



# A Christmas Cookie Swap & Ginger Shortbread

Happy Holidays 2013/Volume 378

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**What's not to love about a Cookie Swap?** It's not just a delightful excuse for friends to get together; a Cookie Swap has a sweet bonus. You arrive with one big batch of your favorite Christmas cookie and leave with a cornucopia of treats. That's right; instead of spending days baking eight or ten different kinds of cookies, you bake up a big batch of one special treat and swap them for a wonderful assortment. Along with the cookies, you'll enjoy a few hours of holiday cheer with friends. Sounds like a pretty good two-fer to me.

### How to begin?

**The more the merrier!** Invite anyone who loves cookies; which more or less means any and every one you know. Friends, neighbors, family and co-workers. Don't forget that nice woman you met in the library last week, the one who's new to town.

**How many cookies are too many?** Silly question; you can never have too many cookies. However, it's a good bet to ask everyone to bring six dozen cookies for swapping and maybe a few more to munch during the party.

**Encourage your guests to bring copies of their recipes.** That way, everyone goes home with plenty of cookies and a whole lot of know how. To avoid any added confusion during the swap, ask your guests to bring containers to carry their goodies home. Since someone always forgets, be prepared and have some extra containers or bags handy.

### What's next?

**Think casual.** There will be plenty of sweets, so whip up a few of your favorite savory snacks. Stick to figure food, set out small plates and let everyone help themselves. If you want to add something a bit more substantial, mugs of soup will be most welcome on a cold night. No need to worry about dessert, there will be cookies galore. Chill some wine, mull some cider and the menu is complete.

**Clear a table, add a few candles and baubles and wait for the cookies to arrive.** Both set-up and clean-up will be a whole lot easier if you ask everyone to bring their favorite holiday platter to display their cookies. Have little cards ready to label each platter. That way your guests can connect the baker and recipe with each cookie.

**More than likely, the halls are already decked** and there's a Christmas mix cued in your iPod or CD player. Now all you need to do is light a fire, fluff a few pillows and take a deep breath or two before the doorbell rings.



Happy holidays and bon appétit!

*Susan*

## Ginger Shortbread

*I've combined two of my favorites – shortbread and ginger – in this tasty holiday treat. Enjoy!*

Makes about 3 dozen cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
Grated zest of 1 orange  
1/2 cup finely chopped candied ginger  
2 sticks (1 cup) butter at room temperature  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 tablespoon Grand Marnier  
6-8 ounces dark or milk chocolate, chopped

Put the flour and spices in a bowl and whisk to combine. Add the orange zest and ginger and whisk again.

Beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl at medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon Grand Marnier and beat until combined. Gradually add the flour mixture and beat on low speed until combined.

Divide the dough into 3-4 pieces. Shape each piece into a log about 1 1/2 inches in diameter, wrap in parchment paper or plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper or silicon mats.

Using a sharp knife, cut the logs into 1/3-inch thick slices. Arrange the cookies on the prepared baking sheets, about 1 inch apart. Bake until the edges are golden, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Put the chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl and zap in the microwave for 30 seconds. Remove from the microwave and stir. Continue to zap in 10-15 second intervals and stir until the chocolate has almost melted. Let the chocolate sit for a minute or two and stir until smooth.

Dip the cookies in the chocolate or spread chocolate on each cookie. Let the cookies sit for about 30 minutes to set.

*The cookies can be stored for up to 1 week in an airtight container.*



Ho Ho Ho ... It's Cookie Time!

From the kitchen of: \_\_\_\_\_

Cookie: \_\_\_\_\_

