

## Stained Glass Cookies

Weather's dreary. Holiday lights are up. A long afternoon awaits. You can pull out a bag of cookies to go with your hot chocolate...or better yet, try making this delightful "cookie science" project: melt the last of that Halloween hard candy into spectacular "stained glass" cookies. Your family may want to eat them, but they also make great decorations for your home, no matter what holiday your family celebrates. Making cookies is, of course, a classic kid craft. But don't forget that it's also a powerful chance for learning. Every time your kid handles a measuring cup or spoons, or understands melting and baking temperatures, he's moving forward in his ability to do good science. So do plan to be on hand for this activity—you'll be working with hot materials—but whenever possible, let your kid do the calculations and observations.



### What You Need:

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 2-1/2 cups all purpose flour
- about 1 pound of hard candy, separated by color
- 2 foil-lined cookie sheets
- mallet or tenderizing hammer
- kneading surface
- oven, preheated to 350°

### What You Do:

1. Before you start mixing cookie dough, you'll want to prepare your candy. Have your child unwrap all the hard candies and sort them by color. Then place each color in a small baggie of its own. Have your child use the mallet or the flat side of a tenderizing hammer to crush the candies so that no chunk is bigger than a small pea.
2. Now mix the cookies: after having your child measure amounts, start by creaming butter, sugar, egg and vanilla until thoroughly mixed. Then add the baking soda and flour to make a firm dough. Chill for at least one hour—and do beware: these cookie textures can vary somewhat by climate, and if you're in a damp one you may want to add a tiny bit more flour. You will want a nice, hard texture for the dough, which will form the "frames" of your stained glass "windows."
3. Working with your child, use floured hands to roll the dough into a long, thin rope, no thicker than a regular pencil. Then shape the rope to form the perimeter of a holiday cookie shape—this could be a bell, or a star of David, or a simple tree. If you plan to hang the cookie as a decoration, twist the middle of the rope at the top of the cookie to make a round loop (tip: don't try to add a hoop later; these tend to break off!). Finally, take special care to join the ends of your ropes: our bakers like to wet them a bit with water and then squeeze tight.
4. Bake the cookie for 10 minutes on foil covered cookie sheets, until they are golden brown. Then, while the cookies and their tray are still warm, have your child fill the gaps with crushed candy. One color at a time works great, but you can also mix colors—just beware blending opposite colors such as green and orange, which will blend to a dull brown when cooked.
5. Now return the cookies to the oven for the final stage, which adults will probably want to supervise

carefully! The candy-filled cookies should bake for another 4-5 minutes—long enough for the candy to melt, but not so long that it bubbles and boils (in cooking chemistry terms, you want to return it to “hard candy” stage but not beyond).

6. Cool the cookies thoroughly, and then peel them gently from the cookie sheet. Be especially careful with the top loop—if it breaks off, try cooking your next cookie batch a little longer so that it's hard!

What's going on? These cookies happily mark the holidays for third graders, but they also reinforce science concepts that kids have been studying for several years in early elementary school, such as measurement and changing states of matter. Kitchen experimenting can be a little hard on parents' nerves...but remember this: it's all good learning, and along the way it can be tons of fun, too.

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