

Fran's Fabulous Chocolate-Chunk Oatmeal Craisen Cookies

We like these cookies made with dried sour cherries, but dried cranberries work just as well and are cheaper. We use chocolate chips in place of chunks out of laziness. Quick oats used in place of the old-fashioned oats will yield a cookie with slightly less chewiness. If your baking sheets are smaller than the ones described in the recipe, bake the cookies in three batches instead of two. These cookies keep for 4 to 5 days stored in an airtight container or zipper-lock plastic bag, but they will lose their crisp exterior and become uniformly chewy after a day or so.

Makes sixteen 4-inch cookies or about 2 doz smaller cookies

- 1 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups unbleached all-purpose flour (6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ounces)
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon table salt
- 2 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups rolled oats , *old-fashioned*, (6 $\frac{1}{3}$ ounces)
 - 1 cup dried tart cherries (5 ounces), *chopped coarse* (I used dried cranberries)
 - 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate , *chopped into chunks about size of chocolate chips (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)* (I used chocolate chips)
 - 12 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks), *softened but still cool* (I used New Balance margarine for baking)
- 1 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups packed brown sugar (10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces), *preferably dark*
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Adjust oven racks to upper- and lower-middle positions; heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in medium bowl. In second medium bowl, stir together oats, cherries, and chocolate.
3. In standing mixer, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until no sugar lumps remain, about 1 minute. Scrape down sides of bowl with rubber spatula; add egg and vanilla and beat on medium-low speed until fully incorporated, about 30 seconds. Scrape down bowl; with mixer running at low speed, add flour mixture; mix until just combined, about 30 seconds. With mixer still running on low, gradually add oat/nut mixture; mix until just incorporated. Give dough final stir with rubber spatula to ensure that no flour pockets remain and ingredients are evenly distributed. (I need to chill the dough at this point – it never has been firm enough to roll into balls).
4. Divide dough evenly into 16 portions, each about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, then roll between palms into balls about 2 inches in diameter; stagger 8 balls on each baking sheet, spacing them about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart. Using hands, gently press each dough ball to 1 inch thickness. Bake both baking sheets 12 minutes, rotate them front to back and top to bottom, then continue to bake until cookies are medium brown and edges have begun to set but centers are still soft (cookies will seem underdone and will appear raw, wet, and shiny in cracks), 8 to 10 minutes longer. Do not overbake.

(I make smaller cookies, using about a tablespoon and just drop them onto the cookie sheet and flatten them to about an inch. Bake about 10 – 12 min. rotating sheets depending on your oven. Just be sure not to overbake.

5. Cool cookies on baking sheets on wire rack 5 minutes; transfer cookies to wire rack and cool to room temperature. They don't mush if you wait the whole 5 min.

This recipe comes from "Cooks Illustrated" so it is a little more fussy than just drop and bake, but good.