

MEXICAN CHILE CHOCOLATE COOKIES (HOT AZTECS)

I first had these cookies at a Christmas party at the Audubon Society in Washington, DC...and loved them. I was lucky enough to track down the recipe..but have changed it up a bit. For example, instead of cayenne, I often grind up dried arbole and pasilla chiles to spice them. These cookies are a great party favorite with a nice afterkick. These cookies are a tip of the hat to the Mesoamerican origins of both chocolate and chiles.

- 1 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups maple sugar
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs (large)
- 3 cups spelt or whole wheat flour
- 1 1/2 cups cocoa powder (preferably Dutch process)
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper (or 6 arbole and 2 pasilla chiles, dried and ground fine)
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Sift together the dry ingredients and set aside. Cream butter. Add vanilla and sugar; mix well. Beat in egg. On low speed, gradually add dry ingredients, scraping bowl and beating only till mixed.

To shape the dough into a cylinder for sliced cookies: Turn dough onto lightly floured board; shape dough into a 2x10 inch cylinder, wrap in wax paper, and place in freezer until firm (or keep frozen). To bake, slice into 1/4-inch slices and place on an unbuttered cookie sheet 1 1/2 to 2 inches apart. Bake at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-11 minutes (or until they almost feel firm to the touch).

To make imprinted cookies: Chill the dough in bowl. When dough is firm, scoop out walnut-sized portions of dough and roll into a ball. With a glass with a patterned bottom, flatten the dough to about 1/4-inch in thickness. Bake at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-11 minutes (or until they almost feel firm to the touch). Makes 36-48 cookies.