

*
a BA Primer!

SWAP

WITH



the COOKIES

And no, we're not even going to entertain the idea that it's not a competition because it is and we all know it. So let's talk strategy

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Last December I attended my first cookie swap, and lost. Badly. But it wasn't because my cookies didn't taste good—there was brown butter in there! It was because of how they... looked. My fellow swappers took one withering glance at my Tupperware full of misshapen blobs and made up their minds.

At the time I was incensed ("You superficial monsters! It's what's on the inside that counts!"), but I later realized the truth: While ugly-delicious cookies get a pass every other month, come December, it's beautiful or bust.

So this year I called in an expert: Rick "Sugar Man" Martinez, noted aesthete, king of dessert, champion of more cookie swaps than he can count. And what he told me changed the game entirely. In 2019 your holiday cookie decorations can't just be an afterthought—they must be the *first* thought, not just a waxy adornment but integral to the flavor itself.

"The decor *IS* the cookie," quoth Rick.

Together (and by together I mean mostly Rick) we created this recipe-laden battle plan...er, cookie primer, packed with tips, tricks, and recipes for six holiday cookies that taste great and are dressed to party. And that next swap? I'm gonna win.

So What Tools Do I Actually Need?



Ice Cream Scoop
Rick uses his to make consistently shaped and sized dough balls (and meatballs).



Parchment Paper
No need to grease (or clean) your pans with this nonstick, heatproof paper.



Stand Mixer
Still waiting for Santa's drop? Use a hand mixer.



Wire Rack
The bad news: Cookies can burn in the pan, even once out of the oven. The good news: A rack prevents that.



Rolling Pin
Crucial for creating that uniform decorating surface. A wine bottle works too.



Oven Thermometer
Trust no oven. Temperature reads are more precise with the ThermoWorks ChefAlarm (\$64; thermoworks.com).

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATE PRIOR



We Love Natural Dyes

The thing with typical food coloring is...nobody actually knows what the heck is in it. (Red Lake 40, whomst?) That's why Rick uses **Suncore Foods Supercolor Powders** (from \$10 each; suncorefoods.com), made from freeze-dried fruits, veggies, and herbs.



DRESS to IMPRESS

Did you hear? Tie-dye is back. But now it's not just that grimy T-shirt your friend who still follows Phish will never wash. It's *couture*. And thanks to Rick's so-very-2020 natural-dye Swirl-n-Dip method (see right), it's also *edible*. Best of all? The butter cookie that acts as your canvas is extremely simple to make (like, six ingredients simple), so you can spend most of your time on the fun part: unleashing your inner artiste.

The Swirl-n-Dip



1—Pour 1 tsp. of the first glaze in center of a plate. Drizzle 1 tsp. second glaze over it.



2—Use a toothpick to swirl the colors together; don't go overboard.



3—Gently press the top of a cookie into the glaze mixture.



4—Lift up and allow excess glaze to drip back onto the plate.



◀
BUTTER PECAN
SKILLET COOKIES
P. 72



THREE DESSERTS in ONE

It looks like cake. It tastes like ice cream. You don't need a baking sheet to make it. But don't let anyone try to call you out on a technicality—one bite and it's clear this big sliceable round boy (see his full glory on p. 4) is all cookie. Maple-syrup-glazed pecans in the dough lend nutty depth, then get sprinkled on top with sugar for an icicles-on-tree-branches vibe sure to freeze out the competition.



Noooooo—the sanding sugar melted into my glaze!

...
Your glaze needs to partially set before you sugar it—sprinkle too early and the sugar melts; sprinkle too late and it bounces off. About 10 minutes? Just right.



GIRL SCOUT but MAKE IT FASHION

This baby is a play on two of our favorite classics: the Thin Mint and New York City's iconic black-and-white cookie. But here we're upping the game with finely chopped fresh mint mixed right into the batter for both its lovely green color and fresher-than-Dentyne flavor. Then comes the drama: geometric swipes of white sanding sugar and dark melted chocolate. Look to this cookie, Elaine.

