



Sweet treats from Cape Ann kitchens are great for entertaining, gifting or just plain eating

Crazy for Cookies

By JILL DIVER •
Photos by KATE GLASS

Felicia Mohan mixes eggs and durum wheat flour to make Pinolata cookies, as Eloise Ciaramitaro, Amanda Mohan, Madeline Ciaramitaro and Rose Ciaramitaro watch.



It's the holiday season. That can mean joy. Or stress.

For most people it means both.

The tough economy may have added some more stress to your holiday agenda, too, in the form of worries about where the money to buy all those gifts and do all that entertaining will come from.

It's entirely possible, however, to give a gift that will have recipients screaming, "Sweet!" — and on a budget. All you need is time, recipes and maybe a little advice from the experts around Cape Ann.

"Baking is a science," said Laurie Lufkin, 44, of Essex, an avid cook and past guest on Food Network's "The Ultimate Recipe Showdown" and New England Cable Network's "TV Diner."

"If you get it wrong," this kitchen perfectionist said, "do it again until you get it right."

These days, Lufkin doesn't bake alone. Rather, her 9-year-old daughter is studying under her tutelage.

"Lily and I bake a lot," she said. "She has a little stool in the kitchen and it's time that we can spend together uninterrupted."

For Felicia Mohan of Gloucester, baking during this season is about the holiday traditions that she and her family carry on.

"I grew up loving to cook, because of my grandmother Felicia," Mohan said. "Holidays always started weeks before. As a child I was always on a chair watching what she did."

When she had children of her own, it was very important for Mohan to share the same experience with them.

"It's my mission in life to pass on those traditions," said Mohan. "It's food that is bringing the family together."

Mary Ann McCormick, owner of Lark Fine Foods in Essex, said she hears similar sentiments from people all the time during the holidays.

McCormick's shop offers unexpected surprises, like spicy Cha-Chas and Salted Rosemary Shortbread, which, as the name implies, is rosemary-seasoned shortbread lightly dusted with sea salt.

Though traditional holiday cookies are not her specialty, McCormick is considering adding cut-out cookies to her inventory. She thinks anyone who has the time to make cookies at home and gift them to others is bound to be met with delight.

"Cookies are time consuming," McCormick said. "That makes them an

attractive gift, because not everyone has the time to bake cookies for the holidays."

Lufkin and her daughter like to create new cookie recipes. And yet, they hang onto the old favorites.

"We bake a lot of the things my mother used to bake," she said.

Once the cookies are cooled and ready to package, there are a number of decorative options.

"I spend this time of year looking for bags and fun boxes," Lufkin said. "We try to make our wrappings festive."

Mohan is very particular about how she serves her Christmas cookies.

"Everyone knows me as the Mariposa queen," Mohan said. "My tradition is, I always display my cookies on my Mariposa. And sometimes I wrap my cookies with satin ribbons and make them look beautiful."

Ready to give it a try? Then preheat the oven, and start mixing up recipes from local baking pros.

Keep in mind that while cookies make great gifts, they are also fun to bake and eat anytime. They really warm up a Cape Ann kitchen in winter.



LILY'S HARVEST COOKIE BITES

Lily and Laurie Lufkin, Essex

YIELD: 5 DOZEN

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup butter-flavored shortening
- 1/4 cup salted butter
- 1 1/2 cups light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup cinnamon-flavored chips
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup chopped raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped dried apples
- 1 tablespoon chopped candied ginger

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line six baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, kosher salt, baking soda and cinnamon. Set aside.

In a large bowl, beat together shortening, butter, brown sugar, egg, vanilla and milk until light and fluffy.

Turn mixer to low speed and beat flour mixture and shortening mix. When all ingredients are mixed, add cinnamon chips, dried cranberries, chopped raisins, dried apples and candied ginger. Mix until combined.

Using a small ice cream scoop, spoon cookie dough onto prepared pan, 12 to a sheet. Bake for 10 to 11 minutes until edges are lightly browned.



