

fortune cookies

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Fortune Cookies

Not Chinese. The fortune cookie descends from the Japanese *tsujiura senbei*, a sesame-and-miso wafer folded around a paper fortune and sold at temples near Kyoto since at least the nineteenth century; Japanese-American bakers in California brought it over, and Chinese restaurants adopted it after the Japanese-American internment of the 1940s emptied the bakeries that made them.

Mechanically it is a [tuile](#) with a folding schedule.

What makes it work

- **Egg white only, no yolk and no butter creamed in.** The batter must bake to something translucent and brittle; fat and yolk make it tender, which is the opposite of what a fortune cookie needs.
- **Two or three at a time, never more.** The fold has to happen within about ten seconds of the cookie leaving the oven. A fourth cookie on the tray is a fourth cookie you will break.
- **Fold in two moves.** Drape the disc over the fortune and fold in half to a semicircle; then bend that semicircle over the rim of a cup or a chopstick to make the hook.
- **Set it in a muffin tin.** The folded cookie holds its shape only if it cools supported; slots of a muffin tin work perfectly.
- **Write the fortunes first**, on paper strips 6 cm × 1 cm. This sounds obvious and is the step everyone forgets until there are three seconds left.

Ingredients

Makes about 20.

- 2 egg whites, about 70 g
- 100 g granulated sugar
- 60 g all-purpose flour
- 30 g [cornstarch](#)
- 40 g unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tbsp water
- 2 g fine salt
- ½ tsp vanilla, or ½ tsp [almond extract](#)
- optional: 1 tsp toasted sesame seeds, for the older Japanese version

Method

Whisk the egg whites and sugar just until frothy, not aerated. Whisk in the flour, cornstarch and salt, then the melted butter, water and flavouring. Rest 30 minutes.

Draw two 9 cm circles on parchment as a guide. Spread a scant tablespoon of batter into each, very thin and even.

Bake **160 °C / 325 °F for 12–14 minutes**, until the outer third is deep gold and the centre still pale.

Working immediately: lift one with a spatula, lay a fortune across it, fold in half, then bend over the rim of a glass. Drop it into a muffin cup. Repeat with the second. Anything that hardens goes back in the oven for 30 seconds.

Notes

- **Gloves help.** Cotton or thin latex — the cookies are hot and the fold has to be firm.
- The original Kyoto version is larger, folded the same way, and flavoured with sesame and miso rather than vanilla — savoury, and still sold at Fushimi Inari.
- **Keeps two weeks** dry and sealed. They soften fast in humidity; recrisp at 150 °C for three minutes and

refold nothing.

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