

John Krzywicki's Top Bars, Squares and Cookies Recipes

Introduction—John strongly suggests that it be read first

This collection is both an addendum or supplement to the First Parish in Lincoln Caring Cookbook, and a stand alone electronic collection. The Caring Cookbook was a major effort by six parishioners over 5 months, and we were assisted by a person who has edited cookbooks professionally. I was one of those six, but lack the editorial and “polishing” skills of the others, so do understand that in reviewing this, my effort. The recipes are indeed readable and followable. There are differences in formats, as the original sources (cooking magazines, foodnetwork.com, etc.) used different formats. So, do use it with those possible shortcomings in mind. Any mistakes you find, please pass them along to johnkrzywicki@gmail.com, and I will fix them. All mistakes are to be attributed to me.

All but one of these recipes came from published sources, principally Food & Wine, Bon Appetit, Fine Cooking, Saveur, foodnetwork.com, and a dessert oriented blog. Identifiers of the original source have mostly but not all been removed. My one original recipe is #22 (John's Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies).

There are 26 recipes, including a reprint of four that are in the Caring Cookbook. Those four (Lemon Squares, Ghirardelli Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookies, Ambrosia Macaroons and Forgotten Cookies) were chosen for the Caring Cookbook because they are star recipes, and you might want to consider/make them first, but they are presented here as the last four recipes (#23-26).

There is a rough order of priority for the recipes. The first nine recipes are bars and squares, and the first four of those are my personal favorites. The Untranutty Pecan Squares recipe has been especially requested by my friends. The final 13 recipes are cookie recipes, and the first five of them, recipes numbered 10 to 14, are my personal favorites. Then the last four recipes are actually possibly the best four overall, and as such are in the Caring Cookbook. For all 26 of the recipes, they have been tested and rated by me as one of the better recipes I have made.

Because this collection was developed for people who already know me, and generally have already tried my baking at church or musical gatherings, I have been moderately free with my commentary. Text in [] is my commentary on the original recipe. Most of the comments are just variations that I did or preferred, but some comments are much broader.

In closing, I hope you are reading this because you already have the Caring Cookbook. If not, regrettably it is sold out but I am hopeful another printing will occur. If you are interested, contact me at the above email address. And enjoy this collection.

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(1) Ultranutty Pecan Squares

[This recipe is from The Complete America's Test Kitchen TV Show Cookbook, which I highly recommend.]

It is important to use pecan halves, not pieces. The edges of the bars will be slightly firmer than the center. Part of the cleverness of this recipe is that the crust does not have to be baked first and separately from the filling—the whole combination gets baked at once.

Crust:

- 1-3/4 cup (8-3/4 oz.) all-purpose flour
- 6 Tablespoons (2-2/3 oz.) granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Topping

- 3/4 cup packed (5-1/4 oz.) dark brown sugar [original recipe calls for light brown, but I prefer dark]
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and hot
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract [or a bit more]
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups (1 pound) pecan halves, toasted at 350 F till fragrant, 8-12 minutes
- 1/2 teaspoon flake sea salt (optional)
- [ground cinnamon for dusting (optional)]

1. For the crust, adjust oven rack to lowest position and preheat oven to 350 F. Make foil sling for 13x9 baking pan by folding two long sheets of aluminum foil; first sheet should be 13 inches wide and second sheet should be 9 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra foil hanging over edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Lightly spray foil with vegetable oil spray.
2. Whisk flour, sugar and salt together in medium bowl. Add melted butter and stir with wooden spoon until dough begins to form. Using your hands, continue to combine until no dry flour remains and small portions of dough holds together when squeezed in palm of your hand. Evenly scatter tablespoon sized pieces of dough over the surface of pan. Using your fingertips and palm of your hand, press and smooth dough into even thickness in bottom of pan. [I find it easier to dump dough into pan, distribute it generally, and then use the bottom of a 1/2 or 1 cup metal measuring cup (assuming it is very flat) to press the dough down, only using your finger for the last bits in the corners.]
3. For the topping, whisk sugar, corn syrup, melted butter, vanilla and salt together in medium bowl until smooth, about 20-30 seconds. Fold pecans into sugar mixture until nuts are evenly coated.
4. Pour topping over the crust. Using spatula, spread topping over crust, pushing to edges and into corners (there will be bare patches [when I did it there were not]). Bake until topping is evenly distributed and rapidly bubbling across the entire surface, 23 to 25 minutes.
5. Transfer pan to wire rack and lightly sprinkle with flake sea salt, if using. [Then sprinkle lightly with ground cinnamon, which is optional, but I highly recommend.] Let bars cook completely in pan on rack, about 1-1/2 hours. Using foil overhand, lift bars out of pan and transfer to cutting board. Cut into 24 bars. [I cut into 30 (6x5), 32 (8x4) or 35 (7x5)]. Bars can be stored at room temperature for up to 5 days.

(2) Pecan chocolate squares Mexican Style

[One word: addictive.]