PINULATA

Felicia Mohan, Gloucester

Mohan serves these fried treats coated with honey, Karo syrup, cinnamon, chocolate, almonds and walnuts in a bowl, sprinkled with Jimmies. She places them on the holiday table.

YIELD: 1 LARGE BROWN SHOPPING BAG

DOUGH INGREDIENTS

- 1 dozen large eggs
- 4 to 5 cups durum wheat flour
- La Spinola oil (vegetable oil with 1 percent olive oil)

COATING INGREDIENTS

- 1 16-ounce jar light ("white") Karo syrup
- 1 16-ounce jar honey
- 2 large Hershey chocolate bars with almonds, chopped into chunks
- 1 small package whole almonds blanched in water and peeled and toasted in oven
- 1 small package walnuts
- Fresh cinnamon sticks finely ground to taste
- Jimmies for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

To make the dough, beat eggs in a medium bowl. On a clean, flat, work surface place the 4 to 5 cups of durum Wheat flour in a pile and make a well in the center. One at a time, add eggs in the center well. Using flour from the edge of the flour pile, add flour to the center well and mix with a fork until all eggs are incorporated with the flour. Place dough in greased bowl.

Take pieces of the dough and roll into long logs. Cut pieces from the logs in 3/8-inch lengths and place on oiled cookie sheet so the pieces won't stick.

Starting with a tall pan, fill with cold La Spinola oil to the halfway mark, heat oil on high and add small amounts of the Pinulata pieces to the pan. When the Pinulatas float to the top of the oil and turn a light golden brown, remove them from the pan with a slotted spoon.

Place in a brown grocery bag to absorb oil. Repeat process until all pieces are cooked. Set bags aside.

To make the coating, mix Karo syrup, honey, Hershey chocolate bars with almonds, almonds, walnuts and cinnamon together in a bowl. Place the Pinulata pieces in a separate, large bowl. Pour the coating mixture over the Pinulata pieces.

Finish Pinulatas by placing in festive bowls and wetting your hands with water to mold the pieces into a high-rounded pyramid shape.

Sprinkle with jimmies.



DARK CHOCOLATE DRIZZLED CRANBERRY TANGERINE "BISCOOKIES"

Laurie Lufkin, Essex

YIELD: 4 DOZEN

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg

- 1/2 cup salted butter, room temperature
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons tangerine zest (use orange zest if preferred)
- 1 cup sweetened dried cranberries
- 1 tablespoon candied ginger
- 1/2 cup good quality semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 teaspoon shortening or vegetable oil

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cover two large baking sheets with parchment and set aside.

Whisk together dry ingredients: flour, baking powder, salt, cardamom and nutmeg. Set aside.

In a large bowl, cream butter, granulated sugar and brown sugar until well combined and lighter in color. Add eggs, one at a time, and vanilla extract. Beat or use electric mixer, until lighter in color and well blended. With mixer running on low, add dry ingredients and beat until incorporated. Beat in zest, dried cranberries and candied ginger.

Divide dough into four portions. Form into loaves about 4 inches wide by 8 inches long, and place two on each baking sheet.

Bake in preheated oven for 28 to 30 minutes, until loaves are golden brown and slightly cracked along the length of the loaf. Allow to cool for 15 minutes and slice on the diagonal. When cookies are completely cool, melt semisweet chocolate bits and shortening or oil together in a double boiler or in the microwave. Pour chocolate in to a small zip-top bag and seal. Snip corner of bag and drizzle over "biscookies," allowing chocolate to harden before shipping, storing or serving.



SASSY SESAME COOKIES

Patricia Flannagan, Gloucester

YIELD: 2 DOZEN

DOUGH INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 sticks butter
- 4 tablespoons sesame oil



Old Fashioned Molasses Ginger Cookies

- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups sugar

FROSTING INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons zest of lime (uses 2 to 3 limes)
- 1 1/2 cups confectionery sugar
- 4 ounces sesame honey candies
- 3 tablespoons candied ginger

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

To make the dough, mix butter, sesame oil, vanilla and eggs. Add flour, baking soda, salt and sugar. Blend well, then roll out the dough and cut to any shape.

