

Sugar Cookies for Dia de Los Muertos (or any other time you need a cookie-fix)

Makes about 2 dozen cookies

Double the recipe! These cookies freeze well and they don't last long. You'll be glad to have extras on hand.

2 cups all-purpose flour, divided

1 ½ teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

½ cup unsalted butter, softened

1 cup granulated sugar

1 large egg

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon whole milk

For decorating: small candies, brightly-colored royal icing (see below)

Place a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Sift together 1 ½ cups flour, baking powder, and salt. In the large bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy. Add the egg, vanilla, and milk and beat on medium speed until just combined. Add the flour mixture. Beat until combined. Add up to ½ cup more flour to the dough, mixing to incorporate, until the dough is just thick enough to roll. Chill for at least three hours.

Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and roll out to ¼-inch thickness. Use cookie cutters to cut out cookies in desired shapes and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Pick up the scraps and repeat with the remaining dough.

Bake the cookies for 8-10 minutes. Cookies should still be soft. Remove from the oven and cool for five minutes on the baking sheet before transferring to a wire cooling rack.

Royal Icing

For decorating sugar cookies and gingerbread cookies.

2 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar

1 tablespoon plus two teaspoons dried egg whites

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

5 tablespoons warm water

Food coloring

In an electric mixer, beat the confectioners' sugar, dried egg whites, vanilla, and warm water on low speed until combined. Increase the speed of the mixer to

medium and beat until the frosting is thick and has a glossy sheen, about 4 minutes. If the icing is too thick, add a little more warm water. If too thin, add some more confectioners' sugar.

Color the icing with food coloring as desired. To pipe icing, spoon icing into a squeeze bottle or pastry bag.