

## Farmers Market Oatmeal Cookies

(Adapted from a Cooks Illustrated Recipe—I call it Farmers Market because a bunch of the ingredients are from artisan farms in the area)

### Hardware

3 bowls, mixer with a flat/wide beater , mixer whisk attachment (or a hand-held whisk), 2 cookie sheets, parchment paper or silpats, cooling racks, spatula and scraper

### Bowl #1: Insertions

- 1 ¼ cups rolled oats
- 4 ounces (4 cubes) of really rich semi-sweet or dark chocolate (*I like Scharffen Berger semi-sweet for this—it's a bit less sweet than most, but any really good chocolate will work as long as it's not too light/milky. If you use plain old Hersheys or Bakers you WILL be able to tell the difference. DO NOT use TollHouse chips.*)
- ½ cup dry or freeze-dried sour cherries (*I like to use both—fresh are even better if you have them but NOT sweet cherries. If you use freeze-dried cherries make sure you halve them and check for pits*)
- ½ cup fresh cranberries, halved (and no, it doesn't take THAT long)
- ¾ cup chopped, toasted pecans
- ¼ cup chopped, toasted hazelnuts (I tried half-half or just one type of nut—doesn't taste as good)

### Bowl #2: Dry ingredients

- ¼ t. freshly grated nutmeg (or to taste—I like a bit more)
- Pinch cardamom
- Pinch coriander
- ¾ t. baking powder (plus about a pinch more if you're using whole wheat flour)
- ½ t. baking soda
- 1 ¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour (Cooks says white flour, I like white whole wheat flour or hand-milled flour, even though it's a bit heavier—makes a nuttier flavor)
- ¾ t. kosher salt or ½ t. regular salt

### Bowl #3: Wet ingredients

- 1.5 sticks very fresh unsalted butter (it's even better if you get fresh butter from the farmer, “French-style” if possible)
- 1 egg
- 1 ¼ cups packed light brown sugar
- 1/3 cup molasses (or ¼ cup packed dark brown sugar if you don't have molasses)
- 1 t. vanilla (please...really GOOD vanilla, not the fake stuff)

### Decoration

Fleur de sel (you'll need about a teaspoon all told—I also found some red sea salt that is pretty good)

## Instructions

*I like to do the mis en place thing with this recipe. The insertions take some time to prepare and you don't want the other stuff waiting around and taking the oomph out of the baking powder, so prepare bowls #1 and #2 in this order, even the night before. When you're ready to start cooking, start on bowl #3.*

**Bowl #1 (Insertions).** Spread the nuts out on a cookie sheet and toast in a 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until they just start to turn brown. While that's happening, dump the rolled oats, cherries and cranberries in the bowl. Chunk the chocolate with a big knife or cleaver into non-uniform pieces (mine usually range from pinhead-sized to about the size of a small hazelnut—the smallest will mix in and flavor the cookie body, the big ones taste great) and dump it into the bowl.

Roughly chop the toasted nuts (when they're cool enough) and add them, too. Stir them up until thoroughly mixed and set the bowl aside.

**Bowl #2 (Dry ingredients).** Get a wire whisk (or the whisk on your KitchenAid mixer, if you have one) and dump the flour, baking powder and baking soda in the bowl. Whisk until thoroughly mixed, then add the salt and spices. Mix a bit longer, then set aside.

**Bowl #3 (Wet ingredients—only start this when you're ready to bake).** *Preheat oven to 350 degrees, and don't start mixing until the oven is at or very close to temp.*

Cream butter and sugar/molasses together until smooth, then add the egg and beat until fluffy. Add vanilla and beat in until thoroughly mixed.

Now, gradually add the contents of Bowl #2 (dry) into Bowl #3 (wet) using the flat beater of the mixer, alternating scraping and beating until everything's thoroughly mixed in. It's going to be stiff, but if it's like playdough, add just a tad more butter. Once it's all mixed in, start adding the contents of Bowl#1 (insertions). Mix as much in as you can with the beater, at a very low speed—toward the end, you may need to add the last little bit by hand.

Divide the dough into 24 portions, roll each into a ball with slightly greased hands and set half of them on two parchment- or silpat-covered cookie sheets. (Parchment seems to make a crisper bottom). Make sure your palm is still greased and mash each ball to about half its height on the cookie sheet.

If you've used all light brown sugar, sprinkle the top of each ball with a pinch of fleur de sel—don't let it clump in one place, make sure it's reasonably well distributed. If you've used molasses, skip this step; the salt really brings out the flavor of sweeter cookies but is a bit much with the molasses. (But try it yourself and see)

Bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes, then rotate the sheets in the oven back to front, shelf-to-shelf. Bak another 5 minutes and start watching the cookies. When the edges just start to brown, even if they still look wet on top, they're done. They overbake really, really easily so don't be fooled.

Take them out and put them on racks to cool, and do the second half of the dough.