

Pecan Toffee Shortbread Stars

Why this recipe works: Basically a mixture of flour, butter, and sugar, shortbread cookies are very simple to make. But that does not mean that every recipe turns out winning cookies. The best are sandy textured and melt in your mouth. This recipe takes a basic shortbread dough and loads it up with lots of interesting flavors and textures. To keep the cookies light and crisp under the weight of all the fillings, cornstarch is added to tenderize the dough. In order for the dough to be rolled thin, the nuts need to be chopped very fine, but finely chopped almonds or walnuts can be substituted for the pecans.

Makes about 2 dozen cookies

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

¼ cup cornstarch

¼ teaspoon salt

12 tablespoons (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup light brown sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

½ cup mini semisweet chocolate chips

1 cup pecans, toasted and chopped fine

½ cup Heath Toffee Bits (without chocolate)

Confectioner's Sugar for serving

Whisk flour, cornstarch, and salt in bowl. With electric mixer on medium high speed, beat butter, sugars, and vanilla in separate bowl until smooth, 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, mixing until combined. Stir in Chocolate, pecans, and toffee until evenly distributed. Divide dough in half, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour or up to 3 days.

Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. On lightly floured work surface, roll one half of dough to ¼" thickness. Using 3" star-shaped cookie cutter, cut out cookies, gathering and rerolling as necessary. Place cookies 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets and bake until edges are golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Cool 10 minutes, then transfer to wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough. Dust with confectioners' sugar if desired.