

Hoot Owl Cookies

(adapted from My Diverse Kitchen)

12 Tbsp. butter
1 cup light brown sugar
1 unbeaten egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups sifted all purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup chopped semi-sweet chocolate
1/4 tsp baking soda
white chocolate chips (or dark), for the eyes of the owls
whole cashew nuts (preferably unsalted and not roasted)

In a bowl, using a hand held mixer, cream the butter and sugar till soft and fluffy. Add the egg and the vanilla extract and beat well.

Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt and add to the butter mixture and mix well to form a softish dough. (Note: I had to add about 1 tsp. of water to get my dough to come together.)

Melt the semi-sweet chocolate over warm water and allow to cool slightly.

Take 2/3rds of the dough out of the bowl and set it aside. Add the baking soda to the melted chocolate, stir well and add it to the 1/3rd portion dough which is in the bowl. Knead this well so that you have a brown coloured dough with no streaks visible. Chill both doughs for about 1/2 an hour to make the dough easy to work with. (Note: my dough was workable enough I didn't need to chill it.)

Take the light coloured dough and divide into 2 equal portions. Also similarly divide the chocolate dough into 2 portions and roll each portion into a long cylinder/ rope shape about 10" long. Set aside.

Cut out a piece of wax paper (approx. 12" by 6"). Place one piece of light coloured dough in the centre of the piece of paper and roll it out into 10" by 4" rectangle. Place one chocolate dough cylinder/ rope in the centre of this rectangle.

Using the paper, wrap the light coloured rectangle of dough around the chocolate one from both sides. Your dough should now look like a long roll of light coloured dough with the chocolate dough in the center. Wrap the wax paper around the roll.

Repeat this with the other half of both doughs, and chill both rolls of dough for at least 2 hours or even overnight. (Note: we chilled ours in the freezer for about 15 minutes.)

When ready to bake the cookies, remove the wax paper and slice each roll of dough into 1/4" thick slices and place them on lined baking sheets.

For each owl, press two slices together to form a face. Pinch, or shape the outer corners of each slice to form "ears" and push an upside down chocolate chip in to the centre of each slice to make "eyes". Press a whole cashew nut between the slices, with pointed side down to make a "beak". Repeat with all the slices.

Do leave some space on the cookie sheets between "owls" as they will swell up and become larger as they bake. Bake the owl cookies at 350F for about 10 to 15 minutes till the edges of the cookies start becoming brown.

Cool the cookies on the sheets for about 5 minutes and then carefully remove them racks to cool completely

This recipe makes 2-3 dozen owl cookies.

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