

Ginger Shortbread Cookies

(makes about 60 cookies; I usually double the recipe and freeze some for the future)

2 cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1/4 tsp baking powder

3/4 tsp salt

1 cup (2 sticks) butter at room temp.

2/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon light brown sugar

3/4 tsp vanilla extract

3 tablespoons ground ginger

1 cup coarsely chopped candied ginger (chopped by hand--it's too gummy to chop with a machine)

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt together into a small bowl and set aside

Using an electric mixer on medium speed, cream the butter, brown sugar, vanilla and ground ginger together in a medium-sized mixing bowl until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Stop mixer once or twice to scrape the bowl with a rubber spatula.

Add flour mixture and mix on low speed until mixture is fluffy again, about 1 minute. Scrape the bowl.

Remove the dough from the bowl and place on work surface. Work the candied ginger into the mix with your hands.

Divide dough in half. Place 2 16-18" lengths of waxed paper or plastic wrap on a work surface. Shape each half of the dough into a rough log, about 10 inches long and 1 1/2 inches in diameter, and place along one long side of the paper or plastic wrap. Roll the dough up in the paper, and twist the ends like a hard-candy wrapper. Refrigerate for 1-2 hours.

Remove dough from the refrigerator. Using your hands, roll the wrapped dough gently back and forth on the work surface until smooth and round. Refrigerate again for at least 4 hours (you can leave it overnight or even a couple of days in the refrigerator before baking).

15 minutes before baking, preheat oven to 350 F (325 for convection). Line baking or cookie sheets with parchment paper, or leave them ungreased.

Remove dough from refrigerator, unwrap logs, and cut them into slices a generous 1/3 inch thick. Place 1 inch apart on baking sheets, and bake until golden and firm to the touch, about 25-30 minutes. Use the lower end of the cooking time for convection and do not overcook. (You can test for doneness by removing a cookie from the oven and cutting it in half. If there is no doughy strip in the center, they're done). Cool on the sheets.

Store in an airtight container for a couple of days at room temp., for a week or two in the refrigerator, or you can freeze them; they're good for a couple of months in the freezer.