

Easter Bonnet Shortbread Cookies

Adults and children will enjoy cutting out and decorating Easter bonnet cookies. To streamline the process, prepare the cookies beforehand - they freeze well for up to 2 weeks. Let the kids ice and adorn their cookies with a variety of decorations, from sanding sugars to sugared flowers.

Yield: 24 cookies

For the Cookies:

1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt

For the Icing:

2 egg whites, or 4 tablespoons meringue powder mixed with 1/2 cup warm water
4 cups (1 pound) confectioners' sugar
Paste food coloring in various colors



For the Decorations:

Colored sugar crystals, sanding sugar, sprinkles, candy dots, and/or small sugared flowers

Cookies:

Combine the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl. Beat together with an electric mixer set at medium-high speed for about 1 minute. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and continue beating until light and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla extract. Sift together the flour and salt. Blend into the butter mixture, 1 cup at a time. Continue mixing until the dough is smooth and no streaks of flour remain. Divide the dough into 4 equal portions. Pat each portion into a disk and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Working with 1 disk at a time (leave the others chilling), place it between 2 pieces of waxed paper (or plastic wrap) and roll out 1/4 inch thick. Remove the top piece of waxed paper, and using a 3-inch biscuit or cookie cutter, cut out at least 6 cookies. Place the cookies at least 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Reserve the dough scraps. Repeat with the remaining dough disks. Reroll all the scraps and cut out at least 24 smaller cookies with a 1-inch straight-edged cookie cutter. The smaller cookies will be the crown of the bonnets and the larger cookies will be the brims.

Place on a second parchment-lined baking sheet at least 1-inch apart. Refrigerate both baking sheets until the cookies become very firm and cold, at least 2 hours or up to 2 days. (If chilling longer than 2 hours, cover loosely with plastic wrap.)

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Bake the cookies until firm and sandy gold, about 20 minutes. Do not allow them to get too dark, as they can taste slightly bitter if overly browned. Let cool completely on a wire rack before icing.

Icing:

In a large bowl, beat the egg whites (or reconstructed meringue powder) with an electric mixer set on low speed until frothy. Sift the confectioners' sugar into the bowl. Increase the mixer speed to high and continue beating until brilliant white, firm, and fluffy, about 10 minutes. You should have 2 1/2 to 3 cups. Scoop out 1 cup of the icing and set aside to use for piping. Thin the remaining icing with water, adding 2 or 3 teaspoons at a time until it is of pouring consistency. Divide the icing among as many small bowls as different colors you wish to create, then tint the portions. Place the cookies on a wire rack set over a baking sheet and pour the thinned icing over them. If necessary, shake the cookies to ease the icing over the edges. This should cover the cookies with a thin, even layer. Allow to dry completely.

Tint the reserved 1 cup icing, if desired. Spoon into a large piping bag fitted with a number 2 plain decorating tip for squiggles, dots, scrolls, and stripes or a number 4 plain tip or 5 plain tip, or small petal tip for piping a ribbon. To create the bonnet, pipe a small amount of icing on the back of the smaller cookie and attach it onto the center of the larger cookie.

The bonnets can be decorated in a variety of ways:

- Pipe an icing ribbon and bow around the 1-inch cookie.
- Pipe a series of small icing dots to resemble dotted Swiss, or pipe decorative scrolls or stripes.
- Sprinkle the icing decorations with sanding sugar while they are still wet to make them sparkle.
- Pipe dabs of icing and attach small sugared flowers.
- For a paisley look, pipe or spin drops of a contrasting color of the thinned icing randomly over the surface of an iced cookie while it is still wet.
- Using a bamboo skewer or toothpick, pull through the center of each dot.
- For an elegant all white cookie, ice with white icing and decorate with small dots of white icing to resemble dotted Swiss. "Tie" the bonnet with a white icing ribbon and garnish with a sugared violet.
- Decorate iced cookies with sprinkles and/or candy dots.

Allow the cookies to dry for at least 2 hours, and if the weather is humid, overnight, before packaging.

Nutrition Facts per Serving (1/24): Calories: 329, Fat: 16g, Carbohydrates: 45g, Cholesterol: 41mg, Sodium: 104mg, Protein: 3g, Fiber: 1g, % Cal. from Fat: 44%, % Cal. from Carbs: 55%

Source: [Easter Treats](#) by Jill O'Connor
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