The Hold-n-Scrape



1—Hold bench scraper 1" from edge of cookie to cordon off a shallow semicircle.



2—Pour sanding sugar in that sectioned-off semicircle before you bake.



3—Post-baking, follow the same method but with the chocolate glaze.



4—Pull the scraper over the chocolate so it drips on the chocolate side.

BLACK-AND-WHITE-AND-GREEN COOKIES P. 71 ▼





CHEWY
GINGER-RYE
COOKIES
P. 73
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ALT GRAINS for A REASON

It's time to move past all-purpose, but that doesn't mean just throwing in any old alt flour and calling it a day. Instead, Rick says, go with one that actually works for the flavor profile—and the look—you're trying to create. In this case rye flour pulls double duty, pairing with molasses and ginger in both the deep, toasty batter and the crunchy streusel topping. The result is something like gingerbread, but softer and way more delicious.



Help! My cookies spread and morphed into one giant cookie.

...
Your dough needs to firm up before baking, usually about 30 minutes (and up to an hour). If the shape holds when you scoop, it's ready.



Get Your Cookie Where It's Going

Poor packing and bumpy car rides have dashed the dreams of even the most ambitious cookie swappers. Here's how to make sure your cookies travel safely.

Good

For a cookie whose decor is baked in rather than layered atop (like the ancho mole, p. 70), **plastic quart containers** can accommodate stacks of up to a dozen. Separate them with sheets of parchment.

Better

Cookies nestled into **bakery boxes or small (unused!) pizza boxes** padded with tissue paper travel farther without crumbling. Make friends at your local bakery/pizzeria or buy boxes at the Container Store for \$1 a pop.

Best

Seasoned swapper? Invest in a **reusable tiered container** like the Baker's Sto N Go (\$20; bakersstongo.com), which can safely transport up to 40 heavily decorated cookies on its nifty shelves.



Curses. I think I ruined my dulce—it looks lumpy and broken and has dark spots.

...
That's exactly how it should look! Throw it in the food processor for about 15 seconds and it will turn into a thick, deep caramel.



ALFAJORES WITH COCONUT DULCE DE LECHE P. 72
▶



WINTER in the TROPICS

It's December. The days are short and dark. You deserve a vacation. But you can't afford one. That's cool; neither can I. So Rick whisks my SAD away with this chic take on the classic Latin American alfajor, a shortbread sandwich filled with a decadent yet shockingly easy dulce de leche. Top it with a blanket of brightly dyed coconut flakes and suddenly we're on a beach far, far away.



ANCHO MOLE COOKIES

Ancho Mole Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 48 Be sure to use ancho powder (pure ground ancho chiles), not ancho chile powder, which has added salt, cumin, and other spices.

- 1 cup (140 g) nuts (such as blanched hazelnuts, blanched almonds, or walnuts)
- 1 ¼ cups (185 g; or more) raw sesame seeds, divided
- ⅓ cup (54 g) ancho powder
- ¼ cup agave syrup, preferably dark
- 2 cups (256 g) all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 12 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature
- ½ cup (100 g) sugar
- 3¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 large egg yolks
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
- ¾ cup (130 g) dried fruit (such as papaya, mango, or pineapple), cut into ¾" pieces
- ¾ cup (110 g) bittersweet chocolate wafers (disks, pistoles, fèves; preferably 72% cacao)
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten

Place racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat to 350°. Toast nuts and ¼ cup sesame seeds on a rimmed baking sheet on upper rack, tossing halfway through, until golden brown, 8–10 minutes. Let cool.

Stir together ancho powder and agave syrup in a small bowl. Whisk flour, baking powder, and cinnamon in a medium bowl to combine. Using an electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat butter, sugar, and salt in a large bowl, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl as needed, until light and creamy, about 3 minutes. Add egg yolks and vanilla and beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Scrape in ancho mixture and beat until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low, add dry ingredients, and beat to combine. Add dried fruit, chocolate, and toasted nuts and sesame seeds; mix with a wooden spoon until evenly distributed.

