

speculoos

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Speculoos

A thin, deeply spiced Belgian and Dutch biscuit, traditionally pressed into a carved wooden mould and baked hard enough to keep until the feast of Saint Nicholas on 6 December. The Dutch *speculaas* and the Belgian *speculoos* differ mainly in the spice bill — the Dutch mix leans on white pepper and mace, the Belgian on cinnamon alone — and the biscuit is now better known worldwide as the thing that gets ground into cookie butter.

The distinguishing flavour is not the spice. It is brown sugar cooked to the edge of caramel in a very dry, very thin biscuit.

What makes it work

- **The dough rests overnight, minimum.** Two days is better. The spices are ground dry and need time in a wet medium to bloom, and the flour needs to hydrate fully or the biscuit bakes with a raw floury note.
- **Roll thin — 3 mm.** Speculoos is defined by its snap, and snap is a thickness property before it is a recipe one.
- **Dark brown sugar or, properly, candi sugar.** Belgian bakers use *cassonade* or a dark candi syrup. Dark brown sugar with a teaspoon of [molasses](#) is the practical substitute.
- **A wooden mould needs a dry dough and a floured mould.** Press the dough in, scrape the back level with a knife, and knock it out onto the tray. If it sticks, the dough is too warm.

Ingredients

Makes about 40 thin biscuits.

- 250 g all-purpose flour
- 200 g dark brown sugar
- 150 g unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 1 [egg](#)
- 5 g baking soda
- 3 g fine salt

Speculaaskruiden — the spice mix, about 15 g total:

- 10 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 2 g ground [nutmeg](#)
- 1 g ground cloves
- 1 g ground [ginger](#)
- 1 g ground cardamom
- 0.5 g ground white pepper
- 0.5 g ground mace or coriander seed

Method

Rub the cold butter into the flour, sugar, soda, salt and spices until it looks like damp sand, then bring it together with the egg. Do not cream — this is a rubbed dough, not a creamed one.

Wrap and refrigerate at least 12 hours and up to three days.

Roll to 3 mm on a lightly floured bench and cut, or press into a floured speculaas mould and level the back. Bake **160 °C / 325 °F for 12–15 minutes**, until evenly dark at the edges.

They are soft leaving the oven and crisp as they cool. If the middle stays bendy, they were rolled too thick.

Notes

- **Speculoos spread** is these biscuits ground fine with condensed milk and a neutral oil until it pours — about 200 g biscuit to 60 g oil and 60 g condensed milk.

- Almond speculaas (*gevulde speculaas*) sandwiches almond paste between two sheets of the dough and bakes it as a slab; see [Almonds](#).
- The spice mix keeps six months in a jar and is the same one used for Dutch *pepernoten*; see [Spices](#) and [expensive spices](#).

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