

Hint of salt makes these bittersweet chocolate cookies sing



Double Dark Chocolate Toasted Pecan Cookies

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

I have been eyeing this recipe in my old metal recipe box for a couple of years now, wondering who in the heck gave it to me. I don't recognize the handwriting and there's no one's name on it. Also, the 5x7 card is in immaculate condition, indicating that we'd never used it before. But, whoever gave it to me, must have been a really wonderful baker!

We've updated the recipe a bit by using bittersweet chocolate chips and toasted pecans. Then, for the final touch, we ground a splash of pink Himalayan salt over the top before bak-

ing the cookies. Oh my. That's all ... pure cookie joy!

The little twist of the salt grinder really brings out the flavor in these cookies. The richness of the bittersweet chocolate combined with brown sugar and the aromatic flavor of toasted pecans is just perfect for chocolate lovers. We love a cakey cookie, so the extra flour helps keep them tall and firm, but crisp at the same time. They are delicious and gooey right out of the oven, but if you have time to bake them ahead of time, they freeze really well. Just thaw them out about 10 minutes before serving.

Double Dark Chocolate Toasted Pecan Cookies

(Makes 24 Cookies)

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 3/4 cup light brown sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 egg, beaten
 1/4 cup cocoa powder (we love Valrhona Dutch-processed cocoa powder, but use your own favorite)
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup bittersweet chocolate chips
 3/4 cup pecans, chopped and toasted (buy pre-toasted or toast in 400 F oven for 6-8 minutes, keeping your eye on them so they don't burn!)
 Pink Himalayan or Sea Salt for topping

DIRECTIONS

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Preheat oven to 350 F. In a mixing bowl, cream together butter with brown and granulated sugar with an electric beater until fluffy. Stir in vanilla. Add beaten egg and stir into mixture until very well incorporated.

In a separate bowl, whisk together all dries: flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Add dries to the butter-egg mixture and beat until well mixed. Stir in chocolate chips and pecans.

With an ice cream scoop, make rounds of dough and place on a prepared baking sheet, 12 at a time.

Grind a dash of salt over each cookie and bake for 11-12 minutes, until set in the center.

Remove from oven and cool. Eat right away, while nice and gooey, or store in an airtight container for several days. You can also freeze the cookies and thaw just before eating.

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Headlands Brewing Co., a new family-friendly hangout



Photo Kristin Godfrey

By Jenn Freedman

Headlands Brewing Co. opened its doors May 28 on the east side of Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette, adjacent to Bonehead's Texas BBQ. The taproom features a 20-tap floating draught tower, two outdoor patios with fire pits, family and dog-friendly landscaping, and live music featuring local bands. Headlands offers small batch ales

exclusively available at the brewery, as well as guest beers, local wines and cider, and a light food menu. In addition, merchandise, gift cards, and beer to go (cans or growlers) are also available.

The drink menu is rather impressive already, with nine of Headlands' own beers on tap. These include both light ales like a pilsner, light lager, hefeweizen, and barrel-aged sour pilsner, as well as plenty of hoppy options, including

three hazy IPAs, a hazy pale ale, and a double IPA. Notably, local Moraga favorite Canyon Club is on tap at Headlands too (and vice versa!). Finally, not to be missed is the frose' (frozen rose wine) as well as non-alcoholic options like frozen pink lemonade.

The food menu is simple, yet inclusive. The mains include a kid-friendly beef hot dog, chicken sweet Italian sausage, and a vegan brat, available in seven styles (like Chicago or Seattle style). Snacks include jerky, trail mix, and vanilla soft serve.

Headlands Brewing Co was originally founded in 2013 when two exceptional home brewers with a love of outdoor adventures and craft beer decided to get together to combine their shared passions. For the past few years they have been brewing their beer in San Francisco and distributed to grocery stores and restaurants/bars. The two founders are no longer a part of Headlands, but the brand lives on with the same values and foundation they instilled back in the day.



Photo Jenn Freedman



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Headlands is still in soft open mode as they wait for construction to complete in areas like bike rack installation, a gate around the perimeter, the front firepit, etc. Current soft opening hours are Tuesday through Thursday 3 to 9 p.m., Friday 3 to 10 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Once the brewery is ready for the official opening, it will be open 7 days a week from noon on weekdays and 11 a.m. on weekends.

For the latest, head to www.headlandsbrewing.com.



Photo Kristin Godfrey

Kiku Sushi & Vegetarian offers fresh options for all



Kobe Soup

Photos Jenn Freedman



Soba Salad



Assorted sushi rolls

By Jenn Freedman

Kiku Sushi & Vegetarian opened its doors on May 18 on the west side of Lafayette Circle. Kiku's original location, Kiku Sushi, in Berkeley on Gilman Avenue has been open for 10 years.

Kiku impressively offers both a traditional Japanese

and Sushi menu, and an entire vegetarian/vegan menu, too. "Many of our customers expressed not being able to accommodate all of their friends, families or partners at our establishment because they could not eat seafood or meat. By offering both menus we found that our customers love being able to bring everyone together to enjoy a

good meal that has delicious options for all. And that has made us different and highly popular," owner Sophia Batsaikhan shares.

Kiku sources fresh fish daily. For example, uni (sea urchin) comes either from Japan or locally from Monterey. Since their selection is so fresh, popular dishes include nigiri/sashimi items like

hamachi, sake (salmon) and uni as well as makis (rolls) like spicy tuna, rainbow, and scallop. The ingredients in the vegetarian and vegan dishes are made from local growers. Some of the more popular dishes are the soba salad, shi-take mushroom and kinoko soup, green dragon roll, and gogo roll. Kiku updates the menus frequently.

Kiku is open for lunch Tuesday through Saturday and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Hours vary by day. You can view hours and menu on their website at <http://www.kikusushiandvegetarian.com>. DoorDash is also available for delivery.