

Top Pick Of The Week

August 5, 2008



Biscottea: Stylish Shortbread

CAPSULE REPORT: At a recent coffee and tea fair, what elicited the most excitement for us was not any of the fine coffees or teas, but Biscottea, a line of all-natural shortbread cookies baked with organic teas—just a touch, to provide interest. The buttery Scottish shortbread without the tea inclusions would have been good enough to accompany any cup of tea. But Laurance Milner has created a delightful line that, apart from adding a good general-purpose cookie to the specialty shelves, allows tea lovers to pair different-flavored shortbreads with different teas. Have some Earl Grey Biscottea shortbread with your Earl Grey tea, mint Biscottea shortbread with mint tea, and so forth.

Some might find this gimmicky, but gimmicky is a blessing when it tastes good: The large (two-inch) squares of shortbread certainly satisfy. These tea biscuits (biscot-tea, in case you missed the pun or want to confuse them with Italian biscotti) are available in individual packages of two as well as full boxes of ten.

Blueberry Biscottea shortbread cookies made with white tea and blueberry juice. We're not going to jump on the

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bandwagon and call them “antioxidant cookies”—just enjoy them for the novelty and fine flavor.

WHAT IT IS: Traditional Scottish shortbread in five flavors that include finely-ground organic tea leaves.

WHY IT’S DIFFERENT: The buttery shortbread has “something different”—in this case, some tea leaves that add a catchy bit of flavor to the general appeal of the shortbread.

WHY WE LOVE IT: These “tea biscuits” earn their name. The subtle tea flavorings are charming, and they do pair with their corresponding teas hot or iced. Serve mint shortbread with mint tea, honeybush shortbread with honeybush tea, etc. They’re good eating and a fun gift.

WHERE TO BUY IT: PleasuresOfTea.com.

Flavors include African Honeybush Tea (a red tea) Shortbread, Blueberry Shortbread with Organic White Tea, Chai Shortbread with Organic Chai Spices, Earl Grey Shortbread with Organic Darjeeling Tea (plus Earl Grey’s signature bergamot orange flavor) and Mint Tea with Organic Peppermint & Spearmint Leaves. The Blueberry, Chai and Earl Grey flavors are also available in gluten-free varieties. The line is certified kosher (dairy) by Orthodox Union.

The company says that Biscottea are “created with real tea for real tea lovers.” But anyone will enjoy them, even if there’s no cup of tea in sight. Read more about this elegant and fun selection of cookies in the [full review](#) below. Put them on your stocking stuffer list. And buy some now, for your favorite tea lovers.

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Enjoy Tea With Your Biscottea



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Biscottea: Stylish Shortbread

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Introduction

Shortbread is a type of cookie with a high butter content: The traditional recipe is one part sugar, two parts butter and three parts flour. It has been called the ancestor of all butter cookies. The original shortcakes were made with oatmeal; the more elegant white flour evolved later. The addition of rice flour gives shortbread a grainy, crumbly texture while cornstarch (corn flour) gives it a more dense texture.

Shortbread originated in Scotland (where cookies are called biscuits) in Medieval times; recipes first appear in cookbooks of the 16th century. According to EnglishTeaStore.com, Scottish shortbread evolved from medieval biscuit bread, a twice-baked, enriched bread roll dusted with sugar and spices and hardened into a rusk. Eventually butter was substituted for yeast, and shortbread was born. Shortbread may have been made as early as the 12th century, but its invention is often attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) in the 16th Century. In the beginning, shortbread was a special-occasion treat for Christmas, New Year's Eve and weddings. But you can't keep a good cookie away from the people, and it soon became a year-round indulgence.



Those who avoid caffeine can enjoy Honeybush Biscottea, made with a red tea from Africa.

The Name "Shortbread"

There are two different explanations for the name of the cookie. Some sources cite the crumbly or "short" texture of the product. English Tea Store and other sources attribute the name to its high percentage of shortening, or butter (the word "shortening" refers to any fat). But why "bread?" Some sources say that early Scottish bakers fought to prevent shortbread from being classified as a biscuit (cookie) to avoid paying a government tax on biscuits. The cookies are fairly white in color: They are baked at a low temperature to prevent browning. Traditionally, shortbread has been baked in a large round that is scored into triangles, a relic of ancient New Year's cakes that were symbols of the sun from the earlier days of sun worship (the edges are traditionally "notched" by pinching with the finger and thumb, thought to symbolize the sun's rays).

