

Biscotti for Christmas

by Joseph Erdos



Biscotti, the popular Italian cookies, can be enjoyed any time of the year, but I find them especially appealing for the holidays. Typically made with almonds and called cantucci in Tuscany, these little treats can include any combination of nuts and dried fruits. Bright red cranberries and green pistachios are ideal for Christmas. I make them every year to share with neighbors and friends who stop by between the two holidays. They go great with coffee and tea and are perfect for dipping.

Traditionally quite dry, biscotti go well with beverages or, as the Italians enjoy them, with the dessert wine Vin Santo. The name "biscotti" translates to twice-baked. First, they are baked through and second, they are dried out. This method of preservation dates back to Roman times, when biscuits were made to last for journeys as long as months. I wouldn't recommend keeping them around for that long. However, they can be stored nicely in a tightly sealed container. But I'm sure they will disappear soon enough.

For this recipe, I add olive oil and honey for a hint of fragrance and fruitiness. I use a portion of whole-wheat pastry flour, which makes the cookies a bit more crisp. A portion of regular whole-wheat flour or the full amount of all-purpose flour would also work fine. Feel free to try a different combination of nuts and fruits. Almonds or hazelnuts are the most traditional in Italy. Besides dried cranberries, dried cherries also lend a beautiful color for a holiday treat.

Cranberry-Pistachio Biscotti

1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder

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1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
1/4 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup honey
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3/4 cup pistachios, roughly chopped
2/3 cup dried cranberries, roughly chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Sift together dry ingredients: flours, baking powder, and salt.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add eggs and mix until combined. Add oil, honey, lemon zest and juice, and vanilla; mix until combined. Add the dry ingredients a little at a time on low speed, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Mix until combined.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead a few times and form into two logs, about 12-inches long by 2-inches wide. Place on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake until pale golden, about 25 minutes. Let cool 20 minutes. Slice logs diagonally into 3/4-inch-thick slices. Place on baking sheet with cut side down. Bake 5 minutes on one side, turn the biscotti over, and bake an additional 5 minutes until lightly golden. Let cool completely.

Yield: 30 biscotti.

Joseph Erdos is a New York–based writer and editor, but above all a gastronome and oenophile. He shares his passion for food on his blog, [Gastronomer's Guide](#), which features unique recipes and restaurant reviews among many other musings on the all-encompassing topic of food.