

PUMPKIN WHITE CHOCOLATE CHIP PECAN COOKIES

The recipe below is for a SINGLE recipe. I usually make a triple recipe because these are so popular around the holidays.

When buying the pumpkin, Be VERY CAREFUL NOT to get Pumpkin PIE MIX - it is too watery and the cookies will not set up.

Do not bake on those "air" bake or insulated cookie sheets - the heat will not transfer adequately and the excessive moisture in the cookies from the pumpkin will prevent the cookies from baking completely. If you are worried about the bottoms of your cookies burning, I suggest lining your cookie sheets with parchment paper or purchase a Silpat silicone baking sheet available at most department stores and Bed, Bath & Beyond - they work very well and clean-up is a snap.

INGREDIENTS:

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice, more if desired
1/2 tsp baking soda
2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted REAL butter, NOT margarine, softened, NOT melted
1 1/2 cups (packed) dark brown sugar
1 cup SOLID-PACK unsweetened pumpkin (for a double recipe, one 15 oz. can is sufficient)
2 large eggs
1 Tbsp vanilla
12 ounces white chocolate chips or chunks (12 oz. bag)
1 cup pecans, coarsely chopped
Optional: Turbinado sugar or Demerara sugar, aka "sugar in the raw" for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

1. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, pumpkin pie spice, and baking soda.
2. In a medium bowl, with an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugar.
3. Beat in pumpkin.
4. Beat in eggs and vanilla.
5. Beat in flour mixture until just combined.
6. Stir in white chocolate chips and pecans.
7. Drop the dough by rounded Tablespoonfuls 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Optional: Sprinkle tops of cookie dough generously with turbinado sugar. Okay if some spills off onto the cookie sheet, but if you're not using parchment paper or a Silpat, clean-up may be a little more difficult.

8. Bake for 20-22 minutes, or until just set - you may see just a little browning around the extreme edges. I usually have to go the full 22 minutes.

9. Allow to cool on the cookie sheet for 15-20 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool. The cookies will continue to bake on the hot cookie sheet and it is important to allow them to do so.

Yields about 3 dozen.

TIPS:

Cookies are very cake-like and taste better the next day after flavors have had time to develop.

I like a lot of white chocolate, so I usually add 1/2 cup extra for a single recipe or 1 extra cup for a double recipe. White chocolate chips can be expensive, so if you plan on baking a lot of these, check Sam's to see if they have the large bags of Nestle's White Chocolate Chips - sometimes they have them and sometimes they don't - it depends on the store and the time of year. I really prefer Ghirardelli brand chips as they taste the best. You can usually get them at Walmart for about \$2 per bag which is competitive with Nestle's. Walmart also carries their own brand and I strongly advise AGAINST using these or any other generic brand for that matter - I tried them and they had a very strange, artificial taste. I haven't tried the Hershey's brand, but, given the name, I would suspect that they would be okay. Also, do not be tempted to buy the blocks of cheap white chocolate (or almond bark) with the intentions of chopping them up for use in the cookies - these are usually a different consistency than the chips and don't work well in cookies and are usually designed to be melted for dipping items into it. Sometimes you can find white chocolate chunks in bags, usually from Nestle's, and these are okay to use.

I get my pumpkin pie spice from Penzey's (<http://www.penzeys.com>). Their products are the best and the freshest and they are only slightly more expensive than the grocery store variety, which you will never want again after trying their spices.

I always sprinkle the cookies generously with the Turbinado or Demerara sugar (aka sugar in the raw)-it really makes a difference. Wal-Mart has it by the granulated sugar.

Also, I always urge everyone to have a separate oven thermometer to ensure oven temperature accuracy. You can get these very inexpensively at Bed, Bath & Beyond and Wal-Mart.

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