Divide dough in half. Working one at a time, roll each piece into a 10"-long log. Wrap each log tightly in plastic and roll across work surface to make as smooth and cylindrical as possible. Place on a rimmed baking sheet and freeze until surface is firm, about 20 minutes.

Slap a log down onto counter to create a flat side; roll over and slap

again to flatten another side (you're aiming for a triangular shape). Repeat to create third side of the triangle. Tap against counter to smooth if needed, then tap ends to flatten. Repeat with second log. Return logs to baking sheet; freeze until firm, about 15 minutes.

Working one at a time, unwrap logs and brush sides with egg white. Working on baking sheet, sprinkle sides with remaining 1 cup sesame seeds and gently press to coat. Surface should be covered; use more sesame if needed (see illustration, left). Freeze logs on baking sheet, uncovered, until surface is very firm but not frozen solid, about 1 hour.

Slice a log crosswise into ¼"-thick triangles and divide cookies between 2 parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing 1" apart. (If dough is soft or starts to lose its shape, freeze 10 minutes before continuing.) Bake cookies, rotating baking sheets top to bottom and back to front halfway through, until edges are just set, about 10 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets. Transfer cookies to a platter or airtight container and line baking sheets with fresh sheets of parchment paper. Repeat process with remaining dough.

DO AHEAD: Dough can be rolled into logs 3 days ahead; refrigerate. Transfer to freezer 30 minutes before slicing. Cookies can be baked 1 day ahead; store airtight at room temperature.

Black-and-White-and-Green Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 24 We used a lot of fresh mint in this cookie for both the real color and flavor. The flavor will intensify as the cookies sit; make ahead if that's your thing.

- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 ½ cups (320 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 2 cups (packed; 45 g) mint leaves
- 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar
- 1 ¼ cups (2 ½ sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- Coarse white sanding sugar or Swedish pearl sugar (for decorating)
- 1 cup (120 g) powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp. (20 g) Dutch-process or unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 Tbsp. light corn syrup

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: A 3"-diameter cookie cutter

Whisk baking powder, 2 ½ cups flour, and 1 ½ tsp. salt in a medium bowl to combine. Pulse mint and granulated sugar in a food processor until mint is finely chopped. Add butter; process to combine. Add dry ingredients and pulse again to combine. Add egg and egg yolk; pulse until a shaggy dough forms.

Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead just until dough holds its shape. Divide dough in half; pat each portion into a 1"-thick disk. Wrap disks in plastic and chill until firm, at least 2 hours.

Place racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat to 350°. Working with 1 disk at a time, roll out dough on a lightly floured sheet of parchment paper to about ¼" thick, dusting with more flour as needed to keep from sticking. Punch out rounds with lightly floured cookie cutter and arrange on 2 parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing 1" apart. Pat dough scraps into a 1"-thick disk. Wrap in plastic and chill 10 minutes if soft. Repeat process with scraps.

Hold a bench scraper or straightedge upright 1" from edge of a cookie to cordon off a shallow semicircle (do not press down into dough; you're just making a barrier). Coat semicircle with sanding sugar; gently press to adhere (see p.67). Remove scraper; you should have a tidy sugared edge. Repeat with remaining cookies and more sanding sugar.

Bake cookies, rotating baking sheets top to bottom and back to front halfway through, until edges are lightly browned, 10–12 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes on baking sheets, then transfer to 2 wire racks set inside 2 rimmed baking sheets; let cool completely.

Sift powdered sugar and cocoa powder into a medium bowl. Add corn syrup, a pinch of salt, and 2 Tbsp. warm water and stir until smooth and glossy.

Position bench scraper to make another shallow semicircle on the other side of the cookie, angling it so that it forms a V with the sugared edge, lightly pressing scraper into cookie to make a barrier. Spoon 1 tsp. glaze onto exposed semicircle and use a toothpick to help coat evenly; excess will drip over sides. Lift scraper straight up and over chocolate side to create a neat edge. Repeat with remaining cookies and glaze. Let sit until glaze is set, at least 2 hours.