For the cookie base:

- 6 oz. (3/4 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. table salt
- 2 oz. finely grated bittersweet chocolate (a scant 1/2 cup)

For the pecan topping:

- 10 oz. pecans (3 cups), toasted
- 1/4 lb. (1/2 cup) unsalted butter
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/3 cup honey

- 2 Tbs. heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp. table salt

Make the cookie base: Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Put the butter in a food processor, along with the flour, light brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Pulse until the mixture is well combined (about 20 pulses). Scatter the dough into a 9x9-inch baking pan and press it evenly over the bottom. (Wipe out the processor bowl but don't bother washing it.) Bake the base until firm and lightly browned, about 25 min. When the cookie base comes out of the oven, sprinkle the grated chocolate evenly over the top. (Don't turn off the oven.) Set the pan aside.

Make the pecan topping: As the cookie base bakes, pulse the pecans in the food processor until coarsely chopped. In a medium-size heavy saucepan, melt the butter. Stir in the dark brown sugar, honey, cream, and salt. Simmer for 1 min., stirring occasionally. Stir in the pecans. Pour the pecan mixture over the chocolate-sprinkled cookie base, spreading evenly. Bake until much of the filling is bubbling (not just the edges), 16 to 18 min. Let cool completely in the pan. When ready to serve, cut into 16 squares. Tightly covered, these bars will keep for about five days (though they never last that long).

(3) Hazelnut Brown Butter Brownies

[After 40 years of using another brownie recipe, this became my "go to" recipe in 2012. One has to be careful in the browning of the butter. Having husked hazelnuts in the past, it is a total pain. One can get already husked hazelnuts at Idylwilde Farm in Acton, MA, and is that a Godsend. This recipe could also be called a flourless chocolate brownie with brown butter—it is gluten free, rather unusual for brownie recipes.]

Food & Wine May 2012 [Chef is a hot shot pastry chef from the Midwest.]

7 ounces hazelnuts
 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
 1 teaspoon salt
 3 cups sugar
 1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter
 12 ounces bittersweet chocolate (70 percent), chopped
 6 large eggs
 1 tablespoon instant coffee dissolved in 1 tablespoon of hot water

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Line a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with foil, pressing it into the corners and leaving overhang on the 2 short sides.
2. Spread the hazelnuts in a pie plate and toast for 15 minutes, until fragrant and the skins blister; transfer to a kitchen towel to cool slightly, then rub off the skins. Let cool completely. [Or buy them already husked at Idylwilde or other specialty grocery store,

and toast till lightly browned.] Transfer the nuts to a food processor. Add the cocoa, salt and 1/2 cup of the sugar and pulse until finely ground.

3. In a large saucepan, cook the butter over moderate heat, shaking the pan occasionally, until nutty-smelling and golden and the foam subsides, about 5 minutes. [I brown it a bit more aggressively.] Remove from the heat and add the chopped chocolate; let stand until melted, about 2 minutes. Whisk the butter and chocolate until smooth, scraping up any browned butter solids from the bottom of the pan. Let cool slightly.
4. In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the eggs with the remaining 2 1/2 cups of sugar and the coffee until tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. Beat in the chocolate-butter mixture. Add the cocoa-hazelnut mixture and beat to combine, scraping down the bowl. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and bake for about 50 minutes, until the top is glossy, and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with a few moist crumbs attached. Let the brownie cool completely on a rack, then refrigerate until chilled.
5. Lift the brownie out of the pan and peel off the foil. Cut into 20 pieces [I did more smaller pieces] and serve.

Serve with Ice cream. [I never have, but I bet it would be good. However, these brownies truly can stand on their own.]

(4) Chocolate-Dipped Hazelnut Caramel Squares

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) plus 6 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2/3 cup sugar
6 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
1/4 cup orange blossom honey
2 teaspoons finely grated orange peel
5 ounces hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup chopped candied orange peel
8 ounces bittersweet chocolate (do not exceed 61% cacao), chopped

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 13x9x2-inch metal baking pan with foil. Mix flour, brown sugar, and salt in processor 5 seconds. Add 3/4 cup butter; using on/off turns, process until coarse meal forms. Transfer to pan; press firmly and evenly onto bottom of pan. Bake crust until golden, about 20 minutes. Maintain oven temperature.

Bring 6 tablespoons butter, 2/3 cup sugar, cream, honey, and finely grated orange peel to boil in heavy small saucepan, stirring until sugar dissolves and butter melts. Boil until candy thermometer registers 230°F, about 6 minutes. Stir in nuts and candied orange peel.

Spoon hot nut mixture evenly over crust in pan. Return to oven and bake until entire surface is bubbling, about 10 minutes. Cool 20 minutes. Using foil as aid, lift cookie from pan. Carefully peel foil from edges. Cut warm cookie into 1-1/2-inch squares. Cool cookies completely. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or waxed paper. Melt chocolate in small metal bowl set over saucepan of simmering water until warm to touch. Remove bowl from over water. Dip corner or edge of each cookie in melted chocolate and place on prepared baking sheet. Chill until chocolate is set, about 1 hour. DO AHEAD Cookies can be made up to 3 weeks ahead. Store in airtight container in freezer. Bring cookies to room temperature before serving.

(5) Chocolate Frosted Brownies

These homemade frosted brownies start with fudge brownies and are topped with a luscious chocolate buttercream frosting, [with an optional topping of chocolate pearls, available from Amazon.com. Our FPL Minister raved about these brownies and specifically the crunch provided by the pearls.]

