

Gingerbread Christmas biscuits

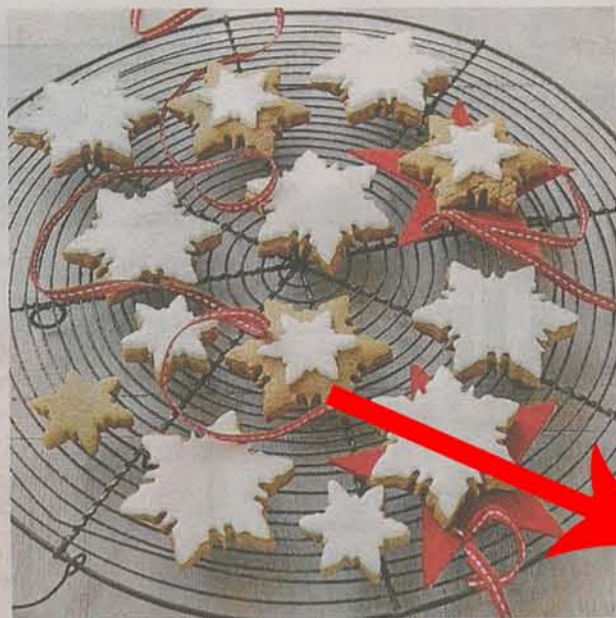
Nothing says Christmas to me quite like gingerbread. These biscuits are easy to make and look very professional with ready-made icing, which is available from the supermarket. For coloured icing, add a few drops of food colouring before kneading. You will need to mix it in well.

INGREDIENTS

- 200g butter
- 90g sugar
- 90g brown sugar
- ¼ cup treacle
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- 1 egg, beaten
- 450g plain flour
- 2 tsp bicarb soda
- Pinch salt
- 500g ready-made, ready-to-roll white icing (available at supermarkets)

METHOD

- Cream the butter and both sugars together until light and fluffy. Add treacle, spices and egg. Mix well.
- Sift flour with bicarb soda and salt. Add flour to butter and egg mix, a little at a time, stirring well after each addition. Knead dough lightly, wrap in cling film and refrigerate for one hour.
- Preheat oven to 180C (160C fan-forced).
- Roll out dough thinly on a lightly floured surface. Cut out shapes and place on trays lined with baking paper.



- Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven, place on wire racks and allow to cool.
 - Take the ready-made icing out of the wrapper and knead. (If the icing is hard, microwave on medium power for 20-30 seconds to soften.) Lightly dust the work surface with icing sugar and roll out the icing thinly. Cut out shapes with a pastry cutter.
 - Brush the cooled biscuits with water and place the icing shapes on top. Press down lightly.
- Makes 40**

Christmas fruit mince tarts

INGREDIENTS

- 3 granny smith apples
- 250g seedless raisins, chopped
- 250g sultanas
- 150g currants
- 100g dried cranberries
- 125g dried apricots, finely chopped
- 125g mixed peel, finely chopped
- 100 dried figs, finely chopped
- 100g slivered almonds
- Finely grated rind and juice of 3 oranges
- Finely grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
- 200g brown sugar
- 2 tbsp honey or golden syrup
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 150g butter, melted
- 100ml orange liqueur or brandy

METHOD

- For the filling, peel and coarsely grate apples. Combine with all remaining ingredients and mix well.
 - Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours, stirring occasionally.
 - Spoon into sterilised jars, seal and store in the refrigerator for up to two months.
- Makes 7 cups**

Pastry

INGREDIENTS

- 170g plain flour
- 80g icing sugar
- 2 tsp ground almonds
- 100g chilled butter, chopped
- 1 egg separated (yolk only for pastry)
- 1 tbsp chilled water

METHOD

- Process flour, icing sugar, ground almonds and butter in a



- food processor until well combined and mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
- Add egg yolk and chilled water and, using the pulse button, process until mixture starts to come together. Bring pastry together with hands and shape into a disc.
- Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for one hour.

