



German and American Cookies

by Angelika Price



56 Ausgezeichnete Recipes

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Hello and Guten Tag!

I am so happy you picked this little book among all the thousands of cookie, bake and cook books that have been published over the years. This is a small collection of cookies that has been compiled from German and American friends who are still traditional bakers.

Christmas is still the most important time to bake cookies in Germany. A virtual baking frenzy starts in early November to be ready for the Advent time, four weeks before Christmas. Countless tins will be filled and stored in ice cold bedrooms. Many pretty paper plates will be filled with a variety of homemade cookies, chocolate and Marzipan, decorated with bows and fresh greenery and given to friends and family and co-workers.

Of course, by now cookies are an all-year round treat, so don't feel limited by just baking for Christmas.

Most of the recipes come from friends who were born around the second World War and just cooked and baked for their family. None of us had any professional training or pretended to know everything. The only teachers were tradition and experience. As we moved, we experimented with high altitude ovens with low altitude, with tired old ovens and with new temperamental ones. We learned to translate grams to cups. We advanced from greased and floured cookie sheets to parchment paper. We still use the old-fashioned measure of a "pinch" and a "tad." And then there is the question, why you do have to cool and rest the dough in the fridge before rolling it out? You have to let it come to room temperature anyway before using it again. Professional bakers are probably cringing by now, but we do what works for us.

Our cookies are not beautiful little artifacts, but simple and delicious treats that shine with grace.

flavor. And of course, there are really no “health food” cookies here. This must be a contradiction in terms, except for an occasional one without flour.

So I would love to encourage you to try a few of these recipes and who knows -- three or four might turn out to be your favorites, too.

A few helpful hints

Many of the German Christmas cookies in this book are made from a traditional "**Knetteig**" (Kn-a-tyke) which means a dough has been kneaded by hand until it is smooth.

To make a Knetteig, mix flour and baking powder in a bowl, add the sugar and small pieces of butter. Cut the butter in with a pastry cutter or a fork until the dough resembles coarse crumbles. Add slightly beaten eggs and flavorings and work the dough with your hands until everything has been incorporated and you have a smooth ball.

You can do this in a food processor also: Pulse the dry ingredients a few times to mix, cut in the butter and let it process until you have coarse crumbles. Mix the slightly beaten eggs and let the dough work until it forms a ball.

Of course, if you have a kitchen machine with a dough hook, that will be the easiest.

Parchment and wax paper

Lining cookie sheets with parchment makes baking cookies really easy. No buttering or spraying is necessary, nothing sticks, and although you might think the parchment is a little pricey, it can be reused several times. Just wipe it off or shake off the crumbs and you are ready for the next batch.

Wax paper can be used to roll out the dough. No need to add flour, which keeps the cookies more tender. We also cut out all the cookies at once, placing them on wax paper and layering them on one cookie sheet. The sheet stays in the fridge until we are ready to bake, often the next day, then transfer the cut-outs onto the parchment.

Not enough time to roll out the dough and cut out shapes? A much faster way is removing small amounts of dough and patting it out with your hand. Not as pretty as bells, hearts, stars, trees, comets or snow men, but it tastes the same and the kids will gobble them up just as well.

Vanilla sugar

Vanilla sugar in Germany is the normal preferred way to flavor a dough. “Dr. Oetker Vanille Zucker” comes in small yellow packages in many supermarkets. You can use either the artificially flavored vanilla or the bourbon. The more intense flavor is the artificial vanilla sugar.

However, if you plan ahead, fill a jar with powdered or regular sugar and stick a vanilla bean into it. The sugar will be infused in time.

Many of the ingredients like vanilla sugar, extracts, and spices that are essential for gingerbread cakes



Hazelnuts

For many years, hazelnuts were the most widely known nut in Germany. Many people have bushes or trees in their backyards. By now hazelnuts are a quite fashionable flavor in the States, but still not as easy to find for baking.

If you live close to a Trader Joe's, an Aldi store, or a German deli or bakery, you often can purchase hazelnuts either shelled and whole, or already finely ground. Note that one pound whole shelled nuts make 3 cups, and 1/4 pound ground nuts make about 1 3/4 cups.

If you grind the hazelnuts yourself, put not more than 1/4 pound nuts into your food processor, adding some powdered sugar or flour to keep it fluffy. Nuts have quite a bit of fat and would otherwise turn into a paste. Best, of course, would be if you can find an old-fashioned nut grinder if you cannot already find the nuts ground.

~~For a deeper flavor, carefully roast the whole nuts in the oven and store the extra in the freezer.~~



Thumb Prints with Pecans

Thumb print cookies seem to be a staple in everybody's baking repertoire in Germany. Currant jelly or raspberry or apricot jam always seem to taste best to fill the little hollows.

