

Taste



Eating in

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AT this time of year there seems to be a fair every weekend and, also, with Christmas not far away, it is timely to share some recipes for biscuits that keep well, look and taste good and are suitable to package up for a gift or cake stall.

If you make them in advance make sure that you store them in a cool place in an airtight container.

A piece of kitchen paper in the base of the container seems to help to keep them fresh.

When slicing the almond bread for best results use an electric knife.

It is important to leave the bread overnight to get the slices as thin as possible.

The parmesan cheese needs to be good quality and certainly not the pre-grated variety. Parmigiano Grano would be a good choice.

The biscuits are best when they are small and are delicious with a glass of wine.

The gingerbread keeps very well and can be made at least two weeks before you need it. I often make a large star and decorate it with cherries and nuts before cooking it.

Cut a template from cardboard and use that as a guide for cutting.

This is a great centrepiece for the Christmas table and can be nibbled away at during the meal. Cut a hole in the centre for a candle to sit. They also make a nice gift.

You can also use this mixture to make decorations for the Christmas tree.

To make a hole to hang them by place a piece of uncooked macaroni in the biscuits and then remove them carefully as soon as the biscuits come out of the oven.

Decorate the ginger bread with icing when they are completely cool.

Be inventive with how you present the biscuits. They look good in a little terracotta pot wrapped in cellophane or a mug.

Cut a shape in a brown paper or white bag then put a cellophane bag inside that so that the biscuits can be seen. Tie them up with thick butchers string or pretty ribbons.

Parmesan shortbread

Freezes well

100g plain flour

100g unsalted butter, cubed

75g grated parmesan cheese

1 egg yolk

Pinch cayenne pepper

Combine all ingredients in a food processor. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll out until 1cm thick. Bake at 170C for 30 minutes until golden. Cool and store in an airtight container.

Gingerbread biscuits

185g butter, softened

1 cup brown sugar, well packed

1 teaspoon bicarbonate soda

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Pinch salt

1 cup golden syrup

2 teaspoons cinnamon

1 teaspoon nutmeg

Pinch ground cloves

4 cups plain flour

1 packet red and green glaze cherries

2 eggs

Few pecans or walnuts for decoration

This mixture can be used to make gingerbread men. This recipe is best made in a Mixmaster. Halve the recipe if making with a hand-held mixer.

Cover a baking tray with foil.

Place the first nine ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Add two cups of the flour and one egg.

Mix at low speed until well blended.

Add remaining flour and knead to a firm dough with your hands.

Roll out thinly and cut into desired shapes. Place on biscuit tray.

Beat remaining egg with a little water (1 tablespoon) and brush the gingerbread to form a glaze. Alternatively, the biscuits can be decorated by painting with food colouring before cooking.

Cook at 180C for 10-15 minutes until lightly browned and "set".

Place on a rack to cool.

Place a short piece of spaghetti in the biscuit to make a hole for hanging biscuits as decorations.

Remove after cooking but while the biscuits are still warm.

Almond bread

4 egg whites

1 cup unblanched almonds

½ cup caster sugar

1 cup plain flour

half teaspoon vanilla

These crispy slices contain no added fat and keep very well.

Beat egg whites until stiff then gradually beat in caster sugar until the mixture holds stiff peaks. Gently fold in flour, almonds and vanilla. Spoon into a greased/lined loaf tin and cook for about 30 minutes at 180C.

When cooked allow to cool completely, then refrigerate for at least 12 hours.

Slice very thinly then bake at 150C for about 10 minutes until golden brown.

Allow to cool then store in an airtight container. Serve as a biscuit or with fruit, custard or ice cream.



TASTY GIFT: Be inventive with how you present biscuits, like these gingerbreads, left. They look good in a little terracotta pot wrapped in cellophane or a mug with a bed of tissue paper.

LONG-LASTING: When slicing almond bread use an electric knife. It is important to leave the bread overnight to get the slices as thin as possible.

Biscuit bake for season of giving

