

Italian-Style Biscotti (Yields 14 to 16 biscotti)

2 large eggs
2/3 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) a large (about 18 x 13 inch) baking sheet.

In a medium bowl, beat the eggs, sugar, baking powder, salt, and vanilla until creamy looking; the mixture will be light-colored and as thick as pancake batter. Lower the mixer speed and add the flour, beating gently just until it's totally incorporated.

Transfer the dough to the prepared baking sheet, and shape it into a rough log about 14 inches long. It will be about 2.5 inches wide and about 3/4 inches thick. Smooth the top of the log with a wet dough scraper.

Bake the dough for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool on the pan for 5 to 25 minutes. Five minutes before cutting, use a spray bottle of room-temperature water to lightly but thoroughly spritz the log, making sure to cover the sides and the top. Softening the crust just this little bit will make slicing the biscotti much easier.

Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees F. Wait another 5 minutes, then cut the biscotti into 1/2 to 3/4 inch slices. How thick you slice them depends on a number of factors. This recipe, without nuts or add-ins, is easy to slice thin. Once you add chips, almonds, raisins, and other chunky ingredients, a 3/4-inch slice is more realistic. When slicing, be sure to cut straight up and down. If you cut biscotti wider at the top than at the bottom, they'll topple over during their second bake.

Set the biscotti upright on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and transfer to a rack to cool. Store the biscotti in an airtight container, to preserve their texture. If they aren't as hard as you'd like (and the weather is dry), store them uncovered, overnight to continue drying. Biscotti can be stored at room temperature for 2 weeks; for longer storage, wrap airtight and freeze.

Nutrition information per serving: (1 biscotti, 29g): 91 cal, 1g fat, 2g protein, 11g complex carbohydrates, 8g sugar, 27mg cholesterol, 90mg sodium, 26mg potassium, 12 RE vitamin A, 1 mg iron, 12mg calcium, 27mg phosphorous.

American-Style Biscotti (Yields 14 to 16 biscotti)

6 tablespoons unsalted butter
2/3 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1.5 teaspoon baking powder
2 large eggs
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) a large (about 18 x 13 inch) baking sheet.

In a medium bowl, beat the butter, sugar, baking powder, salt, and vanilla until the mixture is smooth and creamy. Beat in the eggs; the batter may look slightly curdled. Lower the mixer speed and add the flour, and mix until smooth. The dough will be quite soft and sticky, but should hold its shape when you drop it from a spoon.

Transfer the dough to the prepared baking sheet, and shape it into a rough log about 14 inches long. It will be about 2.5 inches wide and about 3/4 inches thick. Smooth the top of the log with a wet dough scraper.

Bake the dough for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool on the pan for 5 to 25 minutes. Five minutes before cutting, use a spray bottle of room-temperature water to lightly but thoroughly spritz the log, making sure to cover the sides and the top. Softening the crust just this little bit will make slicing the biscotti much easier.

Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees F. Wait another 5 minutes, then cut the biscotti into 1/2 to 3/4 inch slices. How thick you slice them depends on a number of factors. This recipe, without nuts or add-ins, is easy to slice thin. Once you add chips, almonds, raisins, and other chunky ingredients, a 3/4-inch slice is more realistic. When slicing, be sure to cut straight up and down. If you cut biscotti wider at the top than at the bottom, they'll topple over during their second bake.

Set the biscotti upright on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and transfer to a rack to cool. Store the biscotti in an airtight container, to preserve their texture. If they aren't as hard as you'd like (and the weather is dry), store them uncovered, overnight to continue drying. Biscotti can be stored at room temperature for 2 weeks; for longer storage, wrap airtight and freeze.

Nutrition information per serving: (1 biscotti, 35g): 131 cal, 5g fat, 2g protein, 11g complex carbohydrates, 8g sugar, 39mg cholesterol, 88mg sodium, 27mg potassium, 54 RE vitamin A, 1 mg iron, 30mg calcium, 35mg phosphorous.

Biscotti Variations

Pistachio-Cherry Biscotti (Yield 16 to 18 biscotti)

Golden-green, mildly salty pistachios and deep red, sweet and tangy dried cherries complement each other beautifully, both in color and flavor.

- 1 recipe Essential Biscotti (Italian-Style, or American-Style)
- 2 drops strong cherry flavor (optional)
- 1 cup chopped pistachios
- 1 cup sweet or sour dried cherries

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) a large (18 x 13 inch) baking sheet.

Prepare the biscotti dough of your choice, substituting the cherry flavor for the vanilla, if desired. Stir in the pistachios and cherries. Shape and bake the biscotti as directed in the recipe you've chosen. If the cherries are very fresh and moist, the biscotti may be fairly soft at the end of the baking time. For crunchier biscotti, bake for an additional 5 to 10 minutes.

Cranberry-Orange Biscotti (Yield 16 to 18 biscotti)

This classic muffin and quick bread flavor pairing translates beautifully to biscotti. These make a lovely dessert at Thanksgiving, if you can tear folks away from the pumpkin pie. Measure the orange zest into the tablespoon without packing it. It takes about half a large orange to yield a tablespoon of zest.

- 1 recipe Essential Biscotti (Italian-Style, or American-Style)
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon grated orange rind (zest)
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup chopped walnuts, toasted

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) a large (18 x 13 inch) baking sheet.

Prepare the biscotti dough of your choice, adding the orange juice and zest once the egg/sugar mixture is fully beaten. Stir in the cranberries and walnuts along with the flour. Shape and bake the biscotti as directed in the recipe you've chosen.

Brown Sugar-Cinnamon Biscotti (Yield 16 to 18 biscotti)

These comforting biscotti remind us of cinnamon toast. If you can't find cinnamon chips at the supermarket, substitute butterscotch chips.

- 1 recipe Essential Biscotti (Italian-Style, or American-Style)
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 cup cinnamon chips
- 1 cup chopped walnuts, toasted (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) a large (18 x 13 inch) baking sheet.

Prepare the biscotti dough of your choice, substituting the brown sugar for the granulated sugar. Stir in the cinnamon, cinnamon chips, and walnuts along with the flour. Shape and bake the biscotti as directed in the recipe you've chosen.

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