disk. Wrap one disk in plastic wrap and place the other half between two sheets of parchment paper or plastic wrap.

Use a rolling pin to roll out the dough until it is about ¼ inch thick. Keep the rolled-out dough between the parchment sheets and transfer it to a baking sheet. Repeat with the second disk and place it on top of the first. Refrigerate the dough sheets for 20 minutes before cutting out the cookies.

Note: The dough (in disk form or rolled-out sheets) can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for up to 3 months (thaw overnight in the refrigerator). The cut-out cookies can also be frozen, baked or unbaked, for several months.

To cut out the cookies: Remove one sheet of dough from the refrigerator and discard (or save) the top piece of parchment paper. Gently lift and separate the dough from the bottom piece of parchment, then place it back on the paper—this makes it easier to remove the cookies once cut.

Use cookie cutters to cut the dough into desired shapes, placing them on the prepared baking sheets about 2 inches apart. Gather and re-roll the scraps until all the dough is used.

Bake in the center of the oven for 10 to 12 minutes, until the tops appear dry (the cookies will remain pale in color). Remove from the oven and let the cookies cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes, then transfer them to a wire rack to cool completely. Serve plain or decorate with frosting, glaze, or royal icing.

To Store: Place the cookies in an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to 1 week, or in the freezer for several months. Frozen cookies thaw quickly at room temperature.

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