Ingredients:

For the Brownies

- ¾ cup (106 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 3 ounces unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped
- ½ cup (99 grams) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (99 grams) light brown sugar [I used dark]
- 2 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup (85 grams) [I used closer to 100 grams] semisweet chocolate chips

For the Frosting

- 6 tablespoons (85 grams) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¼ cup (21 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder [dark Hershey's]
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1¼ cups (142 grams) powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup (60 ml) heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons [or a bit more] Ovaltine chocolate malt powder [I used regular malt powder]

- [Chocolate pearls: available from Amazon—they are a crunchy cookie center enrobed with chocolate and are very small]

Directions:

1. Make the Brownies: Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter an 8-inch-square baking dish and line with parchment paper, letting the excess hang over the edges. Butter the parchment paper; set aside.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside.
3. Bring about an inch of water to a simmer in a medium saucepan. Place a medium, heatproof bowl on top of the saucepan (do not let it touch the water) and add the butter and unsweetened chocolate. Stir occasionally, until the chocolate and butter are completely melted and smooth. Remove the bowl from the saucepan and whisk in the granulated and brown sugars. Whisk in the egg, the yolk, and the vanilla extract. Add the flour mixture all at once, and fold it into the chocolate mixture with a rubber spatula until combined. Fold in the chocolate chips.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with moist crumbs attached. Allow to cool completely; meanwhile, make the frosting.
5. To Make the Frosting: Using an electric mixer, cream together the butter, cocoa powder, and salt on medium speed for about 3 minutes (mixture will be thick).
6. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the powdered sugar. Mix on low speed to incorporate the sugar, and while the mixer is running, slowly add the milk and vanilla extract. Gradually increase the mixer speed to medium-high, beating until smooth, scraping the sides of the bowl as necessary.
7. In a 1-cup measuring cup, or in a small bowl, stir together the heavy cream and the Ovaltine. Reduce the mixer speed to medium, and pour the cream mixture in a slow, steady stream and mix until thoroughly combined. *(This recipe produces a soft frosting; you can add more powdered sugar a tablespoon at a time, if you would like a stiffer frosting.)*
8. Spread the frosting onto the cooled brownies, [sprinkle with chocolate pearls] and cut into squares. Store brownies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

(6) Chocolate Rhubarb Brownies

[Trust me, this works really well.]

For the rhubarb compote:

- 1 cup rhubarb, cut in 1/2-inch slices
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

For the brownie batter:

- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon New Mexico chili powder (not chili powder) [any good mild to medium chili powder will do—ancho, serrano, chipotle, etc.]
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick), room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon dark rum
- 2 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- Shortening spray, for baking dish

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

To make the rhubarb compote: In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring rhubarb, water and sugar to a boil. When sugar is dissolved, lower heat to a simmer and cook until rhubarb is soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Puree in a blender until smooth, if necessary. The rhubarb should break down to a smooth compote.

To make the brownie batter: In a medium bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, Chile powder, cinnamon and salt. Set aside. In a clean microwavable glass bowl, melt bittersweet and unsweetened chocolate together in the microwave at 50 percent power or in a double boiler. Set aside.

In a stand mixer, cream butter and sugar on medium speed. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, combining well. Add in the vanilla and rum. Stir the rhubarb into the chocolate mixture, then add to the batter. Mix until combined. Add the flour mixture and mix just until incorporated. Scrape down the sides with a rubber spatula and gently fold in the semisweet chocolate and walnuts. Do not over mix. Spray an 8 by 8 by 2-inch clear glass baking dish with shortening spray. Line bottom with parchment paper, then spray parchment. Pour batter into the prepared pan and smooth out top. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Cut into squares and serve.

Recipe courtesy of Guy Fieri [well known Food Network Star]

(7) Macadamia Double-Decker Brownie Bars

[This picture should suffice.]



For the brownie layer:

Cooking spray

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into large chunks

1-1/2 cups granulated sugar

2-1/4 oz. (3/4 cup) unsweetened cocoa powder (natural or Dutch processed)

1/4 tsp. table salt

2 large eggs

1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

3-1/2 oz. (3/4 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour

For the macadamia layer:

1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1-1/2 oz. (1/3 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour
2/3 cup light corn syrup
1-1/2 oz. (3 Tbs.) unsalted butter, melted
1-1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs
1-1/2 cups roughly chopped salted macadamia nuts
1/3 cup sweetened coconut flakes

Preparation

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Line the bottom and sides of a 9×13-inch baking pan with foil, leaving some overhang on the sides, and spray with cooking spray.

Make the brownie layer:

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, whisk the butter until it is melted. Remove the pan from the heat and add the sugar, cocoa powder, and salt. Whisk until well blended, about 1 minute. Add the eggs and vanilla and whisk until smooth. Add the flour and stir with a rubber spatula until blended. Scrape into the prepared pan and spread evenly. Bake until the top is shiny and dry-looking and the brownie springs back very slightly when pressed with a fingertip, about 20 minutes. (The brownie should not be completely baked.) Remove from the oven and put on a rack.