- 4 cups flour
- 3 tsps. baking powder
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 cups finely ground pecans
- 3 1/4 sticks butter
- 3 tsps. rum
- 2 tsps. vanilla
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 to 4 egg whites
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped pecans
- jam and powdered sugar for dusting

Mix together flour and baking powder. Add sugar and ground pecans. Cut in the butter. In small batches, add the rum, vanilla and the 2 lightly beaten whole eggs. Work into a smooth dough.

In a separate small bowl, lightly beat the 3 to 4 egg whites with a fork.

Pinch off small pieces of dough and roll into balls. Dip the balls into the egg whites, then in coarsely chopped pecans.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Bake in two stages. First, place the balls on the prepared cookie sheet and make a deep indentation with your thumb. Bake 5 to 6 minutes and remove from the oven. Notice that the hollows have flattened a bit. Press down on the indentations to deepen them again, using a small plastic bottle cap. Bake the cookies for 5 to 6 more minutes.

While still very warm, fill the hollows with jam. Dust the cookies liberally with powdered sugar. Let the jam air dry before storing.



Stars and Chips Forever Cookies

These are a delicious cinnamon chocolate cookie. When my daughter, Crissy, was 8 years old and learning to read German, she did not quite understand a recipe and made a mistake. We baked the "mistake cookies" anyway, and they turned out to be our most favorite since 1980.

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsps. cinnamon
- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 whole egg
- 2 egg yolks
- semi-sweet chocolate chips

You can do this using a food processor or by hand.

If you have a food processor: Pulse flour, sugar and cinnamon to mix. Add pats of butter all around and pulse until it resembles coarse crumbs. Lightly beat the eggs and egg yolks and mix them in. Let the processor work until a dough ball forms.

Or by hand: Mix flour, sugar and cinnamon in a bowl and cut in the butter. Add the lightly beaten eggs and egg yolks, and knead into a smooth ball.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. Roll out the dough about 1/4 inch thick. Cut out star shapes and place the cookies on a parchment covered cookie sheet. Gently

press individual chocolate chips onto the cookies, using about 5 to 7 chips per cookie, depending on size of the star.

Bake 6 to 7 minutes. Let the cookies cool completely before stacking in a tin. If you stack them too soon, the chocolate chips will get flattened.

Makes about 70 two-inch stars.



Chocolate Chips and Orange Cookies

These are Gaylee's favorite drop cookies. After you taste these flavorful cookies, you'll want to bake more than one batch at the time.

- grated peel of a large orange
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 4 oz. packaged cream cheese (Keep the other half for the next batch)
- 1 large or 2 small egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup walnut pieces

Wash and dry the orange, grate the rind onto a piece of wax paper. Set aside.

In a bowl, cream the butter, sugar, cream cheese, eggs and vanilla until smooth. Slowly add the flour and orange rind. Stir in the chocolate chips and the walnut pieces.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper and drop the dough by 1-2 tablespoons about one inch apart onto the paper. Bake 8 to 10 minutes until the bottoms are golden. The tops will stay white.

After completely cooled, store in a tin, where Gaylee can't find them...

Makes about 3 dozen.



Vanilla Kipferln (Vanilla Crescents)

There are many versions of vanilla crescents in Germany and Austria. Most of them call for ground hazelnuts or almonds, but not this one. This recipe comes from Grandma Angela Miess who was born around 1890 in the Caucasus and lived in Vienna until her death in 1972.

- 1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter
- About 2 cups powdered sugar mixed with 2 to 3 bags of vanilla sugar

Combine flour and sugar. Cut in the butter and knead the dough until smooth.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Roll dough ball into a thin "sausage" and cut off pinkie size pieces. Shape the pieces into small crescents and place on the cookie sheet. Bake 6 to 8 minutes.

These cookies are very fragile. Let them cool about 5 minutes until they are still warm, but can be lifted without damage. Then, roll them carefully in the powdered sugar mix.



Vanilla Crescents with Almonds

This recipe comes from Liesel, who owned a restaurant known as "Gasthaus Königsee" with her husband Ron, in Germany.

- 1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups ground almonds
- a pinch of salt
- 2/3 cups sugar
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup sugar, mixed with 1 package vanilla sugar, for coating

Mix together flour, almonds, salt and sugar. Add butter with a pastry cutter until well combined. Add egg yolks and vanilla and knead until the dough is smooth. Let the dough cool for a while.

Preheat the oven to 360° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Pinch off small balls of dough, roll them into little sausage shapes, and bend them into crescents. Bake 12 to 15 minutes.

While still warm, roll the crescents in the sugar / vanilla sugar mix. If you run out of sugar, mix up some more.



