

The Best Sugar Cookie Recipe. Ever.

by Sara Fehling

INGREDIENTS

6 C. flour (750 grams—and YES, I weigh the flour)
a scant 1/8 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
2 C. butter (softened at room temperature)
2 C. sugar
2 eggs
2 tsp. flavoring (almond or vanilla extract)



INGREDIENTS

1. Measure/weigh your flour into a bowl, then add baking powder and salt. Stir with a whisk to blend thoroughly. Set aside.
2. Using your stand mixer with paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy (approximately 1 minute at speed 2 and 2 more minutes at speed 3).
3. Add eggs and flavoring, mix well. One more minute at speed 2.
4. Add mixed dry ingredients, 1 cup at a time. Speed no higher than 2. With final addition of dry ingredients, and about 30 seconds dough kind of magically “comes together” (If it doesn’t though, don’t panic. Just turn mixer off and push remaining crumbs of dough into main ball and mix for another couple of seconds.)
5. Take freshly mixed dough, smooth into a ball and cut into thirds. Using two sheets of parchment paper and two 5/16-inch dowels as thickness guides*, roll the dough between the parchment paper with a rolling pin into perfect sheets of dough. Remove dowels, and place parchment-and-dough sandwiches flat on a shelf in the refrigerator, and continue rolling the other thirds of dough.
6. Ideally, chill sheets of dough overnight. But if time is a factor, even 30 minutes is okay.
7. Preheat oven to 350°. I bake on Silpats, but parchment works too. I highly recommended this!
8. Cut your cookies, and get into the oven as quickly as possible. Your goal is to bake the dough as cold as possible. When the first pan is in the oven, reroll your dough scraps and place back into the refrigerator. Ovens will vary, but baking time will be approximately 11 minutes, and rarely more than 12. However, the size of the cookies makes a big difference. My bite-sized “Keuter Cuties” only bake for about 8 minutes total.
9. I bake cookies 7 minutes on top rack, while I’m cutting second batch of dough. Then switch 1st tray to bottom rack for 4 when I put the 2nd tray of cookies in the top. Cookies are done right before they “turn” golden. If you touch them with your fingertip, the dough should not indent. Instead, the entire cookie should ever so slightly move. THAT is when they’re done. In my oven that’s 11 minutes. Slightly golden won’t ruin your cookies, but if you like them slightly soft, with nice edges, this is what to watch for.
10. Continue with remaining batches of dough. Chilling, cutting, baking, re-rolling, re-chilling etc.
11. Continue until all dough is used. Makes approximately 3 dozen 2.5” cookies.

*Cathy uses a product called [The Cookie Thing](#) to roll out her dough. It has changed her life.

The Best Royal Icing Recipe. Ever.

by Sara Fehling

INGREDIENTS

5 T. meringue powder
3/4 C. very warm water
1 t. cream of tartar
2 1/4 pounds powdered sugar (I weigh it—2 lb. 4 oz. or 36 oz.)
2 tsp. almond (or vanilla) extract (oil free/alcohol free)
gel coloring (I use AmeriColor, available at Hobby Lobby and Joanns; or Wilton Gels, available at Michaels)

INGREDIENTS

1. Make sure all of your tools are grease free and completely dry. Measure out your powdered sugar, so you're ready to add it to the warm meringue/cream of tartar mixture.
2. In your stand mixing bowl, (bowl off of the stand for this step) hand whisk together 5 T. of meringue powder and 3/4 C. warm water, until foamy. Add 1 t. cream of tartar and whisk again by hand.
3. Place bowl onto stand mixer, and attach paddle. Add all of the powdered sugar at once. Using your paddle attachment on the lowest setting, mix for 9 minutes. At 9 minutes, scrape down the bowl and paddle and add your flavorings and mix for one more minute.
4. Icing will be very thick! But now is the time to divide and color. Add gel coloring slowly—color is intense! AmeriColor comes out in drops, add a couple at a time until you build to color you want. Wilton Gels come in pots, so use toothpicks to scoop up some color and drag the toothpick through your portion of icing. Throw that toothpick away as you don't want icing back in your color container. When color is what you want add water to thin to desired consistency. Proceed slowly – for 1/3 of royal icing batch, I usually add 1 t. of water to start with, then add in 1/2 t. increments between stirrings. Consistency changes quickly! I do all of my cookies using one consistency of icing. I use the 6-second test. Pull your spoon/spatula across the batch of icing you're stirring and the spoon's trail should "disappear" by the time you count 6 seconds.
5. Drop a coupler "throat" into the tip of your icing bag. Snip off the tip of the bag just even with the smallest end of the coupler. Place silver #3 tip over the throat and the plastic icing bag. Screw the "collar" on over the silver tip.
6. I get all of my tips and couplers in ready, then I stand three ice tea glasses on the counter with a fairly damp paper towel stuffed into the bottom of each one. Make a "cuff" in the top of your icing bags, and drop each bag into the glass. Give your icing one more stir, to check for consistency, and pour into prepared bags. Uncuff the top of your bag, and put a twistie, rubber band or an Ikea "clip" on the end.
7. I do all of my coloring and thinning in Pyrex measuring cups because of the handles and pour spouts. This recipe for royal icing makes 4 cups. A Wilton disposable piping bag will hold a heaping cup of icing, so don't ever tint more than a heaping cup of icing one color, unless you want to fill two bags with the same color.
8. Spend a little time playing with the bags now—practicing holding your bag in one hand and just kind of pressing with your index finger on your opposite hand to get the icing to flow.
9. Outline the cookie first, or the area that's to be one color. Then go back in and "flood". Which means squeeze a little harder, and scribble back and forth to fill in your area. I usually lift the cookie 1/4" off the counter and gently drop it a couple of times to smooth out the icing or pop any bubbles.

It's a skill that takes some practice—but with one batch of cookies you'll be feeling much better! If you want dimensional decorations—bulbs on a tree—let the tree green color of icing dry for about an hour, then go back and add your red bulbs. If you want totally smooth decorations, flood your tree with green, then immediately go back in and add your red bulbs. The red will sink into the green, be perfect circles and dry completely smooth!

The other fun one to do is flood your cookie with one color, add alternating horizontal stripes of two other colors, then take a toothpick and drag through the stripes. Bottom to top, top to bottom, bottom to top, top to bottom. You get a funky tie-dyed look in the icing as it dries.

HAVE FUN! the biggest thing to remember is that even if your icing is too thick, your flooding overflows the cookies and your colors run together—they're still yummy and you can eat the evidence!