

Baci di Dama (Lady's Kisses) | from Terresa Murphy

- 1¼ cups hazelnuts, toasted and skinned (toast in a 325° F oven for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown and the skins start to peel away. Remove from the oven and as soon as they are cool enough to handle, rub them in a tea towel to remove as much of the loose skin as possible)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour (or rice flour)
- 3½ ounces unsalted butter at room temperature
- ½ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 2 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped

Put the hazelnuts in the bowl of a food processor and pulse them until very fine. Transfer them to a bowl and add the flour. Cut the butter into pieces then add it, the sugar, and salt to the nuts and flour. Use your hands to mix all the ingredients together until the butter is dispersed and completely incorporated. The dough should be very smooth and hold together. If not, knead it until it does.

Divide the dough into three equal pieces and roll each until it is ¾-inch round. Try to get them as smooth as possible with no cracks. If the dough is too long to work with as you roll them out, just cut it and work with shorter pieces. Chill the dough logs until firm on a small baking sheet lined with plastic wrap or parchment paper, 2-3 hours in the refrigerator or about 15 minutes in the freezer. You can also wrap them and keep them frozen till you're ready to bake.

Preheat oven to 325° F and line two baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Working with one log of dough at a time, cut equal-sized slices with a knife. Once the dough is cut, roll each slice into a small ball (about the size of a marble) and place them on the baking sheet.

Bake the cookies for 10-14 minutes until the tops are lightly golden brown. Let the cookies cool completely.

In a small glass bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water, melt the chocolate until smooth. Put a chocolate chip-sized dollop of chocolate on the bottom of one cookie and take another cookie and sandwich the two halves together. Once filled, put the cookies on a wire cooling rack until the chocolate is firm.

If the cookies aren't devoured, they will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one week.