chocolate mint SUGAR COOKIEs

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*For St. Patrick’s Day, there’s nothing more fun that* ***Chocolate Mint Sugar Cookies****! Tender sugar cookies are rich in chocolate and mint flavor and incredibly soft – and filled with tiny flecks of Andes Creme de Menthe Chocolate Mint Baking Chips melt in your mouth! Cut into fun shamrocks, rainbows and pots of gold, I have it on good authority that these are a favorite of leprechauns everywhere!*

**INGREDIENTS**:

**CHOCOLATE MINT SUGAR COOKIES**:

3 cups + 2 Tablespoons (390g) all-purpose flour

2 Tablespoons cornstarch

1 and 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 cup unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)

4 ounces block cream cheese (softened to room temperature)

1 cup (200g) granulated sugar

1 large egg (room temperature)

1 Tablespoon pure vanilla extract

1 Tablespoon pure chocolate extract

1 teaspoon pure peppermint extract

½ cup Andes Creme de Menthe Chocolate Mint Baking Chips

**FROSTING**: (for Bakery Frosting see SnowflakesandCoffeecakes.com)

**EASY ROYAL ICING**:

4 cups powdered sugar

3 Tablespoons Meringue Powder

1 Tablespoon corn syrup (Karo)

1 Tablespoons clear vanilla

1 Tablespoon pure chocolate extract

½ teaspoon pure peppermint extract

8-10+ Tablespoons water (room temperature)

AmeriColor Soft Gel Food Coloring (strongly recommended!)

**FOR DECORATING**: Royal Icing, Sprinkles, Dragees and Sparkling Sugar (optional)

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:**

* Cookie cutter(s)
* Rolling pin (wooden Joseph Joseph Rolling Pin works the BEST for these cookies!)
* Large baking sheets
* Silicone Baking Mats or Parchment Paper
* Piping Bags & Tips
* Cookie Stencil

**HOW I MAKE THESE**:

1. Set butter, cream cheese and egg out to warm to room temperature.
2. Finely chop Andes Creme de Menthe Chocolate Mint Baking Chips and chill in refrigerator – this will help keep them from clumping together on a warm day or in a warm kitchen. You’ll need them finer than the chips directly from the bag, which will also make your cookies easier to roll out.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, baking powder and salt; set aside.
4. In a large bowl using a hand-held mixer or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and cream cheese on medium speed until completely smooth and creamy (about 3 minutes). Add the sugar and beat on medium high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add in the egg, vanilla extract, chocolate extract and peppermint extract and beat on high speed for another minute. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed between additions.
5. Add the finely chopped chocolate mint pieces and mix just until blended.
6. On low speed, slowly mix half of the flour mixture into the wet ingredients just until combined; add remaining flour mixture and again mix just until combined. This cookie dough will be really soft and creamy!
7. Generously flour your work surface and rolling pin. Divide dough into half and place on top of a parchment paper sized for your baking pans. Roll each half to a ¼-inch thickness (you will need to re-flour your rolling pin periodically to keep the dough from sticking). The rolled-out dough can be any shape, as long as it is evenly 1/4-inch thick. We’re rolling the cookie dough out BEFORE chilling it, which isn’t typical for most sugar cookie recipes – but this is a great trick! The dough is so much easier to roll out before it’s chilled.
8. Stack the pieces, with parchment paper between the two and a single piece of parchment paper on top, onto a baking sheet and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to overnight. Chilling is mandatory for this cookie dough, so that the cookies will keep their shape when baked.
9. The next day, preheat oven to 350°.  Line 2-3 large baking pans with parchment paper (I prefer parchment paper over silicone baking mats for these cookies).
10. Remove one of the chilled cookie dough pieces from the refrigerator. The dough will seem very hard, but it’s softer than it appears! Immediately cut into shapes with cookie cutters that have been dipped in flour. Place each cookie about 2 inches apart on prepared baking sheets. Re-roll dough scraps until all the dough is shaped. Repeat with remaining cookie dough.
11. For 3-inch cookies, bake for 11-12 minutes until VERY lightly golden around the edges. Make sure you rotate the baking sheet halfway through bake time. If your cookie cutters are smaller than 3 inches, bake for about 7-10 minutes. If your cookie cutters are larger than 3 inches, bake for about 12-13 minutes. Every oven is a little bit different, so watch your first batch when baking and time accordingly. **DO NOT OVERBAKE!** The cookies don’t spread much when they’re baking, so they will stay around ¼-inch thick. These are thick sugar cookies! Be sure not to overbake these as they’ll lose their softness.
12. Allow cookies to cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes. Transfer the parchment paper together with the cookies to a cooling rack to cool completely. Once completely cool, decorate with Bakery Frosting or Easy Royal Icing and sprinkles (Bakery Frosting is easier for little ones…)
13. **TO MAKE EASY ROYAL FROSTING**: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, add the ½ cup room-temperature water and meringue powder and dissolve on low (do not use a whisk attachment) for a minute or two. Once dissolved and slightly frothy, add all the powdered sugar and extracts, and begin to mix on low. Add the karo syrup as it all starts to come together. Turn your mixer up to medium-high speed and beat for 5 minutes or until stiff peaks form. **BE SURE NOT TO OVERMIX!**  Once still peaks form, it’s enough. If you overmix, the icing can become crumble after it dries on your cookies.
14. At this point, you will use the Royal Icing as a base – divide as appropriate and add additional water a little bit at a time so that you have the right consistency for outlining, detail and flooding.
15. For flood consistency (usually what you will use the most of) - the icing should drizzle down in a ribbon and smooth out within 10-15 seconds with the frosting in the bowl. If it's too thick, add a little more water (a teaspoon at a time). If it's too thin, add a little more sifted confectioners' sugar (a tablespoon or two at a time).
16. When you're not working directly with the Royal Icing (for example, you’ve split the icing into separate bowls and colored with a few drops of food coloring), place a damp paper towel directly on the surface of the Royal Icing. It will start crusting immediately when exposed to air, and by placing the damp towel directly on top it will prevent it from hardening.
17. **FROST & DECORATE!** Pipe or frost completely cooled cookies and sprinkle with optional sprinkles or decorating sugar.
18. This Easy Royal Icing usually sets in about 2 hours at room temperature, depending on the temperature and humidity. If you're layering royal icing onto cookies for specific designs and need it to set quickly, place cookies in front of a fan heater (set on low heat), box fan or oscillating fan to help speed it up – you’ll need at least 1 hour between layers. Letting your decorated cookies dry in front of a fan will also increase the “sheen” or “shine” of the frosting, rather than a flat matte finish if dried slower only at room temperature.
19. For stenciling with either royal icing or airbrush food color, make sure base coat of royal icing dries overnight before airbrushing and decorating.
20. Icing details were added with Royal Icing and gold dusting sugar.
21. For best results, allow frosting to set and dry **24-HOURS** before storing – keep parchment paper between each layer.