While the brownie layer is baking, make the macadamia topping:

In a large mixing bowl, combine the brown sugar and flour. Whisk until well blended, breaking up any large clumps. Add the corn syrup, melted butter, and vanilla. Whisk until blended, about 1 minute. Add the eggs and whisk just until combined, about 30 seconds. (Don't overmix or the batter will be foamy.) Add the nuts and coconut and stir with a rubber spatula until evenly blended.

Pour the macadamia topping over the warm, partially baked brownie layer. Using a spatula, carefully spread the mixture into an even layer. Return the pan to the oven and bake until the top is golden brown, 37 to 40 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack to cool completely.

Using the foil as handles, lift the rectangle from the pan and invert onto a work surface.

Carefully peel away the foil. Flip right side up. Using a sharp knife, cut into 2×2-inch squares and then cut each square into triangles.

Make Ahead Tips

After the brownie and macadamia layers have been baked and cooled, the entire pan can be wrapped in plastic wrap, then foil, and frozen for up to 1 month.

(8) Super Moist Guinness Brownies

[This is from a dessert only food blog. Fortunately, the author's skill as a recipe provider outstrips her spelling skills.]

Yield: 12-15 brownies [I got 30 or so, but for events I always cut them to smaller sizes than the super-sized versions too many recipe writers use (and bakeries serve).]

Ingredients

Brownies:

1/4 cup vegetable oil
3/4 cup Guinness Stout beer
2 cups sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 cup salted butter, melted and cooled
2 eggs
1 cup flour
2/3 cup cocoa (I used Hershey's dark cocoa) [John K did the same]

Ganache:

5 oz semi sweet chocolate chips
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp guinness [correct spelling is Guinness, but I doubt anyone would go out and buy the wrong thing]
1/4 cup powdered sugar

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x9 square baking pan and line it with parchment paper.
2. Mix together the oil, guinness, sugar and vanilla extract in a large bowl.
3. Add butter and mix until well combined.
4. Add eggs and mix until well combined.
5. Combine flour and cocoa in another medium sized bowl.
6. Slowly add dry ingredients to the egg mixture until well combined.
7. Pour the batter into the pan and spread evenly.
8. Bake for 35-38 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out with a few crumbs. Allow brownies to cool. [Definitely took longer]
9. To make ganache, place chocolate chips, butter and guinness into a microwave safe bowl and microwave until guinness gets hot and butter starts to melt.
10. Whisk together chocolate mixture until smooth, microwaving for a little longer, if needed, using 30 second increments.
11. Add powdered sugar and whisk until smooth.

12. Pour ganache over brownies and spread into an even layer.
13. Cut into bars.

(9) Sticky Oat-and-Pine-Nut Bars



[As many of my choices for this addendum are chocolate or pecan based, this is a delicious version of something with a different profile.]

These chewy, nutty, white-chocolate-dipped sweets are a little bit granola bar, a little bit trail mix. Pastry chef Luis Villavelazquez of San Francisco's Absinthe Brasserie & Bar wanted to put his own imprint on the portable snacks, so he added a twist: a good dose of spicy black pepper.

1 stick unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
3/4 cup honey
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
2 cups old-fashioned oats, preferably thick-cut
1 1/2 cups pine nuts (8 ounces)
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Pinch of salt
4 ounces white chocolate, chopped
1/2 teaspoon canola oil

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 325°. Butter an 8-inch square baking pan. Line the bottom and two sides with parchment paper.

Step 2

In a large saucepan, melt the butter with the honey and sugar and cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until an amber caramel forms, about 5 minutes. Stir in the oats, pine nuts, pepper and salt and cook, stirring constantly, until the pine nuts just begin to brown, about 2 minutes. Scrape the mixture into the prepared pan and smooth the surface. Bake for about 20 minutes, until bubbling and browned around the edges. Let the bars cool completely in the pan.

Step 3

Run the tip of a knife around the edge of the pan and lift the square from the pan. Cut the square in half, then cut each half into 6 bars. Discard the parchment paper.

Step 4

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the white chocolate at high power at 30-second intervals, stirring in between. Stir in the oil and let cool slightly. Dip the bottom half of each oat bar into the white chocolate and set the bars on the baking sheet. Refrigerate just until the white chocolate is set. If the chocolate looks thin, dip the bars a second time.

Make Ahead

The bars can be refrigerated for 1 week or kept at room temperature for up to 3 days.

(10) Chocolate Cherry Mudslide Cookies Jacques Torres

[This is the first of the 13 cookie recipes, and it is spectacular. Jacques Torres is an internationally famous creator of chocolate desserts.]

This is a chocolate lover's cookie: a deeply, rich moist cookie, sprinkled with hazelnuts, pistachios and dried cherries. [Jacques is spot on. My only substitution of substance was pecan

for hazelnuts, to avoid the hazelnut skinning process, but already skinned hazelnuts are available at some specialty food stores.]