DO AHEAD: Dough can be made 1 month ahead; freeze. Thaw in refrigerator before using. Cookies can be baked 1 day ahead; store tightly wrapped on a rimmed baking sheet at room temperature.



DECOR
baked
RIGHT IN

Looking for a cookie that leans savory? How about a deconstructed Mexican mole visually inspired by the Mesoamerican pyramids? Will that do? "The ancient Aztecs knew what was up," Rick says, pensively holding said cookie to the light so I can appreciate the stained-glass effect of the dried fruit. And inside? Chocolate, hazelnuts, the subtle burn of ancho chile...yeah. This is the one I'm taking to that swap I lost last year. Eat it and weep, suckers.

The Slap-n-Sprinkle



1-Form dough into 2 logs; wrap in plastic, twisting the ends.



2-Freeze until firm; slap against counter to create three flat sides.



3-Freeze dough again until firm, then unwrap and brush with a beaten egg white.



4-Sprinkle sesame seeds over each side of dough, pressing to adhere.

Butter Pecan Skillet Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 16 If butter pecan ice cream were a cookie, it would be this all-levels skillet shortbread.

- 1 1/3 cups (160 g) chopped pecans
- 4 Tbsp. pure maple syrup
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 10 Tbsp. chilled unsalted butter, cut into pieces, plus more for pan
- 1 1/4 cups (160 g) all-purpose flour
- 6 Tbsp. (packed; 75 g) light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
- 1 cup (120 g) powdered sugar
- 3 Tbsp. (or more) whole milk
- Coarse white sanding sugar and edible glitter (for decorating)

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 350°. Toss pecans, maple syrup, and 1/2 tsp. salt in a medium bowl. Scrape onto a rimmed baking sheet lined with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper and spread nuts into a single layer. Bake until pecans are slightly darkened and syrup is dark and bubbling, 15–20 minutes. Remove from oven and carefully toss pecans in hot syrup to coat again. Let cool on baking sheet until caramel hardens, about 30 minutes. Break up candied pecans into pieces; discard any burned bits.

Reduce oven temperature to 325°. Generously butter a 10" cast-iron or stainless-steel skillet; line bottom with a round of parchment paper and butter parchment. Pulse flour, brown sugar, half of candied pecans, and 1 1/4 tsp. salt in a food processor until nuts are finely chopped. Add egg, 1 Tbsp. vanilla, and remaining 10 Tbsp. butter and process until a shaggy dough forms.

Transfer dough to a large bowl and knead a couple of times just to bring it together. Using damp hands, pat dough evenly into skillet, extending all the way to the sides of the pan. Bake cookie until edges are golden brown and center is slightly puffed, 30–35 minutes. Let cool in skillet 1 hour. Invert cookie onto a cutting board and cut into 16 wedges. Turn right side up and transfer to a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet.

Whisk powdered sugar, milk, remaining 1/4 tsp. salt, and remaining 1 tsp. vanilla in a small wide bowl until smooth. The glaze should be the consistency of heavy cream; thin with more milk if needed. Transfer half of the glaze to another small wide bowl (you'll

need to use 2 bowls as the glaze will start to collect crumbs and you'll want a fresh start).

Working one at a time, lightly dip half of the wedges, top side down, into first bowl of glaze so that only the surface is covered and no glaze drips down the sides. Use a toothpick to pop any bubbles and smooth glaze; coating should be thin enough to see the cookie peeking through. Repeat with remaining wedges and second bowl of glaze.

Top wedges with remaining candied pecans and let sit 10 minutes. Sprinkle with sanding sugar and glitter and let sit until glaze is set, about 1 hour.

DO AHEAD: Cookies can be baked 1 day ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.

Alfajores With Coconut Dulce de Leche

MAKES ABOUT 24 This traditional South American honey-almond cookie gets a tropical twist with an easy-bake coconut dulce de leche filling.

- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 13.5-oz. can unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 cup (50 g) almond flour or meal
- 2 1/4 cups (288 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1/3 cup (133 g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp. honey
- 1 1/2 cups (125 g) unsweetened shredded coconut
- 1 Tbsp. (or more) any color plant-based food-coloring powder
- 1 Tbsp. (or more) second color plant-based food-coloring powder
- Luster dust (optional)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Assorted 2" (or smaller) cookie cutters

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 375°. Bring condensed milk, coconut milk, and 1/2 tsp. salt to a boil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Scrape mixture into a 13x9" baking dish and bake, stirring every 15 minutes or so, until very thick and a light caramel color, 40–50 minutes. Mixture will look lumpy, broken, and very pasty—that's exactly what you want. Let cool in dish 1 hour,

then transfer to a food processor and process until smooth. Set dulce de leche aside for serving.

Meanwhile, whisk almond flour and 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour in a medium bowl to combine. Using an electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat butter, sugar, and 1 1/2 tsp. salt in a large bowl, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl as needed, until pale and creamy, about 3 minutes. Add egg yolk, vanilla, and 1/4 cup honey and beat until combined, about 2 minutes. Reduce speed to low, add dry ingredients, and mix, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl, until incorporated. Divide dough in half and pat each piece into a 1"-thick disk. Wrap in plastic and chill until firm, at least 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350°. Roll out 1 disk of dough on a lightly floured sheet of parchment paper, dusting with more flour as needed to keep dough from sticking, to about 1/8" thick. Punch out shapes with lightly floured cookie cutters and transfer to 2 parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing 1" apart. Pat scraps into a 1"-thick disk, wrap with plastic, and chill 10 minutes if soft.

Bake a sheet of cookies, rotating halfway through, until edges are lightly browned, 7–9 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes on baking sheet, then transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Bake remaining sheet of cookies. Line baking sheets with fresh sheets of parchment paper and repeat process with remaining disk of dough.

Divide coconut evenly among 3 bowls. Add 1 Tbsp. food-coloring powder (sift if needed) to a bowl of coconut and toss until coconut is coated; add more powder if a more intense color is desired. Repeat with remaining food-coloring powder and another bowl of coconut. Leave 1 bowl of coconut white. If using, add some luster dust to all 3 bowls and toss to combine.

Turn half of the cookies over to expose flat side; spread 1 tsp. dulce de leche over (this will be the inside of the sandwiches); set aside.

Heat remaining 2 Tbsp. honey in a small bowl in the microwave just until warm (you want it to be loose), then stir in 2 tsp. warm water. Working one at a time, lightly brush honey over the top of remaining cookies (the ones that have not been filled with dulce de leche). Immediately dip tops into a bowl of coconut; press additional coconut onto cookie to cover any bald spots. Close up cookie sandwiches, coconut side up.

DO AHEAD: Dulce de leche can be made 1 month ahead; place in an airtight container and freeze. Thaw in refrigerator overnight before using. Dough can be made 3 days ahead; keep chilled. Cookies can be baked (but not assembled) 2 days ahead; store airtight at room temperature.

Tie-Dye Butter Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 24 Because you don't have to chill the dough, this cookie cuts your kitchen time in half. And when it comes time to decorate, no need to panic if your first attempts don't work out. Simply wipe off the failed glaze and let the cookie dry for about five minutes, then try again.

COOKIES

- 14 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1/2 cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- 1 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
- 2 cups (256 g) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

GLAZE

- 2 cups (240 g) powdered sugar, divided
- 6 Tbsp. (or more) whole milk, divided
- 2 tsp. (or more) any color plant-based food-coloring powder
- 2 tsp. (or more) second color plant-based food-coloring powder
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Assorted 2" cookie cutters

COOKIES Using an electric mixer on high speed, beat butter, sugar, and salt in a large bowl, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl as needed, until light and creamy, about 3 minutes. Add egg yolks and vanilla and beat until incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low, add 2 cups flour, and mix until incorporated. Dough will be semifirm but can be rolled out without chilling. If your kitchen is very warm and/or dough is sticky, pat it into a 1"-thick disk, wrap in plastic, and chill 15 minutes to let firm up before rolling out.

