

Recipes from ***Chewy Gooey Crispy Crunchy*** by Alice Medrich. Copyright © 2010. Published by Artisan, a Division of Workman Publishing Company, Inc., New York, NY. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Pebbly Beach Fruit Square

Makes thirty-two 2-1/2 inch square cookies

These crunchy-crisp and chewy cookies with sparkling bumpy tops started out to be simple raisin cookies. Indeed, you can pair lemon zest, cinnamon, or anise with dark or golden raisins. But you can also make the cookies with prunes, apricots, cherries, dates, cranberries, or candied ginger. Verbatim from our testing notes: anise is best with the prunes but smells divine in the oven, no matter what fruit we use. Try a ginger/cranberry combo for the holidays (and note that the cookies are sturdy enough to ship) If dried fruit is especially hard or chewy, it will only get harder after baking. To avoid this, soak pieces in a small bowl with just enough cold water (or fruit juices or wine) to cover for 20 minutes (longer will dilute and oversoften the fruit). Drain and pat pieces very dry before using.

INGREDIENTS:

1-3/4 cups plus 2 tablespoons (8.5 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
3/4 cup (5.25 ounces) granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest or ground cinnamon or anise
1 cup moist dried fruit (one kind or a combination): dark or golden raisins; dried sour cherries; dried cranberries; coarsely chopped dates, dried apricots, or prunes; finely chopped candied ginger
1/4 cup (1.75 ounces) turbinado or other coarse sugar

EQUIPMENT:

Cookie sheets, lined with parchment paper or greased

Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl and mix together thoroughly with a whisk or fork.

With a large spoon in a medium mixing bowl or with a mixer, beat the butter with the granulated sugar until smooth and well blended but not fluffy. Add the egg, vanilla, and lemon zest and beat until smooth. Add the flour mixture and mix until completely incorporated.

Pebbly Beach Fruit Square, (continued)

Divide the dough in half and form each into a rectangle. Wrap the patties in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let sit for 15 minutes to soften slightly. On a sheet of parchment paper or plastic wrap, roll one piece of dough into a rectangle 8-1/2 inches by 16-1/2 inches. With a short side facing you, scatter half of the dried fruit on the bottom half of the dough. Fold the top half of the dough over the fruit, using the paper as a handle. Peel the paper from the top of the dough (if it sticks, chill the dough for a few minutes until the paper peels easily). Dust the top of the dough lightly with flour. Flip the dough onto a lightly floured cutting board and peel off the remaining paper. Sprinkle with half of the coarse sugar and pat lightly to make sure the sugar adheres. Use a heavy knife to trim the edges. Cut into 4 strips and then cut each strip into 4 pieces to make 16 squares. Place the cookies 2 inches apart on the lined or greased pans. Repeat with the remaining dough, fruit, and sugar.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the edges are lightly browned. Rotate the pans from top to bottom and from front to back halfway through the baking time to ensure even baking. For lined pans, set the pans or just the liners on racks to cool; for unlined pans, use a metal spatula to transfer the cookies to racks. Cool the cookies completely before stacking or storing. May be kept in an airtight container for a week.