1/2 cup [or a bit more] hazelnuts [or toasted pecans]
2 pounds bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped [I used 1 pound of Trader Joe's "Dark Chocolate" and 1 pound of their "72% Dark Chocolate." Use whatever you like, but make sure the balance is at least 60% cocoa butter (my combination comes out to 63%).]
6 oz. unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped [I used Ghirardelli 100% chocolate]
1/2 cup plus 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2-3/4 teaspoons baking powder
1-1/4 teaspoons salt
6 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature
2-3/4 cups sugar
5 large eggs at room temperature
1/2 cup salted pistachios [or a bit more], chopped
1/2 cup dried cherries [or a bit more], chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Toast the hazelnuts in a pie plate for 12 minutes, until hazelnuts skin blisters. Transfer to a bowl and rub to remove the skins. [Or toast the pecans till fragrant.] Chop the nuts.
2. In a large bowl set over a pan of simmering water, melt one pound of the bittersweet chocolate with all of the unsweetened chocolate. Let cool completely.
3. In a small bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder and salt. In the bowl of standing electric mixer fitted with the paddle blade, beat the butter until creamy. Beat in the sugar until sandy. Beat in the eggs, then beat in the melted chocolate. At low speed, beat in the dry ingredients. Fold in the pistachios, cherries, hazelnut [or pecans], and the remaining bittersweet chocolate.
4. For each cookie scoop 2 tablespoons [I used closer to 1-1/2] of dough onto a parchment lined baking sheet and roll into a ball and space them about 1-1/2 inches apart. Bake in batches for approximately 15 minutes, just until the tops are lightly cracked. Shift the sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through for even baking. Transfer the cooked sheets to racks to cool slightly, then transfer the cookies to a rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

(11) Pralines with Cream

[Just do it. They are spectacular, easy and addictive.]

2/3 cup light brown cane sugar [cane is important]
1-2/3 cups dark brown cane sugar [cane is important]
1 cup heavy cream
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups pecan halves, toasted lightly

1. Line a clean work surface with a four-foot piece of parchment paper. Put sugar, cream and salt in a 3-quart heavy-bottomed saucepan. Stir mixture over medium heat until sugar dissolves, then allow it to come to a boil without stirring. It will now take 15 to 20 minutes to finish cooking the pralines.
2. The sugar syrup will foam up with large bubbles, but these will soon subside. Cool the syrup until it reaches the soft ball stage, 238 F on a candy thermometer.
3. Remove the syrup from the heat, add the pecans and stir for one minute or a bit more, until the syrup just begins to reach a grainy stage. Working quickly, drop the mixture 1 heaping tablespoon at a time, onto the parchment paper. [I used one spoon to scoop up the syrup and a second spoon to push it off the first spoon and on to the parchment paper.] Allow to cool completely, then remove from the paper.

(12) World Peace Cookies

Makes about 36 Servings

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup natural unsweetened cocoa powder [I use Hershey's]
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 11 tablespoons (1 stick plus 3 tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2/3 cup (packed) golden brown sugar [I use dark brown]
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 5 ounces extra-bittersweet chocolate (do not exceed 85% cacao), chopped (no pieces bigger than 1/3 inch)

Preparation

Sift flour, cocoa, and baking soda into medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until smooth but not fluffy. Add both sugars, vanilla, and sea salt; beat until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add flour mixture; beat just until blended (mixture may be crumbly). Add chopped chocolate; mix just to distribute (if dough doesn't come together, knead lightly in bowl to form ball). Divide dough in half. Place each half on sheet of plastic wrap. Form each into 1 1/2-inch-diameter log. Wrap each in plastic; chill until firm, about 3 hours. DO AHEAD Can be made 3 days ahead. Keep chilled.

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Using thin sharp knife, cut logs crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick rounds. Space 1 inch apart on prepared sheets. Bake 1 sheet at a time until cookies appear dry (cookies will not be firm or golden at edges), 11 to 12 minutes. Transfer to rack; cool. DO AHEAD Can be made 1 day ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.

(13) Walnut Snowball Cookies

[A recently published recipe which reminds me of what my mother made every holiday season.]



These buttery, crumbly, sugar-dusted cookies are irresistible. They can be personalized with different nuts and aromatic flavorings, like rose water or cardamom. [I made mine with pecans to great effect.]

1 1/2 cups walnuts (6 ounces) [or pecans]

Step 1

2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/2 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped
2 cups confectioners' sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups all-purpose flour

Preheat the oven to 350°. Line 2 large cookie sheets with parchment paper. Spread the walnuts [or pecans] on a rimmed baking sheet and bake for about 8 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool, then coarsely chop. Reduce the oven temperature to 325°.

Step 2

In a standing mixer fitted with the paddle, beat the butter with the vanilla bean seeds at high speed until pale, about 2 minutes. Add 1 cup of the confectioners' sugar and beat at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes, scraping down the side of the bowl with a rubber spatula halfway through. At low speed, mix in the salt, then gradually add the flour and walnuts [or pecans] and beat just until the cookie dough comes together, scraping down the side of the bowl halfway through.

Step 3

Roll level tablespoons of the dough into balls and arrange them on the prepared cookie sheets. Bake the cookies in the upper and lower thirds of the oven for about 17 minutes, until they are lightly browned on the bottom; switch the sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking. Let the cookies firm up on the sheets, about 5 minutes, then transfer them to a rack to cool slightly.

Step 4

Put the remaining 1 cup of confectioners' sugar in a small bowl. Roll the warm cookies in the sugar to coat and return to the rack to cool completely. Roll again in the sugar.

