

FOOD & DRINK

Cookies and Christmas go hand in hand

42 per cent of Canadians say cookies are their favourite snack

One third of all Canadians rate cookies as their favourite dessert — 42 per cent enjoy cookies as snacks and one quarter of all Canadians bake from scratch at least once a month.

With the holiday season just around the corner, homemade cookies and squares are especially popular at this time of year for cookie exchanges, hostess and teachers' gifts and just to have on hand when friends and visitors drop by.

The following are easy to make and are sure to be a hit.

Honey nut oat biscotti

Makes about 30 cookies.

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup Ontario honey
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup quick cooking rolled oats
- 1 cup chopped pecans, toasted
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp each baking soda and salt

In bowl, beat butter with sugar until fluffy, beat in honey. Beat in eggs, one at a time; beat in vanilla.

Mix together flour, rolled oats, pecans, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt, stir into butter mixture until moistened.

On large greased baking sheet, spoon batter into two 10"x2" logs, smoothing surface with floured fingers.

Bake in 350°F oven for 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool on pan for five minutes.

Transfer logs to cutting board; cut diagonally into half an inch thick slices. Stand slices up, slightly apart, on baking sheet.

Reduce heat to 325°F; bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden and almost firm to the touch.

Remove from rack and let cool.

Mouth-watering fireballs and hot 'n' nutty cookies

FIREBALLS

- 1 300g package semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup walnuts, toasted and finely chopped
- 2 tbsp dark rum
- 1 1/2 tsp Tabasco brand pepper sauce
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt chocolate and butter or margarine.

Stir in walnuts, rum and Tabasco pepper sauce. Refrigerate mixture about 15 minutes.

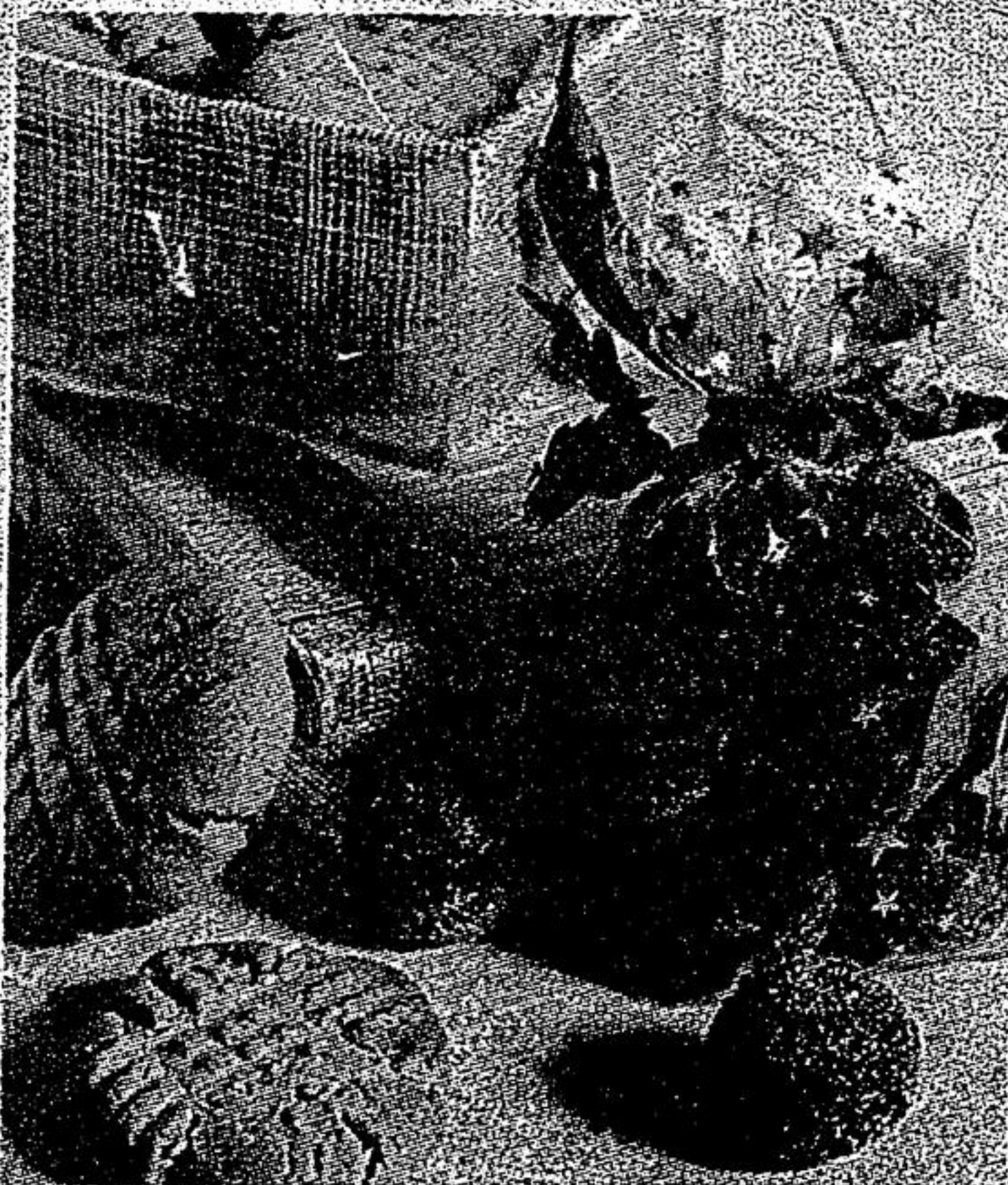
Shape chocolate mixture into one-inch balls, roll balls in granulated sugar to coat.

Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Makes about 34 balls.

HOT 'N' NUTTY COOKIES

- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar



- 1 cup packed brown sugar
 - 2 cups peanut butter, smooth or crunchy
 - 2 eggs
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract
 - 1 tsp Tabasco brand pepper sauce
 - 3 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 tsp salt
 - 1 tsp baking soda
- Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease cookie sheets or line with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugars.

Stir in peanut butter; mix until well-blended. Add eggs, vanilla and Tabasco sauce. Mix well.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, salt and baking soda. Add to peanut butter mixture and stir until blended. Spoon one heaping tablespoon of batter per cookie onto prepared cookie sheet.

With a fork, score each cookie in a crisscross pattern. Bake 15 minutes or until edges are golden. Remove to rack and repeat with remaining batter.

Ginger Crackles

To freeze these, put the sugared dough balls on a tray in the freezer until they're rock-hard and then stash them in zip-top bags. When it's time to bake, arrange them on cookie sheets and let them thaw while the oven heats up.

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 - 2 tsp ground ginger
 - 1 tsp baking soda
 - 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
 - 1/2 tsp ground cloves
 - 1/4 tsp salt
 - 8 tbsp unsalted butter, at room temperature
 - 1/4 cup shortening
 - 1 1/3 cups sugar
 - 1 large egg
 - 1/4 cup molasses
- Heat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, combine the flour, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves and salt.

In another large bowl, beat the butter, shortening and one cup of the sugar with a mixer or a wooden spoon until well combined. Add the egg and molasses to the butter mixture; beat well. Add the dry ingredients and mix until well blended, scraping down the bowl often. Shape the dough into one-inch balls. Roll each ball in the remaining sugar. Put the balls two inches apart on parchment-lined baking sheet.

Bake cookies until they are lightly browned around the edges and puffed about 13 minutes. Let the cookies sit for five minutes and then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

Recipe by Fine Cooking magazine.



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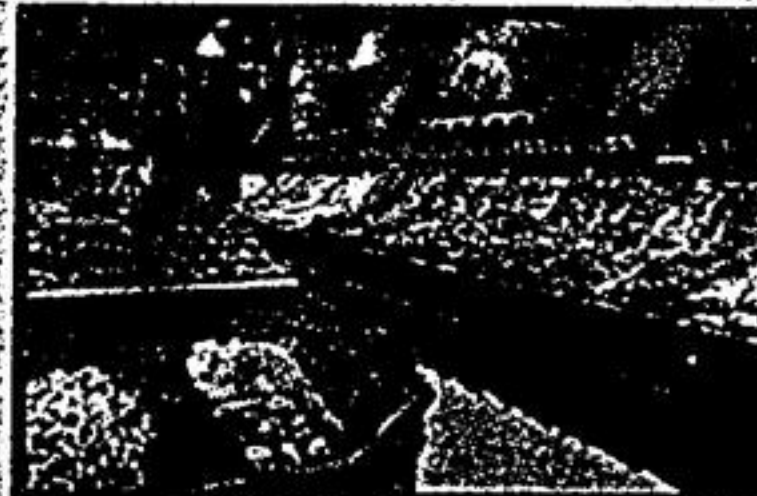
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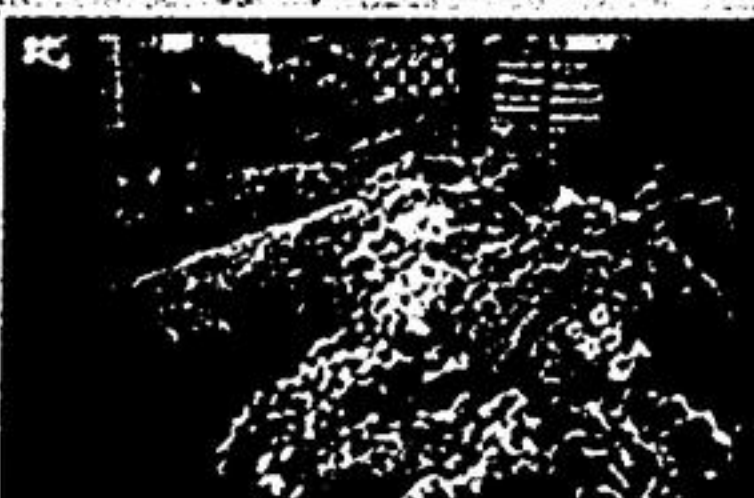
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