To make the frosting, mix together the zest of limes and confectionery sugar. Chop or grate the candied ginger and honey candies and sprinkle on top of the frosting.

Bake cookies at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes.

OLD FASHIONED MOLASSES GINGER COOKIES

Laurie Lufkin, Essex

YIELD: 4 DOZEN

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/3 cup all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 cup butter-flavored or regular shortening

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup molasses
- Additional granulated or decorating sugar for rolling.

DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking soda, cinnamon and ginger. Set aside.

Using a hand or stand mixer, cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla extract and beat until combined. Add molasses and beat again. Slowly incorporate dry ingredients until well mixed. Divide dough in half and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least one hour or until ready to use.

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line four large baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside. Pour decorating or granulated sugar into a shallow dish.

Roll chilled dough in to 1-inch balls and then roll each in sugar. Place on prepared baking sheets, 12 to a sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes until edges are lightly browned and center of cookie is puffed.

Remove from oven. Allow to cool on parchment for five minutes. Remove to a wire rack to cool completely and repeat with remaining dough, leaving the second portion of the dough in the refrigerator until ready to roll.

Note: You can use this recipe for gingerbread cut-outs if you add an additional 1/3 cup of flour. The dough will need to be stiff enough to roll out and cut. ➤

Laurie Lufkin and her daughter, Lily, with a basket of Lily's Harvest Cookie Bites.





JOE FROGGER COOKIES

Melissa Smith Abbott, Gloucester

YIELD: 10 DOZEN

INGREDIENTS

- 7 cups sifted flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup dark rum
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 cups dark molasses
- 1 cup shortening
- 2 cups sugar

DIRECTIONS

Sift together flour, salt, ginger, cloves, nutmeg and allspice. Combine water and rum. Add baking soda and molasses. Thoroughly cream shortening and sugar. Mix everything together. Make sure to blend ingredients with each addition. Chill dough overnight. Roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness and shape with cutters. Bake on greased cookie sheet in a 375-degree oven for 10 to 12 minutes.

CUCCIADATTA COOKIES

Felicia Mohan, Gloucester

YIELD: 4 DOZEN

FIG FILLING

- 1 stick fresh cinnamon
- 8 cups of brewed coffee
- Reserve 1 1/2 cups of brewed coffee
- 2 packages figs
- 1 box seedless raisins
- 1 box pitted dates
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 1 teaspoon orange extract
- Zest of 1 lemon and 1 orange
- 2 cups chopped almonds (toasted)
- 2 cups chopped walnuts (toasted)
- 3 teaspoons ground fresh cinnamon
- 1 large chocolate Hershey bar with almonds (chopped)
- 1/2 jar orange marmalade

DOUGH INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups flour



Cucciadatta Cookies

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 6 level teaspoons baking powder
- 2 heaping cups Crisco
- 2 tablespoons vanilla
- 3 tablespoons orange extract
- Zest of 1 orange and zest of 1 lemon
- 1 1/2 cups of warm milk
- Extra milk for basting

GLAZE

- 3 cups powdered sugar
- Juice of 1/2 of a lemon
- 2 tablespoons of vanilla
- 2 tablespoons of milk
- Jimmies

DIRECTIONS

To make the fig filling, mix coffee grounds and cinnamon stick in the coffee filter. Brew coffee. Soak figs, raisins and dates in a large bowl with 6 1/2 cups of the brewed coffee overnight in a bowl. Set the remaining 1 1/2 cups of coffee aside to mix with fruit mixture. Using a food mill after soaking overnight, grind figs, raisins and dates together. Add the reserve 1 1/2 cups of the brewed coffee to the ground fruit mixture. Add orange and lemon extracts, almonds and walnuts, chocolate, fresh cinnamon and orange marmalade. Mix well.