Make Ahead

The cookies can be stored in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

(14) Mostaccioli (Italian chocolate chip cookies with distinctive spicing)

[This is a Mario Batali recipe, he being an Iron Chef, Food Network Star and major force in the Eataly Restaurants/Food Emporiums in multiple cities, including Boston. It is also a very easy recipe.]

2 eggs
1 ¼ cups sugar
¾ cup heavy cream
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons baking powder
1 ½ teaspoons ground clove

½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1 ½ teaspoons salt
8 tablespoons cocoa powder
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 cups All Purpose flour
½ cups toasted walnuts
1 ¾ cups mini chocolate chips

For the glaze:

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate
3 tablespoons heavy cream
Pinch of salt

Directions

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. In a large mixing bowl, vigorously mix all ingredients, less the flour, nuts and chocolate chips. Slowly add flour to form a cookie dough. Once the dough is combined, mix in the walnuts and chocolate chips.

Roll your dough into balls 1 ½-inches in diameter and place on a sheet tray. To keep them from rolling, carefully smush the balls onto the sheet tray. [I recommend a bit smaller than the 1-1/2-inch balls specified.]

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until the cookies are just about to crack. Remove from the oven and place onto a cooling rack. [May need a bit longer, but start checking at 8 minutes.]

Optional glaze:

Melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and place it over a pan of simmering water (a double boiler). Whisk the chocolate until melted and smooth. Then whisk in the heavy cream and salt until the mixture is homogenous.

Dip the toe of your cookie into the glaze, then put it back on the cooling rack to dry completely, about 15 to 20 minutes. Store in an airtight container.

(15) White Chocolate Chunk Macadamia Cookies



These thick bakery-style white chocolate chunk and macadamia nut cookies are golden and crispy on the outside and super soft and buttery on the inside.

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup (1 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup packed light brown sugar

1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup white chocolate chunks, coarsely chopped
1 cup macadamia nuts, coarsely chopped

Step 1

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour with the baking powder, baking soda and salt.

Step 2

In a large bowl, using a handheld electric mixer, beat the butter and brown sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 4 minutes. Beat in the egg, and then the yolk and vanilla extract until creamy. Reduce the speed to low and add the dry ingredients, mixing until just combined. With a spatula, fold in the white chocolate chunks and macadamia nuts until evenly distributed. Cover the mixing bowl and refrigerate the dough for at least 3 hours or overnight for the best results.

Step 3

Preheat the oven to 375° with the racks placed in the lower and upper-middle positions. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.

Step 4

Scoop the dough into 1/3 cup-size balls, and arrange at least 3 inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. Bake for about 12 to 14 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through, until the cookies are golden brown but still soft and slightly under baked in the center. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheets for 2 minutes before transferring them to wire racks.

Make Ahead

The cookies will keep covered and stored in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Notes

Refrigerating the dough for at least 3 hours before baking will help create uniform cookies that will spread less and stay super thick and indulgent.

(16) Cranberry pecan oatmeal cookies

[I have found dried tart cherries, walnuts, pistachios, raisins, and chocolate chips are all good alternative additions. If using, keep the total volume to 1 1/2 cups of additions.]



Ingredients

14 tablespoons (7 ounces) butter, at room temperature
3/4 cup (6 ounces) firmly packed dark brown sugar
1/2 cup (3 1/2 ounces) granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
1 1/2 cups (7 1/2 ounces) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3 cups (11 ounces) old-fashioned oats
3/4 cup toasted pecans, chopped
3/4 cup dried cranberries

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In large bowl, beat the butter and sugars on medium speed of an electric mixer until creamy. Add the eggs and vanilla; beat well. Add the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt; mix until nearly combined. Add the oats, pecans, and dried cranberries (you might have to do this in multiple additions). Mix until combined.
3. Drop the dough in rounded tablespoonfuls onto ungreased half sheet pans. (Add 15 cookies to each half sheet pan, leaving some space in between as they'll spread slightly.)
4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until just browning on the bottom (lift one cookie to check). They'll look slightly undercooked on top, but will continue to cook once removed from the oven. Cool 2 minutes on the cookie sheets; remove to a wire rack. Cool completely. Store tightly covered.

(17) Cranberry-Lime Shortbread Cookies with Lime Curd

Lime curd

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs plus 2 large egg yolks
1/2 cup fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

Shortbread cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon finely grated lime zest (from about 2 limes)
1 teaspoon kosher salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
3/4 cup coarsely chopped dried cranberries

Step 1 Make the lime curd

In a medium bowl, using a hand mixer, beat the butter with the granulated sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. With the machine on, beat in the eggs and egg yolks 1 at a time. Beat in the lime juice, lemon juice and salt; the mixture will curdle.

Step 2

Scrape the curd mixture into a medium saucepan and cook over moderately low heat, stirring constantly, until it's thickened and reaches 180° on an instant-read thermometer, about 10 minutes. Strain the curd through a fine sieve into a medium bowl. Press a sheet of plastic wrap directly on the surface of the curd and refrigerate until firm, at least 3 hours or overnight.

