

SWEETER BY THE DOZEN

This hit parade of **HOLIDAY COOKIES** features the **CLASSICS** your loved ones look forward to enjoying all year long—but with a **FUN TWIST**. From multicolored shortbread to winter white (chocolate) biscotti, each is extra-special. Bake a few batches, box them with care, and finish with a shiny bow.

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If you think these images were created on a computer, look closely. Prop stylist Sonia Rentsch cut colorful pieces of acetate to create vivid “3-D” gifts, bows, and patterns. How’s that for homemade?



GLAZED
SPICED
SNOWFLAKES



SHORTBREAD
SWIRLS

EDIBLE ART

How do you improve on the simple perfection of shortbread? Go ombré! For this eye-catching display, red and green food coloring were used to tint the dough in successively darker shades (the yellow ones are au naturel). Pipe these figure eights when the dough is room temperature, but chill them before baking for the sharpest shapes.

OPPOSITE: These coriander-and-cardamom-spiced biscuits, known as speculaas in northern Europe, are usually embossed with wooden molds, but we did the job with crocheted doilies. Look for thick ones, as they'll leave the clearest imprint; then create the shapes with snowflake cutters. A confectioners'-sugar glaze dries to a frosty matte finish.

For recipes, see page 158.



BRANDY-NUTMEG
CRESCENTS

MANY MOONS

Our iconic crescents aren't as innocent as they look. They're infused with brandy and fragrant freshly grated nutmeg—yes, we're talking eggnog in cookie form. Enlist a rasp or grater to grind the nutmeg seeds into a fine powder, then toss the baked cookies in confectioners' sugar while they're still warm so it sticks to them easily.



DOUBLE-CHOCOLATE
PEPPERMINT
SANDWICHES

SWEET SPOTS

Even delicate sandwich cookies can pack a flavorful punch when you use twice the chocolate. These boast cocoa in the shortbread as well as milk chocolate in the peppermint-ganache filling. The peekaboo cutouts can be made with a small, fluted round cutter, as we did here, or you can try a star or tree shape for a festive touch. Drive the point home with chopped peppermint candies.

FRUIT BOWLS

These little gems were inspired by torta sbrisolona, a crunchy almond-enriched tart from northern Italy. The nutty dough plays two roles: It forms the cookies and is also crumbled on top. The dough is a snap to make, too—you just cut butter into flour. With your fingers, press it into rounds, then spoon jam on top. (Cranberry was our test kitchen's hands-down favorite.)



STREUSEL JAMMIES



CORNMEAL, CHERRY, AND WHITE-CHOCOLATE-CHUNK BISCOCCI

BIG DIPPERS

Biscotti make great gifts if you're shipping them or traveling far, because they're sturdy and keep beautifully for at least a week. The stealth ingredient in this version is cornmeal. It adds a subtle crunch and a hint of roasted-corn sweetness that's delicious with tart cherries, salted macadamia nuts, and rich white chocolate. Once the cookies are cool, dip them in melted white chocolate and sprinkle with nonpareils.



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**SPICED ORANGE
 PALMIERS**
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FRENCH TWISTS

Crisp, caramelized palmiers look as if they belong in a patisserie, but these are made with store-bought all-butter puff pastry and do not require a degree in pastry arts. You just fold the dough inward from the edges, chill it, slice it crosswise, and bake. (In a nod to morning buns, we sprinkled them with cinnamon, sugar, and orange zest first.) To get the sweet shape, make sure the dough is very cold when you cut it.



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**PISTACHIO
 AND
 DRIED-APRICOT
 RUGELACH**
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**HIGH
 ROLLERS**

The secret to these exceptional rugelach is the tender, flaky, slightly tart (thanks to cream cheese) dough and the intense sweet-tart apricot filling—made from simmering dried apricots with sugar and vanilla and then whirring them in the food processor. A sprinkling of ground pistachios complements the vibrant fruit; if possible, use Sicilian ones, which are a brilliant green.

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