

## Elfie Visits California



### **Berry Patch Holiday Cookies**

*Inspired recipe from finalist in 1968 19th Pillsbury Bake-Off*

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
  - 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
  - 1/4 cup dry strawberry-flavored instant drink mix
  - 1 teaspoon almond extract
  - 2 cups all-purpose flour
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour
  - 3 teaspoons sparkling white decorating sugar, divided
  - 2 Tablespoons semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips, divided
- Note** – use flower pattern disc from a cookie press

### **To Use for Having Fun and Decorating the Cookies:**

- 2 Tablespoons confectioners' sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon water, divided
- 3 drops natural food coloring liquid, each color; red, green, blue, yellow
- Confectioners' sugar for sprinkling as desired

**Mix Cookie Dough:**

- In large mixer bowl, mix butter until light; cream in sugar and dry strawberry mix. Add almond extract; mix until smooth and creamy.
- Add flour and salt; mix at low speed, scraping sides of bowl frequently until the dough forms.

**Shape Cookies:**

- Using 1 Tablespoon dough scoop for each cookie, shape dough into balls. Place on silicone pad lined cookie sheets about 2 inches apart.
- Place about 1 Tablespoon flour on a small dish; dip flower cookie disc from a cookie press into flour for each cookie, shake off excess flour, flatten cookie to imprint design; slightly wiggle disc to easily remove from cookies.
- Sprinkle each cookie with a pinch of sparkling white decorating sugar.
- Insert a chocolate chip in the center of each cookie flower.

**Bake and Cool Cookies:**

- Bake at 350 degrees F. on upper rack for 11 to 12 minutes or until delicately browned. Cool 5 minutes; remove from cookie sheets.

**Decorate Cookies**

- For each color you want to use: In a small bowl, stir together 1/2 Tablespoon confectioners' sugar, 1/4 teaspoon water; 3 drops of liquid food coloring.
- With a food artist's brush, color each of the design petals on the cookies. Let dry.
- Sprinkle cookies with confectioners' sugar before serving as desired.

**Yield:** about 3 dozen cookies. Prep. Time: 20 minutes

Baking Time: 11 to 12 minutes per cookie sheet.

**Cook's Note:** If you would like a Strawberry Mint cookie, add a 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. of mint extract in place of the almond extract. The amount depends on the strength of the extract.

**Recipe Updated from:** Finalist in 19<sup>th</sup> Pillsbury Bake-Off 1968.

**About the Recipe:** Some cookies have a special magic, and this is definitely one of them. This recipe shines because you can easily flatten the dough using a disc from your cookie press, allowing you to create your own unique designs. By adding flavored milk mix, you get a tasty strawberry-flavored cookie, and decorating is simple, you won't need fancy frostings or sprinkles. Invite your family or friends to enjoy "painting" the petals or shapes with natural glazed food coloring and top them with a chocolate chip or two for extra flavor. It's a wonderful way to celebrate the holidays!

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## Elf Kisses and Love Wishes

I was skipping along the sand of Coronado Beach, humming Christmas carols to the seagulls, when I decided that if San Diego really is “America’s Finest City,” it must bake some of America’s finest cookies for Santa. The salty air was lovely, but then a breeze carried something even sweeter: strawberry, mint, and warm butter all rolled together.

I followed that heavenly scent past the grand hotels until I spotted an open window on the third floor of a low-rise building. One sprinkle of elf-dust and whoosh! Up I went.

Inside a sunny kitchen stood two college boys wearing surf shirts and flour covered aprons. Trays of delicate pink flower cookies cooled everywhere, each with a chocolate chip glowing in the center like a tiny jewel. The taller boy was carefully painting petals with a tiny brush: rose, green, sky-blue, yellow, while his best friend sprinkled powdered sugar like fresh snow.

“Think she’ll like them?” Oliver asked, suddenly nervous.

“Dude, relax,” Bob laughed. “You found her grandmother’s actual 1968 Pillsbury Bake-Off recipe for Berry Patch Cookies, when she was a bake-off finalist! Her grandma used to call them Persian Jewel Cookies before the contest renamed them. When your girlfriend opens the tin on Christmas morning and sees these exact pink flowers with painted petals. She’s gonna cry happy tears.”

Oliver smiled, dipping his brush into green again. “She always talks about how her Grandma painted each petal with your mom while baby TJ napped. Said the cookies tasted like strawberry-mint milkshakes and love. I added the mint extract just like the little note in the margin says was Grandma’s secret twist.”

I nearly fell off the windowsill clutching my heart. This wasn’t just baking! This was romance, wrapped in cookie dough! A boy bringing his girlfriend’s own family history back to life, one painted petal at a time.

I can’t wait to tell Santa to fly extra low over Coronado this year. Somewhere on that glittering beach, a girl is about to open the most magical Christmas surprise ever: her grandmother’s famous Berry Patch Cookies, made pink and impressively by the young guy who loves her. Santa will love this story and the Love cookies.