

[A guide on Cookie Decorating](#)

With the Holidays soon approaching why not take a break from the Christmas hustle and spend some time bonding with the kids, family and friends or taking some down time allowing some time to get creative, by making some beautiful festive holiday cookies. This is also a great time to host a cookie exchange, see below for tips on hosting a party (McCall's Sugar Cookie provided below).

A sugar cookie provides a great starting point, since it's typically medium thickness, pale in colour, cuts nicely and bakes out flat to provide a smooth working surface. When planning on decorating cookies, you want to avoid cookies that are thinner due to breakage or cookies which bake bumpy/non-smooth or porous surfaces - it makes decorating more difficult or messy looking.



Another great cookie that is thick and sturdy is gingerbread. Feel free to click on the link below and check out McCall's old fashioned [gingerbread recipe](#).



Once you have decided on the shapes and baked your delicious cookies – the real fun is in the decorating! Having certain tools, can help you achieve the best results. Items such as: food colors, piping bags, piping tips, and or a pallet knife can make decorating a lot easier. All these and more are available at McCall's or www.mccalls.ca

When decorating cookies we suggest using Royal Icing, which is typically most common for covering cookies since it's tasty and sets nicely, or you can purchase our McCall's ready-to-use [Royal Icing](#).

Other materials that you might want to consider when decorating cookies are:

[Rolled Fondant](#): Has a similar consistency to playdough and tastes sweet. You can add colours, and cut out shapes or mold the fondant onto the cookie.



[Dry Fondant](#): Comes in a powdered form, just add water and heat. Is great for dipping, since it has a runny consistency and is much thinner than a royal icing. You can also add color or flavour to dry fondant to accentuate your cookies.

[Compound Chocolate](#): Just melt and dip your cookies into the chocolate or pipe with a piping bag or plastic squeeze bottle. Compound chocolate does not require tempering unlike pure chocolate.



[Wilton Cookie Icing](#): Is a premade cookie icing in a squeezable bottle that is already colored and ready to use.



Always remember have fun and let your creative juices flow!

McCall's Rolled Sugar Cookies

Makes about 36 cookies

Ingredients:

- 227 g unsalted butter, softened
- 175 g granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 10 g vanilla extract or any extract flavour
- 400 g all-purpose flour
- 5 g baking powder
- 5 g salt

Method of Preparation

Preheat oven to 400°F. In large bowl, beat butter and sugar with electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add egg and extract; mix well. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; add to butter mixture 1 cup at a time, mixing after each addition.

Divide dough into 2 balls, flatten into discs and chill dough 15 minutes.

On a floured surface, roll each ball into a circle approximately 12 inch wide and ¼ inch thick. Dip cookie cutter in flour before each use. Bake cookies on ungreased or parchment lined cookie sheet 6-7 minutes or until cookies are lightly browned. Cool cookies on cooling rack.

Additional Tips & Notes for Royal Icing:

- Royal icing will dry out quickly. Keep covered at all times with a damp cloth. Keep tips covered as well when not in use with a damp cloth.
- Grease will break down royal icing. Make sure that your bowl, beater, and other utensils are grease free. Vinegar is a great grease cutter, just make sure to rinse bowl after.
- Use an extract or flavouring that is NOT oil based.
- Make sure to sift your icing sugar to ensure there are no clumps in your icing, which can clog your tips.
- The icing will start to separate after sitting for a while. Re-beat icing before using. You may need to add in some more icing sugar if you find it's too watery.
- If colouring icing with liquid colours, adjust amount of water added.
- Best stored in a glass container as plastic holds onto grease

Cookie Exchange 101

A smart and efficient way of staying ahead of the game is to host a cookie exchange! Why, you ask? Because we all know how quick Christmas comes and goes, and how easy it is to never get around to doing your Christmas baking. A cookie exchange gives you the much needed help during this busy time of year. Not having to put in the time to bake all those varieties of holiday cookies would be a real time saver.

Here is a general cookie swap breakdown for those new to this fun event:

- 1 - Gather a group of family and/or friends for the occasion (5-10 would be great)
- 2 - Guests arrive with their cookies on [trays](#), ready to show them off by displaying their work around the tabletop for all to see
- 3 - Enjoy the eye-catching table scape while choosing 1 dozen of each cookie

The general rule of a Baking Exchange: Come with 8 dozen and leave with 8 dozen! (Depending on how many guests are attending; 10 guests=10 dozen)

Happy swapping!

There are some other must-mention reasons why baking exchanges are such a great idea:

- 1 - It's not only about cookie; it's about baking and spending time with people you care about. So keep in mind, any season fits; it could be Easter, even Halloween! And it doesn't have to be a cookie exchange; how about squares, truffles or chocolate exchanges?
- 2 - These fun get-togethers put you in the spirit of the holiday you're about to celebrate.
- 3 - Baking exchanges inspire you to start your home decorating for the season.
- 4 - This fun event continues the tradition of passing down [recipes](#), baking tips and even stories from one generation to the next.
- 5 - It always feels great spending quality time with certain family and friends who you may not get to see over the holidays!

The host has the crucial role of organizing this gathering, so here are some special tips for hosts to know:

- 1 - Send out your e-vites with an RSVP requesting 3 cookies that your guest is willing to bake.
- 2 - Based on your received RSVP's you must decide which guest bakes what for the exchange, keeping in mind that you want a good variety of [cookies](#) for the event.
- 3 - Reply to all RSVP's the chosen cookie they will each bake. Notify your participants of the confirmed guest list and let them know how many dozens are required. (One dozen cookies per guest)
- 4 - Decorate with the inspiration of the holidays for your cookie exchange gathering, and make appropriate beverages that will pair nicely with your treats.
- 5 - Things that you should consider for your guests to keep the event running smoothly : [disposable gloves](#) for choosing cookies, [boxes](#) for stacking and [parchment paper](#) to divide cookies to transport home safely.
- 6 - Be sure to leave a gentle reminder attached to your RSVP's that if someone cannot attend after confirming, to have their treats delivered in place of them thus allowing the unavailable guest to still receive their allotted amount of cookies.

Baking Exchange Etiquette

- 1 - As an invited guest, when you RSVP you must choose 3 potential types of cookies you are willing to bake.
- 2 - You must bake the cookie that the host chooses for you (One dozen per guest).
- 3 - If for whatever reason you cannot attend the event after confirming, you should send your baked goods by having them delivered in your place, thus allowing you to receive your allotted amount of cookies.

Lastly, your cookie exchange doesn't have to run late; a 2 hour gathering on a week night will do just fine, allowing you to make it home with time to spare!