**YIELD**: Makes about 36 (three-inch) cookies

**RECIPE NOTES**:

**WANT MORE MINT FLAVOR?** You can add an additional ½ teaspoon of pure peppermint extract if you prefer a stronger mint flavor.

**WANT MORE CHOCOLATE FLAVOR?** You can replace the pure vanilla extract with Rodelle Bakers Extract – a combination of pure vanilla and pure chocolate flavor. You need vanilla to balance out the flavor profile!

**WANT A MINT GREEN SUGAR COOKIE?**  You can add a couple drops of Americolor Soft Gel Paste Food Color in Mint Green.

**CAN’T FIND ANDES CRÈME DE MENTHE CHOCOLATE MINT BAKING CHIPS?** You can substitute regular Andes Mint Thins – just make sure that you chop them up really fine!

**CHOP THE CHOCOLATE MINTS INTO SMALL PIECES**: Whether you start with Andes Creme de Menthe Chocolate Mint Baking Chips or Andes Mint Things, you need the chocolate mint pieces to be really fine, so that they blend throughout the cookie dough and are easy to roll and cut out.

**GLUTEN FREE OPTION**: To make these cookies gluten free, substitute a gluten free, all-purpose flour mix.

**BAKING TIMES VARY**: You know your own oven better than anyone! Every oven is a little bit different, so watch your first batch when baking and time accordingly. Baking times will vary based on your oven, bakeware used, whether you use parchment paper or silicone baking sheet liners (or nothing at all). I recommend using an oven thermometer to check for the actual oven temperature calibration and any hot spots.

**STORING COOKIES**: These cookies will stay fresh in an air-tight container at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

**MAKE AHEAD TIP:**  Plain baked cookies freeze well up to 1 month. Thaw overnight UNOPENED on your kitchen countertop before decorating.

**FOR PARTIES:**  I package cookies individually in self-sealing clear cellophane cello bags (Pack It Chic are my favorite brand).  Make sure cookies are completely dry after decorating before packaging.  To make ahead, place individually wrapped and sealed cookies in a larger airtight container and freeze.  Thaw on your countertop before serving - do not thaw in refrigerator (you are trying to minimize moisture during defrosting, which can cause your frosting designs to run or bleed).

**TO KEEP THESE COOKIES SOFT**: These cookies will stay soft and fresh in an air-tight container at room temperature for up to one week.

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