



Baci di Dama Cookies (Ladies Kisses!)

Ingredients:

3½ ounces (100 grams) hazelnuts, shelled and skins off
3½ ounces (100 grams) very cold butter, cut into small cubes
3½ ounces (100 grams or ½ cup) sugar
3½ ounces (100 grams or ¾ cup) flour
3½ ounces (100 grams) good quality dark chocolate or chocolate chips

Instructions

Making these cookies requires a certain amount of technique and skill in order for them to retain their delicate shape and texture. Here are a few tips:

1. Work quickly
2. Use **very** cold butter
3. Cook them in a very cool oven

Start with hazelnuts (skins removed). To get skins off, toast them gently in the oven until warm and fragrant, then rub them in a tea towel to remove the skins. They don't need to be perfect as the skins will add a bit of flecked color to the cookies. Once completely cool, blitz them in a food processor until they resemble sand.

For this step, make sure your butter is very cold and work quickly. Combine the hazelnut meal, cubed butter, sugar and flour in a bowl and rub with your fingers (or use a food processor) until it resembles breadcrumbs, then knead until it just comes together into a dough. Flatten to a disc about one inch high and place in the fridge, leaving overnight if you can or at least one hour minimum.

When ready to make the cookies, remove from the fridge and roll out teaspoon-sized pieces of dough into perfect balls and place them on a parchment lined cooked sheet a couple of inches apart (they will spread a little as they sink into domes). Place back into the fridge for a couple of hours before baking (or put the sheet in the freezer for 30 minutes). One little ball will weigh about 10 grams.

Bake in a low oven at about 285-300° (less if you have a convection oven) for 15 minutes or until they resemble a little dome and are dry to the touch. They will be very lightly baked and extremely fragile as this point. Do not let them brown or melt into a puddle so watch closely during this time. If they seem to be baking too quickly, remove from the oven and turn temperature down. Don't touch until they are cool! Let them cool completely. Once cool, they will harden enough to handle.

Place the chocolate over a double boiler and let melt about 75% . Take off the heat and stir to melt the rest. Let it cool for about 5 minutes or until it reaches a consistency where you can spoon it onto a cookie and it does not dribble off the sides. Place a teaspoon of the chocolate on the flat bottom of the cookie and before the chocolate sets, place the other half of the cookie on top (not too early or it will slip and slide!) Place the set onto a wire rack to support them and to keep them upright until the chocolate is set.

Store in an airtight container. They are better a few days after making them.