



# Christmas Sugar Cookies

 *PG Tested*

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1½ teaspoons almond extract
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2½ cups sifted flour

**In** bowl of stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, cream butter. Add powdered sugar. Blend in egg, almond and vanilla extracts, salt and flour. Chill dough until firm, at least 1 hour.

**Roll** dough to ¼-inch thickness on well-floured surface. Cut into desired shapes with cookie cutters. Place cut-outs on greased cookie sheets. If decorating with colored sugar, sprinkle sugar on top of cookies.

**Bake** cookies at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Cookies should not brown. Frost and decorate when cool with Royal Icing (recipe follows).

**Makes** 40 cookies.

## Royal Icing

- 4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 tablespoons meringue powder
- 5 tablespoons water

**Combine** all ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on low speed until the sheen has disappeared and the icing has a matte appearance (about 7 to 10 minutes). Transfer the contents of the mixing bowl to an air-tight container. This will be the stiffest consistency of the icing, and at this point it still will be too stiff to use for decorating.

**Add** more water, a very small amount at a time, and stir by hand until fully incorporated. Continue until the icing has reached a consistency appropriate for piping. (Remember, if you are having any difficulty piping, it is still too thick. Add a little more liquid and try again.)

**Using** a pastry bag, pipe around the edges of each cookie. Let it stand so the icing will set. Make sure to keep the leftover icing covered at all times when not in use so that it does harden.

**Once** all the cookies have been edged, transfer some of the remaining icing to a separate air-tight container. Thin out by incorporating a small amount of water at a time, until the icing drips off the spoon easily when lifted and then smooths in with that still in the bowl. If the icing is too thin, add more sifted powdered sugar to thicken it again. Once the icing has reached the desired consistency, transfer it to a squeeze bottle (or a plastic bag with a hole in one corner), and flood the area surrounded by the piping on each cookie. If it does not completely spread to the edges, use a toothpick to help it along. Allow to set.

**Use** the remaining thicker icing for piping decoration as desired. Gel icing color is best as it does not add a significant amount of liquid. Liquid food coloring can be used as well. Add powdered sugar as needed to compensate for any thinning that occurs.