

VALERIE'S Sweet Tradition

Like her mom and grandma before her, Bertinelli kicks off the holidays with a cookie swap

Trading homemade treats at Christmastime has been a holiday ritual for Valerie Bertinelli since she was a little girl in Delaware. “We used to have big gatherings at my Aunt Adeline’s,” the *Valerie’s Home Cooking* host, 56, tells *Us*. This year, the mom of 25-year-old Wolfgang is inviting a slew of friends and family to the Arizona home she shares with husband Tom Vitale, 55. She’ll be preparing a riff on mother-in-law Helen’s pepper-laced biscotti and her own “decadent” take on a chocolate chip flavor. As for the guests’ contributions to the exchange, the only directive is the number of treats to bring: “It’s fun to see how other people make the same recipe!”



THAT'S A WRAP!
Bertinelli enjoys having guests decorate tins, glass jars and takeout containers that they can use to transport their haul.

Toasted Almond Biscotti MAKES 3 DOZEN BISCOTTI

- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tbsp freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch kosher salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tsp grated orange zest
- 1½ tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp almond extract
- 1½ cups chopped almonds, lightly toasted

- 1 Sift together the flour, baking soda and baking powder in a medium bowl. Stir in the pepper and salt. Set aside.
- 2 In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter on high until pale and light. Add the sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 7 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the orange zest and vanilla and almond extracts.
- 3 Fold in the flour mixture, then fold in the almonds. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
- 4 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or nonstick silicone liners.
- 5 Divide the dough in half. Place 1 piece on each sheet and shape each piece into a 12-inch log, about 2 inches across and 1 inch tall. Bake until the logs are cooked through and lightly browned, about 35 minutes.
- 6 Let the logs cool for about 10 minutes on the baking sheets (leave the oven on), then transfer them carefully to racks to cool 10 minutes more. Using a serrated knife, slice each log on the diagonal into ¾-inch-thick slices. Arrange the slices cut-side down on the baking sheets and return to the oven until well toasted, 15 to 20 minutes more. Transfer the biscotti to racks to cool completely. They will keep, tightly covered, up to a week.



Caramel Chocolate Chip Sea Salt Cookies

MAKES 3 DOZEN COOKIES

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 sticks butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 1½ tsp vanilla extract
- ¾ cups dark chocolate chips
- 1 cup caramel bits or chopped unwrapped caramel candies
- 1½ tsp flaky sea salt

- 1 Preheat the oven to 375 degrees with racks in the upper and lower thirds. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 2 Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and kosher salt together in a bowl.
- 3 Beat the sugars and butter together in a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes.
- 4 Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the vanilla extract and beat to combine.
- 5 Add the flour mixture and beat until just incorporated. Stir in the chocolate chips and caramel bits.
- 6 Scoop heaping tablespoons onto the cookie sheets, leaving about 2 inches of space between cookies (you will have cookie dough left over). Sprinkle each cookie with a pinch of sea salt.
- 7 Bake the cookies, rotating the position of the trays halfway through, until golden brown, about 13 minutes.
- 8 Transfer the cookies to a rack to cool. Cool the baking sheets and repeat with the remaining cookie dough.



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