

GRANDMA JULIE'S CREAM CHEESE SUGAR COOKIES

Yield: 3 Dozen Cookies (36) Doubling this recipe is always a good idea for sharing/parties.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup Tillamook butter, softened (Tillamook has the highest fat content of any US-made butter and is superior for pastries and baked goods)
- 3 oz cream cheese, softened
- ½ teaspoon salt (omit if using salted butter)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine butter, cream cheese, egg yolk, sugar, salt, and vanilla, beat until light and fluffy.
2. Add flour; mix well. The dough will be a little stickier than traditional cookie dough.
3. Shape dough into 3 disks. Wrap dough tightly in plastic wrap; refrigerate 2 hours up to overnight, for easier handling.
4. When you're ready to bake, preheat oven to 375°F.
5. On a floured surface, roll out 1 disk of dough at a time to 1/8-inch thickness. (Keep the remaining dough refrigerated while you do this.)
6. Cut with lightly floured 2 1/2-inch round or desired shape cookie cutters. We have found round or latticed round to be the best shapes for these delicate cookies.
7. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. If you won't be frosting your cookies, sprinkle them with colored sugar before baking.
8. Bake at 375°F. for 6 to 9 minutes, or until a light golden brown on the bottom, the tops will remain quite pale, this is what you want.
9. Immediately remove from cookie sheets to cool on a wire rack.
10. If desired, frost and decorate the plain cookies once they have cooled completely. We recommend this delicious simple royal icing recipe below.

ROYAL ICING

Yield: 3 cups

This is a simple and classic royal icing recipe that sets nicely but doesn't get overly hard. Perfect for decorating sugar cookies and gingerbread.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups (480g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 3 Tablespoons meringue powder
- 9–12 Tablespoons room temperature water
- If you'd like to color your icing, use gel food coloring for the best results

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sift the powdered sugar into a large bowl, then add meringue powder, and 9 Tablespoons of water to the sifted sugar.
2. Using a hand mixer or a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment beat icing ingredients together on high speed for 2 minutes. When lifting the whisk up off the icing, the icing should drizzle down and smooth out within 5-10 seconds. If it's too thick, beat in more water 1 Tablespoon of water at a time. The longer you beat the royal icing, the thicker it becomes. If your royal icing is too thin, just keep beating it to introduce more air, or you can add more sifted powdered sugar if that's not doing the trick.
3. Once you have your icing to the desired consistency, transfer it into a piping bag and apply the icing to the cooled cookies. If using coloring, separate into different bowls and blend in the desired amount of coloring, before transferring to piping bags.

Icing Notes

Icing completely dries in about 2 hours at room temperature. If the icing consistency is too thin and runny, it will take longer to dry. If the icing is applied very thickly on cookies, it will also take longer to dry. If you need to speed up the drying time pop them in the refrigerator.

When you're not working directly with the royal icing (for example, you are decorating cookies but you still have some icing left in the bowl that you intend to use later) place a damp paper towel directly on the surface of the royal icing. This prevents it from hardening.