

FAMILY RECIPES

Great Dishes From Local Chefs | By Christina Elston

Sweet Little Holiday Snowballs



PHOTOS BY STACI VALENTINE

Christine Moore, far right with pastry chef Cecilia Leung, says these snowballs are the perfect marriage of chocolate and peppermint.

Walking through Little Flower Candy Co. bakery-café with founder Christine Moore takes a bit of time, but not because it's a long walk. On the way through the tiny eatery at Pasadena's western edge, Moore stops to chat at a table where three generations who've been customers since the beginning are showing off a new baby. She greets and hugs a few customers waiting in the long line at the counter, then stops to encourage and high-five an employee returning from a break.

"It smells like butter!" she announces on our way through the kitchen.

Moore's children were 6 months old, 5 and 7 when she started the business, and Little Flower, which will celebrate its 12th anniversary Dec. 1, is a part of their lives and their holidays. "My kids are really good at setting up the house and setting the table, and Mom comes home and has a car full of food that I've been preparing for the last week at work," Moore says. "Everything that we do revolves around food, because we

love it so much. Our travels, our holidays, our days, our life, we celebrate with food."

Even before opening Little Flower and her other Pasadena restaurant, Lincoln, Moore baked a lot – especially during the holidays. "I always start early and freeze everything before baking," she says. Moore calls this cookie recipe, which will be available for Little Flower holiday customers, the perfect marriage of chocolate and peppermint. "It's a festive, delicious, beautiful cookie," she says.

Just don't skip the browned-butter step. "Get all of those crispy, yummy, caramelly bits of butterfat," Moore says. "It really adds a depth of flavor." For the peppermint, Moore advises taking the time to hunt down an extract that isn't loaded with alcohol or sugar syrup. "Home bakers really have access to everything these days with the internet," she says. You could also substitute other flavorings for the peppermint and any flavored baking chip you like – even pieces of caramel.



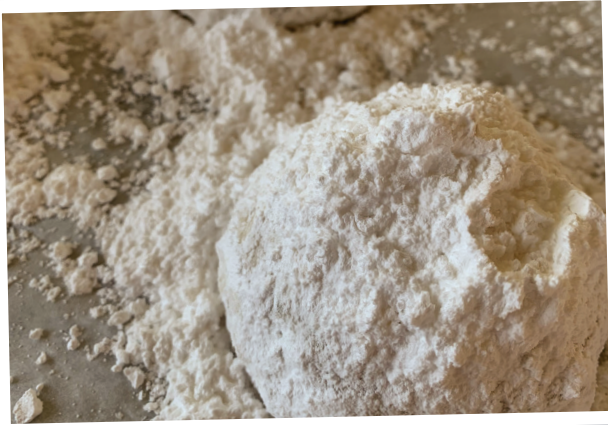
If 15 cookies aren't enough, you can double the recipe. You could also scoop these out half the size. "There's a real beauty about tiny little cookies, little one-biters," Moore says, but know that little cookies will bake faster, so watch your oven.

Moore admits that as a professional baker, she finds baking with kids challenging, even though hers "have grown up sitting on the counter." "I think the most important thing as a mom is to just relax and have fun and not look for perfection," she says. She calls using the cookie scoop "the funnest part."

Storing your cookies need not involve plastic, and Moore says she's working to eliminate single-use plastics in her restaurants. "If it's a well-made cookie with a great balance of ingredients, it will stay fresh for days in a tin. You can have cookies in your cookie tin for up to a couple of weeks," Moore says. "When we put it in plastic, we take away its texture, we suffocate it."

If you're not baking, you can order holiday treats – including beautiful gift boxes of three dozen mini cookies adorned with caramels – by email now. You can also visit Little Flower for good food with lots of heart. "It makes me cry sometimes," Moore says. "We wouldn't be here if it weren't for all those amazing customers who have been coming for 12 years. It's our heart and our love. Everything we do here really matters so much to us and we just feel very grateful that we get to come here every day."





Chocolate Peppermint Snowballs from Little Flower

Yields 15 cookies

1 cup (228 grams) butter
1 cup + 1 tablespoon (120 grams) powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1½ teaspoons peppermint flavor

2½ cups + 1 tablespoon (310 grams) all-purpose flour
¾ teaspoon salt
¾ cup (175 grams) mini chocolate chips
1 cup (115 grams) powdered sugar, to coat cookies

Place the butter in a medium or large saucepan over medium-high heat. Heat the butter until it foams and milk solids fall to the bottom of the pot. Use a rubber spatula to scrape the bottom so that the milk solids brown evenly without burning. Let the butter foam a second time. Butter should have a nutty aroma. Remove from heat and cool. Once cooled, transfer into a clean, scent free container and refrigerate until ready to use.

In the mixing bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, combine the browned butter and powdered sugar on medium-low speed for 30 seconds. Use a rubber spatula to scrape the bowl. Add the vanilla extract and peppermint flavor and mix on low speed for 30 seconds. Scrape the bowl well. Add the flour and salt and mix on low speed until just incorporated, about 20 seconds.

Add the mini chocolate chips and mix on low speed until just combined, about 10 seconds. Scrape the bowl well and finish incorporating the dry ingredients with the rubber spatula.

Portion the dough into 2-inch balls, or use a #20 yellow scoop and place them on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Freeze until firm, at least 1 hour. Frozen cookie dough will keep in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Place the cookies on a parchment lined sheet pan with at least a 1-inch space between each cookie. Bake for 8 minutes, then rotate the pan. The dough will have puffed a bit. Bake 7 more minutes, or until the edges are golden and small cracks appear. Allow to cool for 5 minutes. Coat warm cookies with powdered sugar. ♦

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