Vanilla Crescents with Hazelnuts

My friend Kate in Minnesota gave me this recipe. As a young woman, she worked in the largest department store in Bamberg, Germany, where she became friends with the Countess Nina Schenk Gräfin von Stauffenberg. This recipe came from the von Stauffenberg's kitchen. After the war, the Countess was instrumental in furthering the friendship between the American occupation force and the German population in that town. The Countess was the wife of Lt. Colonel Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, who was executed by Hitler a day after the failed assassination attempt on July 20, 1944.

- 4 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cups finely ground hazelnuts
- 3 Tbsps. baking powder
- 3 sticks butter
- 2 eggs yolks
- 2 tsps. vanilla
- 2 tsps. brandy
- plus sugar and vanilla sugar for coating

Prepare like the previous recipe.

Mix flour, ground hazelnuts and baking powder. Add butter with a pastry cutter until well combined. Add egg yolks, vanilla, and brandy, and knead until the dough is smooth. Let the dough cool for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 360° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Pinch off small balls of dough

roll them into little sausage shapes, and bend them into crescents. Bake 12 to 15 minutes.

While still warm, roll the crescents in the sugar / vanilla sugar mix.



Nußbecken (Nut Squares)

This is my favorite bar cookie, which takes quite some time to prepare, but is well worth the effort. This is best done over 2 days.

For the topping:

- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 4 Tbsps. water
- 1 1/2 cups ground hazelnuts
- 1 1/2 cups chopped hazelnuts or walnuts

For the bottom:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tsps. vanilla
- 1/2 jar apricot jam or preserves

For dipping:

- 18 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Make the topping first. Melt the butter in a large pot. Add the sugar, vanilla and the water. Bring to a boil, then remove from the heat and stir in all the nuts. Set aside.

Make the bottom. In a food processor, pulse the flour, baking powder and sugar. Add the butter and mix until it becomes crumbly. Add the eggs and vanilla and process until the dough forms a ball.

Preheat the oven to 375° F. Line a 10 by 17 cookie sheet with parchment paper. Press the dough into the bottom; no need to work up the edges.

Spread the dough with apricot jam. Spread the nut mixture on top of the jam. Bake 25 minutes. Let cool overnight.

The next day, cut the cookies into bars, triangles or small squares. Melt the chocolate chips. Dip a side or each bar, and place the cookies on wax paper until the chocolate is completely set and firm.



Spitzbuben (Rascals)

Why that name? Nobody knows. This is one of Elfriede's famous cut-out sandwich cookies. She is a fabulous baker.

- 1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 3/4 cups finely ground hazelnuts
- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- apricot jam
- 1 package Dr. Oetker vanilla sugar OR 1 tsp. vanilla

In the food processor, pulse flour, sugar and hazelnuts. Cut in the butter and add the lightly beaten egg. Process until dough forms a ball.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Roll out the dough about 1/4 inch thick and cut out rounds, about 1-1/2 to 2 inch across. Place the cookies onto the sheet and bake for 8 minutes.

Let the cookies cool slightly. When you can handle them, spread one with apricot jam and sandwich together with another cookie. Roll the sandwiched cookie in sugar. Let them cool completely before storing them in a tin.

A helpful note: If you warm the jam a little, it is easier to spread.



Mocha Drop Cookies

If you love strong coffee flavor in cookies, give these a try. This one of Gaylee's own creations.

- 3 Tbsps. instant coffee granules
- 3 Tbsps. hot water, to dissolve the granules
- 4 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Dissolve the coffee granules in the hot water in a small bowl. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, cream the cream cheese, butter and sugar until fluffy. Mix in the egg yolks and coffee. Slowly mix in the flour. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Remove small amounts of dough, flatten it somewhat, and place it on cookie sheet. Leave about an inch of space between cookies. Bake for 13 minutes.

If you like a sweeter cookie, roll them in sugar while still warm from the oven.



Andy's Sandwich Cookies

A very simple dough for cut out cookies. What makes it special is the filling and the glaze. Our recipe does not make very many cookies, so I always make several batches.

For the cookies:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 Tbsp. fresh or dried lemon peel
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with the extra yolks
- your favorite jam, such as raspberry, currant, apricot, or strawberry

For the lemon glaze:

- about 2 cups powdered sugar
- a little lemon juice

In a food processor, pulse flour and baking powder. Add sugar and pulse again to mix. Add the butter and lemon peel and pulse until it looks crumbly. Add the egg yolks and lightly beaten eggs and process until a ball forms.

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Roll out the dough to about 1/4 inch thick, cut out circles and place them on the cookie sheet. Bake 6 to 8 minutes, until the cookies start to turn golden. Let them cool completely.

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