

Snowball Cookies

Preheat oven to 375°.

½ cup ground or finely chopped nuts (I use hazelnuts or almonds)

1½ cups (3 sticks) butter at room temperature (soft)

¾ cup powdered (confectioners) sugar

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

½ teaspoon salt

3 cups all-purpose flour

[or for chocolate cookies, 2½ cups flour & ½ cup cocoa]

optional:

1 cup mini-chocolate chips (to taste—I usually add about ½ - 1 cups). (A 12 oz. bag of chocolate chips is 2 cups.)

Spread nuts over an ungreased cookie sheet and toast in oven at 375° for 5 - 10 minutes, until golden. While nuts are toasting, beat together the butter and sugar, in a large mixing bowl until creamy (use an electric mixer if possible). In a separate bowl, mix together the flour and salt (and cocoa) and the toasted nuts. Add these dry ingredients slowly to butter mixture, about ¼ cup at a time, and mix until blended (dough will become stiff). Fold in chocolate chips.

Make round balls using about 1 teaspoon of dough per cookie. A mini ice cream scoop makes this easier and faster. Place on ungreased cookie sheet 1½ or 2 inches apart (they usually hold their shape and do not spread much).

Bake at 375° for 9 -11 minutes (bottoms will burn quickly if baked too long). The hot cookies are very crumbly, so allow to cool on cookie sheet for at least 10 minutes before using spatula to move them to a wire cooling rack.

For snowball effect, sift powder sugar over the hot cookies right after they come out of the oven, while still on cookie sheets (this be messy, they also taste good without the sugar on top).

Store airtight (metal tin works best).