Fruit mixture can be prepared and stored in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for up to one month.

To make the dough, mix flour, granulated sugar and baking powder together. Add Crisco to the mixture until dough is crumbly. In a separate bowl, mix vanilla

and orange extract into the 1 1/2 cups of milk, along with orange and lemon zest.

Make a well in the center of the dough and add warm milk mixture. Mix together. The dough should feel like pie crust dough. Refrigerate dough 3 to 4 hours.


On a floured surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Using the lid of a coffee can or a circle cookie cutter, cut circles out of the dough. Repeat until all dough is gone. Baste edges of dough circles with cold milk.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Before baking the cookies, place one heaping tablespoon of fig mixture in the center of the dough circles. Bring the edges together in the center of the circle, pinching the dough gently all the way to the outside edge. Very gently, press down and slightly curve the filled cookie dough into a half moon shape.

Snip three small slits on top of the pinched edge of the cookie with kitchen scissors.

Place on parchment-lined cookie sheet. Place shaped cookies back into refrigerator for 10 minutes, then bake at 375 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from oven when slightly golden brown. Cool on cookie rack.

While cookies cool, make glaze.

To make the glaze, mix powdered sugar, lemon juice, vanilla and milk. Whisk together until smooth. Using a pastry brush, brush glaze over cookies and then sprinkle with jimmies. 



Melissa Smith Abbott makes Anadama bread in her Gloucester kitchen.

CAPE ANN ORIGINALS: LOCAL AUTHOR INVITES YOU TO REMINISCE IN THE KITCHEN

Author Melissa Smith Abbott was raised in Cape Ann, where she spent a great deal of time in her grandmother's kitchen and restaurant, the Blacksmith Shop. In these places, she vividly remembers watching her grandmother bake Anadama bread.

"This is a very old bread recipe that the neighbors in Rockport cooked," said Abbott, an advertising sales representative for North of Boston Media Group, of the concoction of cornmeal and molasses.

In her new book, "The Legacy of Three Melissas: Authentic & Original Cape Ann Recipes," she tells the story of how Anadama bread got its name.

The story is of a local fisherman whose lazy wife always gives him steamed corn meal mush and molasses for dinner. One day when he comes in from fishing, he finds the same mush and, being very tired of it, decides to mix it with bread flour and yeast. While baking it he repeated, 'Anna damn her.' As it turned out, the finished bread was so delicious that his neighbors asked for the recipe – and began to call it 'Anadama Bread.'

"My great-grandmother, Melissa McKeeckin Collins, came to Rockport in the 1920s and started the Blacksmith Shop. In the 1940s my grandfather started the bakery on Main Street in Rockport and made 80 loaves of Anadama a day," Abbott said. "Today the bread is sold at George's Coffee shop in Gloucester and Latoff Farms in Rockport."

Abbott said the Anadama Bread story is all folklore. And yet it's a story that begs to be preserved.

"Believe it or not, people want to know about the bread worldwide," she said.



ANADAMA BREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup course cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup unsulphured blackstrap molasses
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 package dried yeast
- 5 cups unbleached flour

DIRECTIONS

Slowly stir the cornmeal in 2 cups boiling water and let steam over a double boiler for a minimum of 1 hour. Let cool. Add the butter, molasses and salt. Cornmeal mixture can sit overnight.

Dissolve yeast in a 1/4 cup warm water. Add to the cornmeal. Add flour to the mixture to make a stiff bread dough. Knead for 10 minutes. Place dough in a greased bowl and cover with a damp cloth. Let sit for at least 1 hour, or until the dough doubles in bulk. Shape 2 loaves and place in 2 greased bread pans. Let the dough rise again until double, at least 1 hour. Bake at 400 degrees for 1 hour. **CA**

IT'S ALL IN THE PRESENTATION

Giving cookies as gifts? Felicia Mohan and Laurie Lufkin offer some creative ways to package those goodies.

