

EARLY GIFT GUIDE

Sometimes, the best gifts are ones that can be eaten

(StatePoint) Sometimes the best presents and the most treasured ornaments aren't the ones that last a lifetime — they're the ones that you can eat!

But don't just bake the same old boring treats for friends and family. This season, give your holiday treats, eats, gifts and decor a colorful twist using richly hued sprinkles, frosting and icing.

"I love working with sprinkles because they're not only delicious, they're so visual too. Of course you can scatter them over cakes, but you can also swirl them into waffles, 'embroider' them on cookies or do any number of creative things with them that look great for the holidays," says Jackie Alpers, a photographer and author of the new cookbook "Sprinkles! Recipes and Ideas for Rainbowlicious Desserts."

For a beautiful and delicious batch of edible ornaments you can hang on your tree or use to adorn your home, follow this recipe from Alpers for Windowpane Cookies:

Ingredients

- 1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon

baking powder

- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

• 1 egg at room temperature, beaten

• 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

• Approximately 1/2 cup various sanding sugars, sorted by color. (Clear hard candies, like Jolly Ranchers can be used instead. Just sort by color into plastic bags, seal and use a hammer to crush the candies into bits.)

Directions

• Sift together flour, baking powder and salt.

• In another bowl, cream butter and sugar with an electric mixer on medium, until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Mix in flour mixture until dough is smooth and firm.

• Divide dough in half and shape into two 1/2-inch-thick disks. Cover them in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 hours.

• Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

• On a lightly floured work surface, roll dough to a thickness of 1/4 inch.

Cut out shapes using a larger cookie cutter and then use smaller cutters to remove "windows" from those shapes. Arrange cookies about 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets.

• Fill cookie windows with sanding sugars or crushed candy pieces.

• Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until edges start to turn golden, rotating sheets halfway through baking time. Place sheets on wire racks to cool for a few minutes before gently removing cookies with a metal spatula. Let cookies cool completely on wire racks. Store between layers of wax paper to prevent sticking in an airtight container for up to one week.

To turn the cookies into holiday ornaments, use a bamboo skewer or chopstick to poke a hole about 3/4 inch from the top of each cookie before baking. Once baked cookies have cooled, thread 10 inches of ribbon or colorful baker's twine through each hole and tie in a bow.

More information about baking with sprinkles can be found at www.QuirkBooks.com/Sprinkles.

With a bit of colorful fun, you can make your holiday treats and gifts extra festive and delicious this year.



Edible ornaments can be two gifts in one — a decoration for the Christmas tree and then a treat to enjoy at the end of the season.

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