

Mocha Shortbread Squares*Makes about 4-5 dozen cookies*

Not only are these cookies easy to make, they are swoon worthy! With classic shortbread cookie roots, these cookies are imbued with special powers due to a deliberate double-down on chocolate and a healthy dose of espresso. One secret to these cookies is the coarse salt or crumbled flaked salt. It doesn't quite dissolve into the dough, so that when eaten, random salty bursts occur making these cookies extra wonderful. We've dressed them for holiday success with a drizzle of melted white chocolate. No matter the season, it's worth keeping a log of this dough in the freezer for chocolate-craving emergencies. *(This cookie was inspired by Dorie Greenspan's World Peace Cookies, which are also scrumptious!)*

Cookie Ingredients:

1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tablespoons espresso powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup unsalted butter, (1-1/2 sticks) softened room temperature
1/2 cups light brown sugar, packed
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3/4 teaspoon coarse or crumbled flaked salt (or 1/2 teaspoon table salt)
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped coarsely

Decorations: (optional)

6 ounces white chocolate, melted

Directions:

1. Measure the flour, cocoa powder, espresso powder, and baking soda, and whisk together in a small bowl until all of the ingredients are evenly distributed.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer, or large mixing bowl, place the butter and mix for about 30 seconds until nicely softened. Add the brown sugar, white sugar, coarse salt and vanilla extract, and beat until just evenly incorporated. Add the flour mixture in two portions. Mix well, but do not overmix.
3. Chop the chocolate into small, coarse pieces. Fold into the dough until evenly distributed.
4. Gather the dough together, divide in half, and with the help of parchment paper or plastic wrap, roll each piece into a log approximately 1-1/2-inch in diameter. You may leave them in this round shape, or with a little pressing create a square log. Chill the log in the refrigerator for a minimum of two hours, or up to 3 days, or up to 1 month in the freezer.

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5. At baking time, preheat the oven to 325°F. Prepare cookie baking sheets by lining with parchment paper or choosing nonstick baking sheets. Using a large, sharp knife, slice the dough logs in one-quarter inch slices. Place on the cookie sheet. These cookies will not spread as much as some cookies, so they may be placed closer together. We bake 24 at a time on a standard sized cookie sheet.

6. Bake for 12 minutes without opening the oven. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and place on a cooling rack. Allow the cookies to cool slightly – about 4-5 minutes – right on the baking sheet, then transfer the cookies to a cooling rack and allow to cool completely.

7. Because it's the holidays, you might like to add a little embellishment. Melt the white chocolate and dip the bottom of each cookie square. Place on a cooling rack to allow the chocolate to harden prior to packaging. If desired, drizzling any remaining melted chocolate randomly across the cookie tops.