

EDIBLE GIFTS

CRANBERRY PISTACHIO FLORENTINES

Feel free to play around with the nuts. Chopped hazelnuts work well in the place of pistachios and if you can't get hold of candied peel some orange zest is delicious too.

50g salted butter
50 dark brown soft sugar
50 honey
30g plain flour
75g flaked almonds
30g chopped pistachios
30g candied orange peel or chopped stem ginger
30g dried cranberries or sultanas
200g good quality dark chocolate

Preheat your oven to 180°C and line two baking trays with a silicone mat or baking paper.

Add the butter, sugar and honey to a saucepan and melt gently over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved.

Add the flour, almonds, pistachios, candied peel and cranberries to the pan and mix well to form a wet dough.

Drop teaspoons of the dough onto the lined baking sheet leaving at least 2 inches between them. (You may need a third tray or to work in batches)

Bake for 12-15 mins until golden. Allow to cool slightly / harden a little on the tray then transfer to a wire rack to cool using a flat spatula.

Melt the dark chocolate in a small bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, then spoon over each Florentine on the flat side spreading to coat. Allow the chocolate to harden. Wrap and gift away!

CHOCOLATE HAZELNUT BISCOTTI

These last around three weeks so you can make them well ahead of time. They are delicious with a cup of coffee.

Makes around 30

150 g blanched hazelnuts
150 g dark chocolate (70%), roughly chopped
170g granulated sugar
230g plain flour
30g cocoa powder
1 tsp baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tbsp ground coffee
3 large eggs
1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 170, roast hazelnuts for 10 mins until they begin to smell fragrant and are slightly browned. Allow to cool. Very roughly chop making sure you retain some nice big pieces.

Line two baking sheets with baking parchment. Flour then lightly.

In a food processor, pulse the coarsely chopped chocolate together with the sugar and process until the chocolate is very fine.

In a large bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, ground coffee and salt.

In a large bowl, using an electric whisk beat the eggs and vanilla extract until well combined (about one minute). Add the chocolate/sugar mixture and the flour mixture and beat until a stiff dough forms.

Fold through the hazelnuts.

Have a small bowl of flour nearby as the mix will be sticky. With floured hands divide the dough into three. On a lightly floured surface roll each half of dough into a log shape about 20 cm long and 5 cm wide.

Transfer the logs to the prepared baking sheets spacing about 8cm apart (they will spread during baking). Bake until almost firm to the touch, about 30-35 minutes .

Remove from the oven, place on wire rack, and let cool for 10 minutes.

Transfer to a cutting board and use a serrated knife cut the dough into slices about 2 cm thick. Arrange the slices cut-side down on the baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes. Turn the slices over and bake for a further 10 mins. Remove from oven and let cool on wire rack.

These will keep for a good three weeks in an air tight container.

DARK CHOCOLATE HOBNOBS

A homemade take on one of the nation's favourite biscuit.

100g flour

75g oats

1tsp bicarbonate of soda

1tsp salt

115g butter

50g golden caster sugar

50g light brown muscovado sugar (dark brown works well also for a deeper more caramelly biscuit)

Scant tbsp honey

200g 70% chocolate

Preheat the oven to 170 degrees and line two baking trays with baking parchment.

Whisk together the flour, oats, bicarbonate of soda and salt.

In a separate bowl using an electric whisk beat the butter and sugar until fluffy scraping down the sides with a spatula as needed. Then beat in the honey.

Fold in the dry mix using a spatula.

Divide into 16 small balls (just smaller than a golf ball). Space each one at least 2 inches apart. Bake for 25 mins.

Allow to cool on trays for 5 mins then transfer cookies onto a wire rack.

Once the hobnobs have cooled, melt the chocolate in a heat proof bowl over a pan of simmering water. Spoon about 2 tsps of the chocolate onto each hobnob and spread. Allow the chocolate to set and enjoy.