

That's How the Cookie Crumbles: 10 Tips for Baking Cut-Out Cookies

By Brette Sember | December 4, 2015 | 9:00am

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One of the sweetest part of the holidays is cookies. And cut-out cookies are practically required to make the season official. We've all seen the ones in magazines that are works of art, but how do you get your own cookies to turn out beautifully with as little stress as possible? Follow these tips.

Stop the Sticking

Rolling out your cut out cookies can result in a sticky mess. Try rolling the dough between two sheets of floured parchment to avoid this. Cut out the cookies on the parchment; they will keep their shapes better since you won't be scraping them off the counter. You can just move the entire bottom sheet with the cookies right on it to your baking sheet if you wish.

Roll Evenly

Start rolling the dough from the center to the edges so that it will roll out evenly. Keeping the dough the same thickness throughout will help the cookies bake evenly (if they aren't the same thickness, some will brown while others will be underdone). To make this easier, buy [spacer bands](#) (they look like thick rubber bands) to put on the ends of your rolling pin so that can control the thickness of your dough.

Put Together a Puzzle

Minimize the number of times you have to re-roll the dough by fitting the cookie cutters as closely together as possible on the dough. Think of it like a puzzle and squeeze as many as you can together, leaving very few scraps.

Cutter Cues

Be sure to dip your cookie cutters in flour each time before pressing them into the dough to minimize sticking. If you have cookie cutters with small nooks and crannies, use a chopstick to gently push out the dough that is getting stuck in the small spaces. If you do make a mistake and a piece breaks off, gently press it back together and put a drop of water on your finger to smooth out the seam.

Chill Out

Chilling the dough for at least an hour before you roll it will make it less sticky and easier to manage. Once you've rolled it out, chill it again (about 5 minutes) before you cut the cookies out. Then chill the cookies once more time (about 5 minutes) after you've cut them out and before you bake them. This will help them keep their nice crisp edges and make your shapes more recognizable.

Baking Better

Never put cookies on warm baking sheets, since the fat in the dough will melt and your cut-outs will start to spread. If you're making several batches at once, cool your baking sheets off by running them under tepid water (not cold, which may warp the metal) and drying them. Most ovens do not bake completely evenly, so if you're baking several sheets, rotate them by shelf and also rotate the positioning of the baking sheet in the oven halfway through.

Give It a Rest

After you take your cookies out of the oven, let them rest on the baking sheets for a few minutes to firm up. If you try to move them while they are hot they are likely to tear and bend. Once they're no longer hot, move them to a wire cooling rack for best results.

Frosting Fun

Do you frost cookies with an offset metal spatula or knife? Skip that and make things easier. Make two batches of icing: one thin and one thick. Put both into plastic squeeze bottles from a craft or restaurant supply store. Use the thick icing to outline the cookie (using a bottle with a bigger hole). Then flood the inside of the lines with the thin icing. Make several colors of each type so you can have some variety.

Have Patience

Frosted cookies need a full day to completely dry, so let them sit someplace where no one is going to steal them or drop crumbs on them. Placing them on parchment will prevent icing that drips off from cementing the cookie to the counter. When they are completely dry, the icing will be smooth and shiny.

Stash 'Em Away

To keep your cookies beautiful, store them in plastic containers, layered between parchment

paper sheets. Don't store them in the same container with other types of cookies, because this could change their texture (making them harder or softer). Cookies will keep for months in the freezer. Thaw them at room temperature for about 15 minutes before serving.

Brette Sember is a cookie lover and is the author of [Cookie: A Love Story: Fun Facts, Delicious Stories, Fascinating History, Tasty Recipes, and More About Our Most Beloved Treat](#). Her website is www.BretteSember.com.

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