THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM · DECEMBER 25

Shepherd’s crook candy cane cookies

Prep 1 hr **Cook** 20 min **Chill** 20 min **Total** 1 hr 40 min **Makes** About 4 dozen cookies **Level** Easy

ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED

Cooking is for children and grown-ups together. An adult should supervise at all times and handle the oven, stovetop, knives, and anything hot. Hard peppermint pieces are a choking hazard for children under 4, so crush them to a fine dust or leave them off. A grown-up moves the hot baking sheets.

ALLERGY INFORMATION

Contains wheat (gluten), milk, and egg. Check the labels on the peppermint candies and food coloring. Always read ingredient labels, since brands vary, and ask about food allergies before you cook or share.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 1 cup (2 sticks, 225 g) butter, softened
- 1 cup (120 g) powdered sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon peppermint extract
- 2½ cups (315 g) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- About ½ teaspoon red gel food coloring

Peppermint sugar (optional)

- ¼ cup (45 g) finely crushed peppermint candies
- ¼ cup (50 g) granulated sugar

METHOD

1. Beat the butter, powdered sugar, egg, vanilla, and peppermint extract until creamy. Stir in the flour and salt until a soft dough forms.
2. Divide the dough in half. Knead the red coloring into one half until the color is even. If the dough is too soft to roll, wrap both halves and chill for 20 minutes.
3. Heat the oven to 375°F (190°C) and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Stir the crushed peppermint and sugar together in a small bowl.
4. For each cookie, roll 1 teaspoon of white dough and 1 teaspoon of red dough into ropes about 4 inches (10 cm) long. Lay them side by side, pinch the ends together, and twist gently.
5. Set each twist on the baking sheet and bend the top down into a crook. Space them 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart.
6. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, until set and barely golden underneath; the tops stay pale. Sprinkle with peppermint sugar right away, cool 2 minutes on the pan, then move them carefully to a rack.

LITTLE HELPERS CAN (WITH A GROWN-UP)

- Knead the red color into the dough (gloves keep hands clean)
- Roll red and white ropes and twist them together
- Bend each twist into a shepherd’s crook
- Crush the peppermints in a zip-top bag with a rolling pin

GOOD TO KNOW

- Roll the ropes on a clean counter without flour, since a little grip helps them roll evenly. Keep the dough you are not using covered so it stays soft.
- The dough keeps, wrapped, in the fridge for 3 days. Baked cookies keep in a tin for 1 week, or in the freezer for 2 months.

A BLESSING BEFORE WE EAT

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Jesus, Good Shepherd, keep us close to you, and bring every lost lamb safely home.