

black and white cookies

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Black and White Cookies

A New York deli institution: a soft, cake-textured drop the size of a saucer, iced half in vanilla fondant and half in chocolate, on the flat side. It is descended from the German *Amerikaner*, itself a hartshorn-leavened lemon cake, and it is only nominally a cookie — the batter is a cake batter, and the page it really belongs beside is [cakes](#).

What makes it work

- **It is baked upside down and iced on the bottom.** The flat underside is the canvas. Ice the domed top and it looks wrong and the icing runs off.
- **The batter is soft, almost a thick cake batter**, and it must be scooped rather than rolled. Cake flour and buttermilk give the tender, close crumb.
- **Icing is a fondant, not a glaze.** Powdered sugar, corn syrup, a little hot water, and heat — warm it to about 40 °C so it flows, then let it set to a dry, matte, snappable shell. A plain water glaze stays tacky and smudges.
- **Ice white first, let it set, then chocolate.** Cocoa in the second half will bleed into a wet white side.
- **A straight line needs a straight edge.** Press a ruler or a strip of card down the centre, ice one half, lift, wait, and repeat.

Ingredients

Makes 12 large cookies.

Cookie:

- 190 g cake flour, or all-purpose with 20 g swapped for [cornstarch](#)
- 120 g all-purpose flour
- 5 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 115 g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 g granulated sugar
- 1 [egg](#)
- 120 ml buttermilk — see [buttermilk recipes](#)
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)
- zest of 1 [lemon](#)

Fondant icing:

- 400 g powdered sugar
- 60 ml hot water, plus more as needed
- 2 tbsp light corn syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 30 g cocoa plus 20 g melted dark chocolate, for the dark half — see [Cocoa and cocoa mixes](#)

Method

Cream the butter and sugar three minutes, beat in the egg, vanilla and zest, then alternate the flours with the buttermilk in three additions, starting and ending with flour.

Scoop 70 g mounds onto parchment, four to a tray, and flatten slightly. Bake **190 °C / 375 °F for 15–17 minutes**, until the edges are set and a skewer comes out clean. Cool completely, then turn every cookie upside down.

Whisk the icing to the thickness of heavy cream and warm it gently over a pan of hot water. Ice half of each cookie white. Let it set 30 minutes.

Stir the cocoa and melted chocolate into the remaining icing, thin it back with a spoonful of hot water, and ice the second half. Set another hour.

Notes

- **Half a cookie is a portion**, and the New York convention is to fold it and eat the two halves together.
- Corn syrup is what stops the fondant crystallising; [honey](#) or glucose syrup does the same job.
- **Best on day one**. The cake dries by day three, and the icing is what keeps it edible that long.

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