

Chocolate Meringue Cookies

Start to finish: 1 hour 10 minutes (40 minutes active)
Makes 24 cookies

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate,
finely chopped, divided
4 tablespoons (½ stick) salted butter,
cut into 4 pieces
20 grams (¼ cup) cocoa powder
½ teaspoon instant espresso powder
3 large egg whites
145 grams (⅔ cup) packed
light brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon kosher salt

These rich, yet airy flourless chocolate cookies have crisp edges and chewy interiors. They rely on whipped egg whites for their structure. To ensure your whites attain the proper volume with beating, make sure the mixer bowl, whisk and whisk attachment are perfectly clean and without any trace of grease or fat. Either Dutch-processed or natural cocoa works well in this recipe. Leftover cookies can be stored in an airtight container for up to three days; the edges will lose their crispness but the cookies will still taste good.

Don't omit the step of heating the egg whites and sugar over the saucepan of simmering water. This ensures the sugar fully dissolves so the cookies bake up with shiny, crisp exteriors. But also make sure you don't overheat the mixture (100°F is the ideal temperature), which can cause the whites to cook. Also, the melted chocolate mixture should still be warm when you fold in the whipped egg whites. If it has cooled and thickened, it will be impossible to fold in the whites without deflating them. If needed, before folding in the whites, return the bowl of chocolate to the saucepan and re-melt the mixture.

1. Heat the oven to 350°F with racks in the upper- and lower-middle positions. Line 2 baking sheets with kitchen parchment. Measure out 2½ ounces (½ cup) of the chopped chocolate and set aside.

2. In a medium saucepan over high, bring 1 inch of water to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a simmer. In a medium bowl, combine the remaining 5½ ounces chopped chocolate, the butter, cocoa and espresso powder. Set the bowl on the saucepan over the simmering water (the bottom of the bowl should not touch the water) and let the mixture melt until completely smooth, stirring often with a silicone spatula. Set aside to cool slightly; keep the saucepan and water over the heat.

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together the egg whites, sugar, vanilla and salt. Set the bowl on the saucepan over the simmering water and, while whisking constantly, heat the mixture to 100°F. Attach the bowl to the mixer fitted

with the whisk attachment and whip on medium-high until the mixture holds soft peaks when the whisk is lifted, 3 to 4 minutes.

4. Using a silicone spatula, fold ⅓ of the egg white mixture into the chocolate mixture until almost completely combined. Add the remaining egg whites and fold until a few streaks of white remain. Add the reserved chopped chocolate and fold gently until no white streaks remain.

5. Drop the batter in 2-tablespoon mounds spaced 1½ inches apart on the prepared sheets. Bake until the tops have cracked but the interiors still look moist, 12 to 14 minutes, switching and rotating the sheets halfway through. Cool on the baking sheets for 10 minutes, then transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely, about 30 minutes.