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Brown butter shortbread cookie packs caramelized pecan crunch

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Toasted Pecan Brown Sugar-Brown Butter Shortbread Photos Susie Iventosch

This little cookie is fabulously delicious and really, what isn't when it's made with brown butter? The caramelized toasty, nutty flavor you get when you brown butter just makes anything taste divine, whether it's sweet or savory!

In this shortbread cookie recipe, we used light brown sugar, and added toasted pecans for the perfect tea cookie or afternoon pick-me-up. I think that you'll find snitching the dough is pretty tasty too. When using brown butter for baked goods, you have to prepare it ahead of time, because you need to brown the butter and then chill it until it's firm again, before you take it out of the refrigerator to soften it for the cookies. I once made an entire wedding cake using this method and it took some extra time just to get enough brown butter for a four-layer wedding cake.

If you decide you love cooking or baking with brown butter, you can make a pound of it ahead of time and store it in the refrigerator. That way, it'll be ready to go when you are.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (8 oz.) brown butter (see notes on how to brown, chill and soften below)

1 cup, packed, light brown sugar

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups finely chopped toasted pecans

DIRECTIONS

How to brown butter:

Cut the cubes of butter (salted or unsalted . your choice) into smaller pieces (maybe 8 pieces per stick of butter) and bring it to room temperature. Place the butter in a sauce pan with a light colored bottom, if possible, so you can watch the color of the butter as it changes. Heat butter over medium heat until melted, stirring occasionally. Continue to cook until you see the butter foam and little brown crystals form along the edge and at the bottom of the pan. This whole process will take about 6 minutes or so. When the butter is brown, it will take on a rich, nutty smell and look like it has brown bits on the bottom and along the edges. Be sure not to burn the butter, which can happen quickly. Remove the brown butter from the stove and cool to room temperature. Once cooled, refrigerate it either in the pan or in a plastic container until firm. Now you are back to square one and can take this butter out to get it to room temperature just as you would with a regular cube or stick of butter before baking.

Note: You should account for about 15% loss in volume after browning the butter, so make a little extra to make up the difference.

Shortbread Cookies:

Preheat oven to 325 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place softened brown butter in a mixing bowl. Using an electric beater, beat butter with brown sugar and vanilla until fluffy. Add flour and salt and mix until well-integrated. Finally, stir in the toasted, chopped pecans and mix well. The mixture will be rather thick at this point.

Place dough on a floured cloth or cutting board and roll out with a rolling pin to 1/4-inch thickness. Using a 2-inch biscuit cutter, cut the dough into rounds. This may take several steps of reshaping the dough after you've cut several of the cookies out.

Place the cookie rounds on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake for approximately 15-20 minutes, or until cookies begin to look golden brown. Remove from oven and cool completely before removing from baking sheet.

These cookies store well for up to a week in an airtight container.



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