

Snowball Cookies – aka Mexican Wedding Cakes

- ½ lb. salted cold butter, sliced
 - 6 T. powdered sugar
 - 2 C. all-purpose flour
 - 1 C. pecans (halves or pieces)
 - 1 T. vanilla extract
 - 1 T. cold purified water
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- Use a food processor to combine flour, butter, and powdered sugar. Very small pieces of butter should still be visible.
 - Add pecans and process until nuts are in about ¼” pieces. Do not over-process!
 - Add vanilla and water, then pulse to combine. Dough will look like a crumble topping. Do not add more liquid!
 - Transfer dough to a bowl. Cover and refrigerate at least one hour (or even overnight is fine).
 - Shape dough by compressing it and rolling it into 1” balls. It’s important that the cookies are all the very same size.
 - Place on a cookie sheet and refrigerate again for about 30 minutes.
 - Preheat oven to 300°. If your oven tends to run hot, reduce the temp to 275°.

NOTE: Since most recipes call for baking cookies at 350°, this recipe is quite a departure from the usual practice. Baking these cookies longer at 300° works because the sugar amount in the dough itself is so low in proportion to the flour and fat amounts.

The strategy in this unconventional approach is to bring the cookies beyond a doughy ball that's crispy only on the outside, and into a wonderful state of being totally “melba toasted” with a nutty crunch throughout. This is the approach my dad taught me when I was young, and it's delivered sensational results for decades. But...it requires some observation to achieve the perfect window of “melba toastiness”. As with roasting a turkey, baking a pumpkin pie, or these unique cookies, you must “sneak up” on the right moment to pull them out.

The photo below shows the desired results we achieved in our new oven just two days from this posting. They baked at 300° for a full 60 minutes.



- Because there can be variations in brand ingredients and ovens, start checking the cookies at 35-40 minutes by cutting one open to see the color inside. Depending on the color you see, continue baking 5-10 minutes at a time, until they have reached the color you prefer. They should be golden all the way through, but not brown or burnt.
- Roll each cookie one time in powdered sugar as soon as you take them out of the oven.
- Repeat the process two more times of rolling them in powdered sugar. You may need to cool them slightly between the second and third coats to get the powdered sugar to adhere well. On the first application of powdered sugar, the heat actually helps the sugar to adhere.
- Store in an airtight container to maintain that nutty melba crunch. Separate layers with waxed paper or parchment.
- Theoretically, these cookies can last for weeks. I try to make them at least a week before Christmas.

In our family tradition, these Mexican Wedding Cakes are not eaten before our Christmas Eve dinner. They are available as long as they last Christmas week. For that reason, we usually make a double or triple batch, and the kids love to help.

Warning: these cookies are addictive! (And Bob says you need to save at least one for coffee the next morning.)