

OCTOBER

Baking School In-Depth: Apple Cider Whoopie Pies

As the weather cools, the air grows crisp, and fall harvest sets in, the draw toward cozy and comforting bakes becomes nearly impossible to resist. For our October Baking School In-Depth module, we encourage you to give into all the fall feels and celebrate with fall's favorite fruit, the apple. Though the origin of the whoopie pie may be disputed, there's no denying the charm of two cake-like cookies sandwiching a lusciously smooth buttercream. For our autumnally inspired twist on the classic, we incorporated apple pie spice and Homemade Boiled Cider into our cookies and added tangy cream cheese to our buttercream filling. The result is a sweetly spiced sensation, sure to be a star all autumn long.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each of our recipe's simple ingredients contributes to making these festive, fall-inspired whoopie pies.

UNSALTED BUTTER: Butter brings rich milk fat to baked goods, but it has another purpose in these cookies. For our recipe, we cream softened butter and sugar together, a classic technique that whips air pockets into batter. The creaming method creates a fluffy and lofty bake while simultaneously ensuring a tender, melt-in-your-mouth interior. Melted butter is brushed onto the finished, cooled cookies to create a sticky surface for the spiced sugar coating to stick to.

LIGHT BROWN SUGAR: With its deep, caramellike flavor, brown sugar pairs beautifully with the notes of apple and spice in our whoopie pies, adding both sweetness and depth of flavor. Usually containing about 3.5% molasses, light brown sugar also adds moisture that plain granulated sugar wouldn't, making it an excellent texture booster. The molasses added to brown sugar also increases its acidity, allowing it to react with the alkaline baking soda in the recipe, producing carbon dioxide that creates lift in our whoopie pies.

EGG: Working as a binder, enriching agent, source of moisture, and leavening agent, the single egg in this recipe performs multiple roles to achieve rich yet tender whoopie pies. And for those wondering, bringing your egg to room temperature before mixing into your batter pays off. When you use room temperature eggs, they break up more easily, guaranteeing a silky-smooth batter every time.

ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: A little bit denser than cake but a little lighter than a cookie, whoopie pies require a flour that balances between hard and soft. All-purpose flour, with a protein content typically ranging from 10% to 12%, creates whoopie pies that are tender but have enough gluten structure to hold everything together.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

APPLE PIE SPICE: The perfect premixed blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice, apple pie spice is the flavor sensation that gives our whoopie pies their signature sweetly spiced kick.

BAKING POWDER: Comprised of baking soda, powdered acid or acids, and a starch (to absorb moisture so a reaction doesn't occur until a liquid is added to the batter), most baking powders are double-acting, meaning their chemical reaction occurs twice, using two different acids. The first is a very quick reaction that occurs when baking powder is combined with a liquid, aerating the dough. The second reaction is slower-acting, occurring when heated and baked. Bubbles of carbon dioxide are generated and are ultimately responsible for creating a lighter, more tender crumb when the cookie sets.

BAKING SODA: When baking soda is combined with an acid, like the baking powder and brown sugar in this recipe, it produces carbon dioxide, which helps each cookie to rise and spread. It also helps the cookies caramelize, raising the pH level in the dough for peak browning.

KOSHER SALT: We bake with kosher salt because, unlike most commercial salt, it doesn't contain iodine, making it taste purer and more palatable. Also, the salt crystals are larger. Table salt is much finer, so you would use half of what a recipe with kosher salt calls for.

HOMEMADE BOILED CIDER: To take these whoopie pies to the next level, we employ a boiled-down, super-concentrated apple cider. Syrupy, sweet, and full of rich apple flavor, the cider is a key contributor to the flavor of our whoopie pies while also adding necessary moisture.

GRANULATED SUGAR: Used in a spiced sugar coating, the neutral sweetness of granulated sugar is the perfect final sweet element that lets the apple and spice in these whoopie pies shine.

CREAM CHEESE BUTTERCREAM: A typical American buttercream with the tangy addition of cream cheese, our Cream Cheese Buttercream is creamy and quick to come together. Accented with vanilla, this velvety filling takes our whoopie pies from delicious to decadent.



