

Drop Dead! Pecan Spice Cookies From Betty Fussell

Makes 24 Cookies

2 cups (240 grams) all-purpose flour
1. teaspoons baking soda
1. teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine salt
Freshly ground black pepper (optional)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups pecans, finely chopped
1 stick unsalted butter,
at room temperature
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed light brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup molasses
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 large egg, beaten
 $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar or sanding sugar

“Because I like to improvise and play with whatever I’m cooking, I’m not a good baker,” admits ninety-two-year-old cookbook author and memoirist Betty Fussell. “Especially if I’m in a rage and seek the kitchen for outlet. Impatient with precise measurement at the best of times, rage requires a foolproof classic that I can’t ruin. I resort to a traditional drop cookie of sugar-butter-flour-nuts-spice that I can push onto the baking pan from the tip of a spoon. Got no patience for rolling out dough and fiddling with a cookie cutter in this kind of mood. Obviously I will (just as you will) adjust spices in quantity and kind. If I’m really mad, a dash of black pepper in the dough does me no end of good.”

Whisk together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, salt, and some pepper, if you like, in large bowl. Stir in the pecans.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and brown sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 1 minute. Add the molasses and vanilla and beat until fully incorporated. Add the egg and beat until evenly combined. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture and beat until just incorporated. Cover and refrigerate until the dough is firm enough to scoop, about 30 minutes.

Position two racks evenly in the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

Put the granulated sugar on a plate. Scoop up about 2 tablespoons of the dough and roll it into a ball, then roll the ball in the sugar to coat. Place it on the prepared baking sheet and repeat with the remaining dough, spacing the cookies about 2 inches apart. Using your hand, press down on the cookies to flatten them.

Bake the cookies until slightly puffed up and just crisp along the edges, 12 to 14 minutes, switching the pans from top to bottom and bottom to top about halfway through the baking time. Transfer the baking sheet to a wire rack and let cool. These cookies will keep in a tightly sealed container for up to 5 days.