

Italian Rainbow Cookies

<http://userealbutter.com/2017/12/17/italian-rainbow-cookies-recipe/>
from *Smitten Kitchen* and *In Jennie's Kitchen*

3/4 cup (6 oz.) granulated sugar, divided into 3 tbsps and 9 tbsps
6 oz. almond paste (NOT marzipan – they are different)
15 tbsps unsalted butter, room temperature
3 large eggs, separated
3/4 tsp almond extract
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp + pinch salt
18 drops red food coloring
18 drops green food coloring
1/2 cup (6 oz.) apricot preserves, heated and strained (warmed as needed)
6 oz. semisweet dark chocolate, chopped

Preheat oven to 350°F. For shorter cookies, line an 11×17-inch rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper, leaving 2-inches of overhang on two opposite sides of pan. For taller cookies, line a 9×13-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving 2-inches of overhang on two opposite sides of the pan. Tip: I like to fold the parchment in thirds along the short axis of the pan, essentially dividing the pan into thirds.

Using the paddle attachment on a stand mixer, beat the almond paste and 9 tablespoons of the granulated sugar together for about 3 minutes until more or less mashed together. Add the butter and beat on medium speed until pale and fluffy (about 3 minutes). Beat in the egg yolks and the almond extract for another 2 minutes until combined. Add the flour and 1/4 teaspoon of salt, mixing on low speed until just combined.

In a clean mixing bowl, beat the egg whites and a pinch of salt together on medium speed using the whisk attachment until the whites just form stiff peaks. Slowly pour the 3 tablespoons of sugar into the egg whites while whipping on high speed until the meringue becomes stiff and glossy. Stir half of the meringue into the almond batter to lighten the dough. Fold the remaining half of the meringue into the batter so there are no white streaks.

Divvy the batter into three equal portions in three separate bowls (you can leave one portion in the mixing bowl). Add 18 drops of green food coloring to one bowl of plain batter and add 18 drops of red food coloring to another bowl of plain batter. Stir each bowl until the batter is uniform in color. Spread the green batter over a third of the baking pan. Spread the plain batter over the next third of the pan. Finally spread the red batter over the final third of the pan. Use an offset spatula to help push the batter into the corners. It won't flow before baking, but once it is in the oven, the batter will flow some and fill any gaps. It's okay for the batters to touch.

Bake the 11×17-inch pan for 8-13 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean (the cookie will be soft – that's okay). If using the 9×13-inch pan, bake anywhere from 11-19 minutes (it all depends on your pan and your oven and your batter) until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool in the pan on a rack.

Once cooled, you can remove the cookie to a work surface. Use four hands (on the four corners) to quickly and carefully lift the layer to your work surface. Two hands run the risk of potential structural collapse of your layer as you transfer it out of the pan. Cut the layers into three equal sections according to their color. Set the green layer on a sheet of wax paper. Brush half of the strained warmed apricot preserves over the green layer. Set the plain layer on top of the green layer. Brush the remaining half of the apricot preserves over the plain layer. Top the ensemble with the red layer. Lay a piece of wax paper over the top of the stack and gently press down with your hands to level the three layers to a uniform height. Weigh the top down with something flat like a baking pan or a cutting board. It doesn't need to be outrageously heavy. Chill in the refrigerator or a cold place for 4 hours or overnight.

Remove the cookie stack from the refrigerator and trim the edges with a knife (and a ruler if you're that kind of person... I am that kind of person). Allow the stack to come to room temperature. Temper or gently melt half of your chocolate. Spread the chocolate evenly over the top layer of the cookie stack to cover the entire surface. Allow to cool and solidify. You can place the stack in the refrigerator, too. When the chocolate layer is completely set, cover it with wax paper and invert it so the bottom is facing up. Temper or gently melt the rest of the chocolate and spread it evenly over the surface of the cookie stack as you did for the other side and allow it to set. Wrap the stack in wax paper and freeze for 30 minutes or longer. Remove from freezer and slice into desired dimensions. For the tall (9×13-inch pan) cookies, I got 34 cookies at 1/2 inch by 2 inches. For the short (11×17-inch pan) cookies, I got 56 cookies at 3/4 inch by 1 1/4 inch. These will keep in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks, or in the freezer for a month (or more).