Step 3 Meanwhile, make the cookies

Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour with the lime zest and salt. In another medium bowl, using a hand mixer, beat the butter with the confectioners' sugar at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in the vanilla, then beat in the dry ingredients just until combined. Stir in the cranberries. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough 1/4-inch-thick, then cut into 2-inch squares [or a bit smaller] and transfer to the baking sheets. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

Step 4

Preheat the oven to 350°. Bake the cookies for about 20 minutes, shifting the pans halfway through baking, until golden. Transfer the cookies to a rack and let cool. Serve with the lime curd.

Make Ahead

The cookies can be stored in an airtight container for 3 days. The curd can be refrigerated for 1 week.

(18) Dried Cranberry and Chocolate Cookies



Adding cranberries and rolled oats to buttery chocolate chip cookie dough makes the cookies crunchier and more substantial.

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup quick-cooking or old-fashioned rolled oats

1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon kosher salt
2 1/2 sticks unsalted butter (10 ounces), at room temperature
1 cup light brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg, at room temperature
1 large egg yolk, at room temperature
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups semisweet or white chocolate chips
1 1/2 cups dried cranberries

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 325°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

Step 2

In a medium bowl, mix the flour with the oats, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a standing mixer fitted with the paddle, beat the butter and both sugars at medium speed until creamy. Add the egg followed by the egg yolk and vanilla, beating well between additions and scraping down the side of the bowl as necessary. Beat in the dry ingredients, then add the chocolate chips and cranberries and beat until incorporated.

Step 3

Spoon heaping teaspoons of the dough onto the baking sheets, 2 inches apart. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until the cookies begin to brown at the edges. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheets, then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

Make Ahead

The cookies can be stored in an airtight container for up to 4 days

(19) Chocolate-Hazelnut Clouds with Cocoa Nibs



1/4 cup hazelnuts
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 1/2 teaspoons cocoa nibs
2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
3 large egg whites
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
Pinch of salt
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 350° and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Spread the hazelnuts in a pie plate and toast for 14 minutes, until the skins blister. Transfer the nuts to a kitchen towel and rub together to remove the skins. Coarsely chop and transfer to a bowl. Add the cocoa, cornstarch, nibs, chocolate and cardamom. Lower the oven to 300°.

Step 2

In a medium bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the egg whites with the cream of tartar and salt until soft peaks form. Add the sugar in a thin stream and beat until the whites are stiff and glossy. Beat in the vanilla. Fold in the dry ingredients, leaving some streaks.

Step 3

Scoop 8 level tablespoon-size mounds of the meringue onto each baking sheet. Scoop the remaining meringue directly on top of the existing mounds, as if forming little snowmen.

Step 4

Bake the cookies in the upper and lower thirds of the oven for about 30 minutes, until firm when tapped; shift the sheets halfway through baking. Transfer the sheets to racks and let the cookies cool before serving.

(20) Pecan-Mocha Meringues

1/3 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1/3 cup egg whites (from about 3 large eggs)
1/4 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/3 cup sugar
2 teaspoons instant espresso powder
1 cup finely chopped toasted pecans
1/2 cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips (optional)
18 (about) untoasted pecan halves

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line heavy large baking sheet with parchment paper. Press brown sugar and cocoa powder through sieve into small bowl to remove any lumps; whisk to blend. Using electric mixer, beat egg whites, coarse salt, and cream of tartar in medium bowl until very soft peaks begin to form. With mixer running, gradually add sugar, then espresso powder; beat until medium peaks form. Beat in brown sugar mixture by tablespoonfuls. Continue beating until meringue is very stiff and glossy, 2 to 3 minutes. Fold in chopped pecans and chocolate chips, if desired. Drop mixture by rounded tablespoonfuls onto prepared sheet, spacing about 1 inch apart. Place 1 pecan half atop each meringue, pressing very lightly to adhere. Bake meringues until dry but still slightly soft when pressed with finger, about 25 minutes. Turn off oven. Cool meringues in oven with door closed until crisp, about 1 1/2 hours. DO AHEAD Meringues can be made up to 1 day ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.

(21) Giada de Laurentiis' Hazelnut Toffee Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup (packed) light brown sugar
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 4 ounces English toffee candy (recommended: Heath or Skor bar), finely chopped
- 1 cup hazelnuts, toasted, husked, and chopped
- 1 (12-ounce) bag semisweet chocolate chips

Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

Line 2 heavy large baking sheets with parchment paper. Finely chop the oats in a food processor. Transfer the oats to a medium bowl. Mix in the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.

Using an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugars in a large bowl until fluffy. Beat in the eggs and vanilla. Add the flour mixture and stir just until blended. Stir in the toffee, hazelnuts, and chocolate chips.

For each cookie, drop 1 rounded tablespoonful of dough onto sheet, spacing 1-inch apart (do not flatten dough). Bake until the cookies are golden (cookies will flatten slightly), about 15 minutes. Cool the cookies on the baking sheets for 5 minutes. Transfer to a cooling rack and cool completely. (The cookies can be prepared 1 day ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.)

(22) John's Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies

[This is how I write down recipes just for my own use (or to be written out later). In looking at it, it is so simple I decided to leave it mostly as is, with just a few clarifications. This is my only “originally created recipe” in this collection, but one can see that all I did was take a generic cookie recipe and then I added things I like.]

Preheat oven to 325F

½ C Irish Oatmeal, ground in spice grinder
1-1/4 C cake flour
1 C all-purpose flour
1-1/2 t baking powder, ½ t baking soda, ½ t salt
Combine above.

