

FROSTED CASHEW COOKIES

The recipe below is for a double batch. I've found that these cookies go so quickly that there is no point in only making a single recipe. Yields about 3-4 dozen cookies. Be sure you set aside plenty of time to make them - it takes quite a while to frost each cookie individually, plus, the frosting takes time to set up. I suggest making them the day before you are going to need them.

INGREDIENTS:

For the Cookies:

1 cup (2 sticks) REAL butter (NOT margarine), softened
2 cups packed brown sugar, light or dark or combination
2 large eggs
2/3 cup sour cream
1 tsp vanilla
4 cups all purpose flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1 1/2 tsp baking soda
1 1/2 tsp salt
3 1/2 cups salted (lightly or regular) cashew halves (halves & pieces okay) (this is equal to two 9 oz. cans)

For the Browned Butter Frosting:

1 cup (2 sticks) REAL butter (NOT margarine)
6 Tbsp heavy whipping cream (and maybe a little additional)
1/2 tsp vanilla
4 cups confectioners' (powdered) sugar (no need to sift) may use just a LITTLE bit more, but not much.
1 16-oz box is a little bit less than 4 cups.
Optional: Whole honey roasted cashews for topping

COOKIE DIRECTIONS:

1. In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and brown sugar.
2. Beat in eggs, sour cream, and vanilla and mix well.
3. Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl and mix them together well with a whisk or fork, then add to creamed mixture and mix well.
4. Fold in the cashews. Note: The dough will be very stiff, so you may need a wooden or bamboo spoon or spatula at this point. Or use dough hooks on your mixer, if you have them.
5. Drop by rounded Tablespoonfuls onto a greased baking sheet. If using a Silpat or other silicone sheet, no need to grease or spray with Pam. Dough will be sticky, so you will probably have to use the 2-spoon method.
6. Bake at 375 degrees for approximately 10-12 minutes or until the tips and edges are starting to brown. Allow cookies to remain on cookie sheet to cool for about 5-10 minutes before removing to a wire rack to finish cooling.

FROSTING DIRECTIONS:

Browning butter is a somewhat tedious process, but does add a different and richer taste to the frosting. You do not have to brown the butter to make the frosting - just used melted butter that has cooled sufficiently.

1. In a small saucepan on about 35-40% heat (less than medium), melt and stir butter **CONSTANTLY** with a spatula. Slowly the butter will start to change color, about 15-20 minutes, to a darker golden color, you will be able to smell it and some particles/butterfat/impurities will start become visible - this is okay.

It is okay if the butter starts to bubble (boil) and foam up, but keep a very close eye on it, continue to stir, and turn the heat down or occasionally lift the pan off the burner to prevent burning. To be on the safe side, I usually stop here because butter burns very quickly once it gets too hot and it will continue to cook even after you remove it from the burner. If you think your butter is starting to burn, completely remove the pan from the heat immediately, **CAREFULLY** pour the hot butter into a large mixing bowl and allow it to cool.

2. Once cooled, stir in the cream and vanilla.
3. Beat in powdered sugar with mixer until a little smooth and thick. Note that the frosting may not be as "smooth" as most cake frostings and may look more like crumbly meal - that is okay. Also, you may also notice that the frosting appears "wet" after completely mixing in the powdered sugar - this is okay, too. Just add a little more powdered sugar by a heaping tablespoon at a time, continue to mix and also add a little more cream by about a tablespoon at a time. Eventually the frosting will come together and smooth out. You want the frosting to be very thick. Don't worry about making too much frosting - this makes just the perfect amount.
4. With a broad knife, frost cookies liberally and top each with a honey roasted cashew, if desired. Note that due to the rough texture of the tops of the cookies, you won't be able to make them look too fancy, but they will taste **VERY** good.

TIPS:

These cookies are very rich, but they taste much better the next day after all the flavors have developed.

Carefully follow the recipe for the frosting ingredient quantities. If the frosting is too thin, it won't set up. That's okay, just put the cookies in the fridge for a while and it will set up, but once you take them out, the frosting will start to loosen up again.

A note on the powdered sugar - be sure to only use the C&H brand. Some "off brand" names have higher percentages of corn starch in them such that, when mixed with water or other liquid, it turns almost translucent and doesn't stay a nice thick, bright white like the C&H brand does. Of course, if you're making frosting, the high concentration of corn starch can adversely affect the frosting recipe both from chemical and aesthetic standpoints and we obviously don't want that here.

After frosting, I usually put the cookies in the fridge to make the frosting set up faster. You'll have to be patient here and allow the frosting to set up, so if you know you're going to be in a hurry, I suggest you make these the night before and allow them to stay on the cooling rack overnight or select a different variety of cookie.

The frosting should set up sufficiently so that you can stack the cookies on top of one another, however, I still suggest you separate the layers with waxed paper.

Cashews can be expensive, so I usually buy mine at Walgreen's (their brand) which, believe it or not, are much cheaper than the grocery store. If you are a Sam's Club member, the best deal is their 46 oz. can of Planter's brand Cashew Halves & Pieces. Of course, you'd only buy this amount of cashews if you were planning on making several batches of cookies. ;-)

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