



Makes: 30 cookies

Prep Time: 1 hour Bake Time: 36 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour 36 minutes

Iced Heart Cookies

Cookies:

- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp Kosher salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Royal Icing:

- 2 & 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 large egg white, or 2 & 1/2 tablespoons meringue powder
- Gel food color (optional)
- Sprinkles

Cookies:

In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Beat butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Reduce speed to low and gradually add flour mixture; beat until combined. Divide dough in half; flatten into disks. Wrap each in plastic and freeze until firm, about 20 minutes.

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment. Remove 1 disk of dough; let stand 5 to 10 minutes. Roll out 1/4-inch thick between two sheets of floured parchment, dusting with flour as needed. Cut shapes with 2 1/2-inch heart-shaped cookie cutters. Using a spatula, transfer to prepared baking sheets (if dough gets too soft, refrigerate 10 minutes). Re-roll scraps and cut more shapes. Repeat with remaining disk of dough.

Bake cookies, rotating sheets halfway through, until edges are golden, about 12 minutes. (If bubbles form, tap baking sheet firmly against oven rack a few times during baking.) Let cool completely on wire racks. Cookies can be stored in an airtight container up to 1 week.

Royal Icing:

In the bowl of a mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine confectioners' sugar and egg white on low speed. Add a scant 1/4 cup water, then increase speed to medium-high and mix until icing holds a ribbon-like trail on surface for 3 seconds when you raise paddle, about 10 minutes. Reduce speed to low and mix 1 minute more to eliminate air bubbles. If icing is too thick, add more water, 1 tablespoon at a time. If icing is too thin, add more confectioner's sugar, 1-2 tablespoons at a time.

Dip the top side of each cooled cookie into the royal icing. Tilt the cookie so that excess icing drips off back into the bowl. Place the iced cookie on a rack set inside a baking pan or over aluminum foil (for easy cleanup). If you are using sprinkles, spread over the top of the iced cookies now. If you are making the paint-stroke cookies, let cookies sit until the icing is hard, at least 2 hours.

Paint Stroke Finish:

Use a few drops of pink gel coloring in a small bowl of water to color the water to the depth that you prefer. Using a paint brush, dip the brush in the pink water and then "paint" over the cookies. For the cookies that I am featuring, I set the iced cookies in alternate positions next to each other. I then dragged the brush on a diagonal across the cookies. Repeat that until the cookies are painted. Let sit until dry.

Chef's Notes:

If you're decorating cookies for children, pregnant women, or anyone with a compromised immune system, use meringue powder instead of egg whites.

If you have egg white powder, you can add 1 tablespoon along with 2 tablespoons of water instead of the egg white or meringue powder. You still will need to add the 1/4 cup water.

Recipe adapted from Martha Stewart