To assemble tarts:

- Roll out pastry thinly, cut out rounds and place in greased tart trays. Cut out some pastry shapes to decorate. You can use star or snowflake cutters to make it festive. Spoon in some fruit-mince filling and place a pastry shape on top (optional).
 - Bake in moderate oven (180C) for 20-30 minutes, until the pastry is golden.
 - Remove from oven and cool on cake racks. Dust with sifted icing sugar before serving.
- Makes about 18 tarts.**

MARKET WATCH

Blackberries Already good but the quality and supply will improve.
Celery Top time for Victorian variety.
Lemons Short supply from the Victoria-South Australia riverland, with stocks supplemented by US-grown fruit. Prices higher than usual.
Onions New-season brown and flat white salad varieties both have a beautiful flavour at the moment.
Peaches White flesh in best supply and quality is good.

Pineapples More becoming available. Don't be deterred by greenish skin.
Plums Early varieties of yellow-fleshed ones now available.
Pumpkin Butternut variety from Queensland's Lockyer Valley coming down in price and great for roasting.
Rockmelons Pleasant supply from Queensland and prices are low.
Tomatoes Gourmet variety in peak supply and prices are falling.

TONY NIGRO

BOOKS

Martha Goes Green

By Rosie Percival and Ruth Friedlander
 Self-published, PB, \$29.95;
marthagoesgreen.com.au



IN THE overblown world of glossy cookbooks, how do a couple of humble, suburban greenie authors get noticed? Visual arts graduates Rosie Percival (a vegan) and Ruth Friedlander (a vegetarian) coupled their love of food and a passion for design to craft a delightfully simple vegetarian publication that's hard to ignore. The duo's green principles extend to 100 per cent recycled paper and vegetable-based inks; it comes packaged in a reusable book bag fashioned from organic cotton and manufactured in India under a fair trade system. Called *Martha Goes Green*, its other message is, of course, that eating less meat is a positive environmental contribution. The reference to Martha in the title refers to renowned US cookbook queen Martha Stewart, a name chosen to infer that "anyone can go green", says Percival. The collection of more than 50 recipes includes some usually meat-based dishes such as lasagne and sausage rolls. The recipes are hardly sophisticated but like the package, they have their charms. When Epicure tested the sorta shepherd's pie (four-bean-mix in place of meat) at home, the leftovers were "reserved" by younger family members in the family fridge for consumption the next day.

VERONICA RIDGE

At Home & in the Mood

By Luke Mangan
 New Holland, HB, \$59.95



AT HOME and in the mood? Not if you're Luke Mangan — cooking for rock stars and royalty, running restaurants in

Tokyo, San Francisco and Sydney, one soon to open in Melbourne, another on P&O's Pacific Jewel. Add chef for Virgin America's first-class routes, roving food reporter, a provisions range and now this, his fourth cookbook. Incredible. Super-human skills aside, this is a beautiful book, perfect for both ingenues and experienced home cooks. Mangan's mantra is fresh food cooked simply and shared in good company. No exotic ingredients. No expensive equipment. No smears and spheres. Just low fuss, a little fusion and big flavours. Think classics with a twist. From snacks, soups, salads and spices to stocks, slow roasts and seafood, you will find more than 150 easy-to-follow recipes peppered with home-entertaining hints and anecdotes. All up, this is a rather handsome book, one that reads like a world tour brought to life by Dean Cambray's gorgeous photographs.

MICHELLE POTTS

Express Cook

Dorling Kindersley, HB, \$60



THERE is a sense of urgency created in the speed and ease with which you can navigate this hefty tome, with more than 700 recipes that have been sensibly formatted. It's layout is practical, and it lives up to its name with quick, approachable recipes, where time, rather than provenance or seasonality, is of the essence. Take, for example, chapters such as: 10 Ways With . . . (ingredients such as mince, turkey and cheese); Speedy Suppers (30 minutes or less from start to finish); and Storecupboard (using dried, tinned, bottled or frozen food). Recipes such as tuna and white beans with olives; chicken with pancetta, peas and mint; or a goat's cheese and zucchini omelet are both easy to follow and taste good (in little time). And the sweet sections — No-cook Desserts, Cakes and Bakes, and Indulgent Puddings — make you want to keep cooking (which is the best job a cook book can do).

HILARY McNEVIN

"celebremos el verano"

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