APPLE CIDER WHOOPIE PIES



APPLE CIDER WHOOPIE PIES

Makes 9 whoopie pies

After a day spent at the orchard, there are few bakes that'll satisfy cozy fall cravings quite like these Apple Cider Whoopie Pies. For our twist on the Northeastern favorite, tender apple-and-spice cookies, brushed with butter and dipped in a sparkly spiced sugar, are piped with a thick, luscious layer of Cream Cheese Buttercream before being sandwiched together to create the ultimate autumnal treat. Enjoyed alongside a fresh cup of cider, these sweets are simply irresistible.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
- 3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon (6 grams) plus $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon (1.5 grams) apple pie spice, divided
- 2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (160 grams) Homemade Boiled Cider (recipe follows)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon (14 grams) unsalted butter, melted

Cream Cheese Buttercream (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat butter and brown sugar at medium speed until creamy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, 1 tablespoon (6 grams) pie spice, baking powder, baking soda,

and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with Homemade Boiled Cider, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Batter will be thick.) Using a 3-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop batter level, and place at least 2 inches apart on prepared pans.

4. Bake until bottom edges are lightly golden and tops are dry, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool completely on pans.
5. In a small bowl, stir together granulated sugar and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon (1.5 gram) pie spice. Working with one at a time, lightly brush top and edges of each cookie with melted butter. Place, top side down, in sugar mixture, making sure top and edges are coated. Place back on pans. (Use remaining sugar mixture to sprinkle on tops as needed for any areas where there might have been too much butter).
6. Place Cream Cheese Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch round tip (Ateco #807). Pipe buttercream onto flat side of half of cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, onto buttercream. Serve immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

HOMEMADE BOILED CIDER

Makes about 1 cup

- 8 cups (1,956 grams) apple cider

1. In a large saucepan, bring cider to a boil over medium-high heat; cook until cider is the consistency of maple syrup and reduced to 1 cup, 1 hour to 1 hour and 20 minutes. (See Note.) Pour mixture into a heatproof liquid-measuring cup; let cool completely before measuring and using. If not using same day, refrigerate in an airtight container, and let come to room temperature before using.

MAKE AHEAD

You can make the boiled cider well in advance. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 months. This recipe for boiled cider makes enough to make a double batch of whoopie pies. Alternatively, extra can be used to sweeten cocktails, served over ice cream or over other deserts as a sauce.

Note: Since stovetops can vary, apple cider may take more or less time to reduce. Be sure to keep an eye on it, especially as it gets closer to 2 cups.

CREAM CHEESE BUTTERCREAM

Makes 3 cups

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 (8-ounce) package (226 grams) cream cheese, softened
- 4 cups (480 grams) confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Add cream cheese, and beat until smooth and combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until just combined. Beat in vanilla; increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until light and fluffy, about 30 seconds.



A SWEETER, SYRUPY CIDER

To help create a more concentrated apple flavor, we boil our apple cider until it's thick and syrupy before incorporating it into our whoopie pie's cookie dough



1. In a large saucepan, bring cider to a boil over medium-high heat; cook until cider is the consistency of maple syrup and reduced to 1 cup, 1 hour to 1 hour and 20 minutes. (See Note.) Pour mixture into a heatproof liquid-measuring cup; let cool completely before measuring and using. If not using same day, refrigerate in an airtight container, and let come to room temperature before using. When boiled cider is getting close, the bubbles will become larger on the surface. It can go from 1½ cups to 1 cup in less than 5 minutes, so it's important to watch closely at the end.

THE COOKIE COMPONENT

Sitting somewhere between cake and cookie, our whoopie pie's batter comes together quickly but is all about incorporating air and lightness to create deliciously tender, fluffy cookies



1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat butter and brown sugar at medium speed until creamy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Beat in egg until combined.

THE COOKIE COMPONENT



3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, 1 tablespoon (6 grams) pie spice, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with Homemade Boiled Cider, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Batter will be thick.) Using a 3-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop batter level, and place at least 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Whoopie pie batter has to be thick to make sure it doesn't just turn into a puddle in the oven.
4. Bake until bottom edges are lightly golden and tops are dry, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool completely on pans.

BRINGING TOGETHER THE BUTTERCREAM

With the help of a stand mixer, the sweet and tangy filling for our whoopie pies comes together easily and effortlessly



1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Add cream cheese, and beat until smooth and combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until just combined. Beat in vanilla; increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until light and fluffy, about 30 seconds.

FILLING AND FLAIR

Brushed with butter, dipped in sweetly spiced sugar, and filled with silky-smooth Cream Cheese Buttercream, these cookies are sure to be snatched up the second they're done



1. In a small bowl, stir together granulated sugar and remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon (1.5 gram) pie spice. Working with one at a time, lightly brush top and edges of each cookie with melted butter. Place, top side down, in sugar mixture, making sure top and edges are coated. Place on a wire rack. (Use remaining sugar mixture to sprinkle on tops as needed for any areas that there might have been too much butter).

2. Place Cream Cheese Buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch round tip (Ateco #807). Pipe buttercream onto flat side of half of cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, onto buttercream. Serve immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days.