The Buttery Nature

Butteriness is an important quality in shortbread; so much so that in 1921 the British government legislated that a product called shortbread must get at least 51% of its fat from real butter. Outside of the U.K., however, there is no such requirement. Check the label to ensure yourself of an authentic shortbread experience and hold out for 100% butter.

Today shortbread is baked in every traditional cookie shape, including rounds, squares and long fingers. While it is a famous accompaniment to tea, shortbread it is also served with wine and

Champagne (and of course, with coffee, milk and hot chocolate).

Scotland has its regional shortbread variations. In Shetland and Orkney, for example, caraway seeds are added to the recipe, and the cookie is called “Bride’s Bonn.” At Christmas, a variation is made with citrus peel and almonds. But if anyone ever thought to add tea leaves, the concept never took off. With the addition of organic teas, Biscottea is at the ready to open the eyes of shortbread lovers to this overdue opportunity.

Biscottea Flavors



Chai Biscottea are energized with chai spices. They’re like eating a cup of chai tea.

African Honeybush Biscottea Shortbread

Honeybush tea is a red tea similar in appearance and flavor to rooibos tea, but it’s slightly sweeter. The flowers of the honeybush plant emit a distinct honey scent, and the tea is only harvested during flowering season to get the sweetest flavor. There really is a feeling of strawberry sweetness in this cookie—a nice, buoyant, natural taste. While it is delicious with an herbal tea like honeybush, the cookie has a universally appealing flavor. You can drink it with any type of tea (or coffee). This cookie is the darkest; look closely and those tiny specks of tea are brown.

Blueberry Biscottea Shortbread

This flavor is made with organic white tea. White tea is the most subtle of tea flavors: You’d never taste it in a cookie. Here, blueberry juice and organic blueberry flavor are used to add sweet fruit flavor to the shortbread. Like African Honeybush Biscottea, it can be enjoyed with any type of tea.

Chai Biscottea Shortbread

This flavor, made with organic chai spices, packs a punch, and anyone who enjoys chai tea or spice cookies will love it. The flavors perfectly mirror a good cup of chai: It’s a match made in heaven. It also pairs with any unflavored black tea, milk or hot chocolate.

Earl Grey Biscottea Shortbread

Organic Darjeeling tea, infused with Earl Grey’s signature bergamot orange flavor, is another charmer. Notes of lemon seem to accent the bergamot flavor. Earl Grey lovers should be delighted. Aside from matching with Earl Grey tea, his cookie can be served with any unflavored tea (you wouldn’t want the flavors to conflict with chai or mint tea, for example), and with any other beverage, as well.

Mint Tea Biscottea Shortbread

Fresh mint flavor leaps from these cookies, flavored with mint tea made with organic peppermint and spearmint leaves.

Gluten-Free Cookies

We have eaten many a gluten-free cookies, feeling sorry for those with gluten allergies. They will be very happy to discover that Biscottea's gluten-free cookies are almost as tasty as the regular wheat flour. They are a bit less sweet (we wish the sweetness were on a par with the regular cookies), but the excellent tea flavors are virtually identical. Made with gluten-free all purpose flour and sorghum flour, they are a real find for anyone in need of a gluten-free treat. The gluten-free flavors include Blueberry, Chai and Earl Grey.

For more fine gluten-free baked goods, take a look at [Mariposa Baking Company](#), another NIBBLE Top Pick Of The Week, with excellent brownies and biscotti.

You don't have to be a tea drinker to enjoy Biscottea shortbread cookies. But if you are, consider this line to be icing on the biscuit.

— Karen Hochman

FORWARD THIS NIBBLE to anyone who enjoys a good cookie.

BISCOTTEA SHORTBREAD COOKIES

African Honeybush Tea Shortbread, Blueberry Shortbread with Organic White Tea, Chai Shortbread with Organic Chai Spices, Earl Grey Shortbread with Darjeeling Tea and Mint Tea with Organic Peppermint & Spearmint Leaves

GLUTEN-FREE FLAVORS: *Blueberry Shortbread with Organic White Tea, Chai Shortbread with Organic Chai Spices, Earl Grey Shortbread with Darjeeling Tea*

Certified kosher by OU (Dairy)

- 5-Ounce \$7.95
- 1.4-Ounce Individual Grab & Go Package \$2.59

Purchase online* at PleasuresOfTea.com

*Prices and product availability are verified at publication but are subject to change. THE

Box



Biscottea are available in 5-ounce boxes, above, and in individual, 2-cookie grab-and-go packages.

NIBBLE does not sell products; these items are offered by a third party with whom we have no relationship. This link to purchase is provided as a reader convenience.

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