Then
2 sticks butter (8 oz.)
½ C dark brown sugar
1 C light brown sugar
½ C granulated sugar
Cream the above.

Then add 2 large eggs room temp., ½ t almond extract (or ¼), 2 t vanilla extract
Mix top group with this group, and thoroughly combine.

Add 12 oz. choc chips and 1 C toasted chopped pecans.
Form into cookies on parchment lined baking sheets.
Bake for 13+ minutes.

(23) Ultimate Ghirardelli Chocolate-Chip Cookies

With no intention to plug any brand, the Ghirardelli folks are experts in chocolate, and this is their premier chocolate-chip cookie recipe. It's great.

1 bag (11 1/2 ounces) Ghirardelli 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate chips
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 eggs
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 bag (12 ounces) Ghirardelli semisweet chocolate chips
1 cup (4 ounces) toasted chopped walnuts

1. In a double boiler over hot water, melt the bittersweet chocolate chips and butter. In a large bowl, beat the eggs and sugar with an electric mixer until thick, then stir in the chocolate mixture. In a separate bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and then add this to the chocolate mixture. Stir in the vanilla next, and finally, gently, mix in the semisweet chocolate chips and walnuts.

2. Using two sheets of plastic wrap, form the dough into two logs, each 2 inches in diameter and about 8 inches long. The dough will be very soft, so use the plastic wrap to keep it in a log shape. Wrap the rolls tightly and refrigerate them until they're firm, at least one hour.

3. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Unwrap the dough and use a sharp knife to cut the logs into ¾-inch slices. Place the slices 1½ inches apart on a greased or parchment-lined cookie sheet. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until a shiny crust forms but the interior is still soft. Cool on a baking sheet.

Makes 24+ cookies.

(24) Ambrosia Macaroons with Coconut

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
3/4 cup sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons finely grated orange peel
3 large eggs
24 ounces sweetened flaked coconut (about 6 cups firmly packed)
6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Line three large rimmed baking sheets with parchment. Using an electric mixer, beat the butter in a large bowl until smooth. Add the sugar and salt and beat until blended. Beat in the orange peel, then the eggs one at a time. Finally, mix in the coconut. Use a tablespoon to drop the batter onto the baking sheets, spacing 1 1/2 inches apart.

2. Bake the macaroons, one sheet at a time, until golden on the bottom and browned in spots, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool completely on the sheets. 3. Using a fork, drizzle the melted chocolate over the tops. Chill the macaroons right on the sheets until the chocolate is firm, about 30 minutes.

Makes about 45.

(25) Forgotten Cookies

There are many variations on this recipe, mostly because it's so simple and really good.

2 large egg whites
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
5/8 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

3/4 cup bittersweet chocolate chips (or 3/8 cup bittersweet chocolate chips and 3/8 cup white chocolate chips)
3/4 cup chopped toasted pecans
1/4 cup dried cherries (or dried cranberries)
Coarse sea salt

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk, beat the egg whites with the cream of tartar at medium speed until soft peaks form, 1 to 2 minutes. With the machine on, gradually add the sugar. Then add the vanilla extract and cardamom and beat at high speed until stiff peaks form, about 3 minutes. Using a spatula, scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl and fold in the chocolate chips, pecans, and dried cherries/cranberries.
2. Using 2 spoons, drop 2-inch balls of the mixture onto a large foillined baking sheet. Sprinkle the cookies with sea salt and bake for 5 to 7 minutes until a very thin light outer crust has formed. Turn the oven off and leave the cookies in the oven for at least 8 hours or overnight before serving.

Makes 18 to 24 cookies.

(26) Lemon Squares

A knockout every time.

Unsalted butter for the pan
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
2/3 cup confectioners' sugar
3/4 teaspoon salt
12 tablespoons unsalted butter, at very cool temperature, cut into 1-inch pieces
4 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup lemon juice (from 3 to 4 large lemons), strained
1/4 cup whole milk
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Dot the bottom of a 9x13inch baking pan with butter and line the pan with a sheet of parchment paper large enough to go up and over the edges of the long sides of the pan. Dot the parchment paper with butter and line with a second sheet of parchment large enough to go up and over the short sides of the pan.
2. Pulse the flour, sugar, and salt in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Add the butter pieces and process to blend for 8 to 10 seconds, then pulse until the mixture is pale yellow and

resembles coarse meal, about three 1-second bursts. Sprinkle the mixture into the prepared pan and press it evenly with your fingers (or any flat-bottomed instrument) until the surface is smooth; it should be about ½-inch thick. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bake the crust for 20 to 25 minutes, until light golden brown.

3. While the crust is baking, whisk the eggs, sugar, and zest in a medium bowl. Whisk in the flour and salt, and then stir in the lemon juice, milk, and melted butter to blend well. Once the crust is out of the oven, reduce the heat to 325 degrees F. Stir the filling one more time and then pour it into the hot crust. Bake until the filling feels firm when touched lightly, about 20 minutes. Check regularly after 18 minutes to avoid overbaking. Transfer the pan to a cooling rack and cool to room temperature. Cut into squares and serve.

Makes about 25 pieces.