

From my kitchen bench with Pat Churchill

# Butter me up

These buttery little biscuits are great when you are looking for a bit of sweetness with your tea or coffee.

They take no time at all to mix – just process until the crumbs stick together when you press some of the dough between your finger and thumb.

## Spiced almond biscuits

- 150g flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 100g finely ground almonds
- 100g caster sugar
- 140g butter, cubed and at room temperature
- 2 tsp vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 180C. Line a baking tray with baking paper or use a silicon sheet.

Place the sifted flour and spices in a food processor bowl then add the ground almonds and caster sugar and pulse a few times to mix. Add the butter and vanilla extract and process briefly just until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.

Roll into small balls and place on the prepared baking tray. Bake for about 25 minutes or until golden. Cool on a rack then place in an airtight container.



Easy snack: Spiced almond biscuits.

Photo: PAT CHURCHILL

Epicurious with Jenny Garing



Exchange rate: Some spices and ingredients can be substituted for others.

Photo: FAIRFAX NZ

# Spicy dilemmas

**J**enny Garing, linguist, traveller, gourmet, teacher, and the creative force behind Lyttelton's Ground Culinary Centre (destroyed in the February 2011 earthquake) is extending her Ground Essentials food products, running cooking classes, and now, providing answers for culinary questions. [ground.co.nz](http://ground.co.nz)

**Q** Could I use something other than molasses in spice cookies?  
**A.** Yes. Molasses is the syrupy residue left after refining sugar and you can make a similar syrup by dissolving ¾ cup of dark brown sugar in ¼ cup of water and cooling it. As brown sugar has some molasses left in it, there is a trace of the flavour, although not the same bite. If you have muscovado sugar use it, as it is unrefined and full of molasses flavour (and all the minerals and nutrients). I have also used maple syrup and a dark honey, but the flavour differs from molasses. This recipe uses the muscovado substitute.

## Spice biscuits

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
  - 2 tsp baking soda
  - 2 tsp ground cassia
  - 1 tsp ground cloves
  - 1 tsp allspice
  - 1 tsp nutmeg
  - Pinch of salt
  - 1 cup packed light-brown sugar
  - ¼ cup packed muscovado (or dark brown) sugar, plus water
  - ¾ cup canola oil
  - 1 large egg
- Prepare your fake molasses by putting the muscovado sugar in a saucepan with enough water to liquefy. Heat and stir until it turns syrupy. Place in the freezer to cool.
- Combine all the dry ingredients in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine ¼ cup of your fake molasses with the other wet ingredients.
- Pour the liquid mixture into the dry ingredients and mix until combined. It should be crumbly.
- Cover with plastic wrap and cool in the fridge for 20 minutes to 1 hour. Preheat oven to 190C.
- Scoop out teaspoons of the dough and

roll them into small balls. Place about 3cm apart on an oven tray lined with baking paper. Bake for 7 to 10 minutes.

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**Q.** What is the difference between cassia and cinnamon, apart from price? Can I use the cheaper cassia instead of cinnamon?

**A.** Cassia and cinnamon are related but there are differences. Cassia is stronger and sweeter than cinnamon, and many commercial bakers use it because it is cheaper. Traditionally, cinnamon is used more often in savoury dishes and cassia in sweeter dishes; so yes, go ahead and use it in your baking. When buying check the quills – cassia quills are thicker and curl up from both sides like a scroll, while cinnamon quills have many thinner layers and roll in from one side only.

■ Email your culinary queries to [zest@press.co.nz](mailto:zest@press.co.nz) with epicurious in the subject line.

## Treat Dad this Fathers Day with The Fudge Cottage

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