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 350°. Roll out dough on a lightly floured sheet of parchment paper, dusting with more flour as needed to keep dough from sticking, to about 1/4" thick. Punch out shapes as desired with

lightly floured cookie cutters and transfer to 2 parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing 1 1/2" apart. Pat scraps into a 1"-thick disk, wrap with plastic, and chill 10 minutes if soft.

Bake 1 sheet of cookies, rotating halfway through, until edges are golden brown, 10–15 minutes. Let cookies cool 10 minutes on baking sheet, then transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Bake remaining sheet of cookies, then repeat process with remaining dough.

DO AHEAD: Dough can be made 1 month ahead; wrap tightly and freeze. Cookies can be baked 2 days ahead; store airtight at room temperature.

GLAZE Whisk 1 cup powdered sugar, 3 Tbsp. milk, 2 tsp. food-coloring powder, and half of salt in a small bowl until no lumps remain. Glaze should be the consistency of heavy cream; add more milk if needed. For a deeper color, whisk in more powder 1 tsp. at a time until desired color is achieved; adjust with milk if needed. Repeat with second food-coloring powder, remaining salt, remaining 1 cup powdered sugar, and remaining 3 Tbsp. milk, adjusting intensity of color as desired.

Spoon 1 tsp. first glaze in the center of a small plate. Drizzle 1 tsp. second glaze over the first and use a toothpick to slightly swirl colors together; don't go overboard. (If you want to decorate larger cookies, add 1 tsp. glaze to plate for each additional inch.)

Gently press the top of a cookie into glaze, then lift up and allow excess glaze to drip back onto the plate. Using a toothpick, pop any air bubbles and swirl colors more if desired (see p.65). Transfer to a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with 2 more cookies, adding 1/2 tsp. of each color of glaze to plate before each cookie is dipped. The glaze will lose its swirly effect at this point. Clean plate and repeat process, decorating cookies in batches of 3 until all cookies have been glazed. Let sit until glaze is set, at least 2 hours.

DO AHEAD: Cookies can be glazed 1 day ahead. Store tightly wrapped on a rimmed baking sheet at room temperature.

Chewy Ginger-Rye Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 24 Rye flour adds an earthy-nutty dimension and absorbs more molasses than all-purpose flour. The result is a cookie with the smoky caramel finish of rye whiskey.

- 1 cup (128 g) all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 3/4 cup (110 g) plus 6 Tbsp. (60 g) rye flour, divided
- 3 tsp. ground ginger, divided
- 1 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1/3 cup (50 g) finely chopped crystallized ginger
- 2/3 cup robust-flavored (dark) molasses
- 1/4 cup (packed; 50 g) dark brown sugar
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted, plus 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 large egg yolks
- 6 Tbsp. (90 g) raw sugar

Whisk all-purpose flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, 3/4 cup rye flour, 2 tsp. ground ginger, and 1 tsp. salt in a medium bowl to combine; add crystallized ginger and toss until coated and evenly distributed. Whisk molasses, brown sugar, and 3/4 cup melted butter in a medium bowl to combine. Add egg yolks and whisk just until egg yolks are absorbed but mixture is still very dark, about 10 seconds. Add dry ingredients and fold until no streaks of flour remain. Let sit, uncovered, at room temperature 30 minutes (batter will thicken as it sits).

Meanwhile, place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 375°. Whisk raw sugar, remaining 6 Tbsp. rye flour, remaining 1 tsp. ground ginger, and remaining 1/4 tsp. salt in a small bowl to combine. Add remaining room-temperature butter and smash together until mixture resembles clumpy wet sand; this is your streusel topping.

Using a 1-oz. ice cream scoop, portion out dough (about 2 Tbsp. each) and roll into balls between your palms. Working one at a time, toss balls in streusel mixture to coat and place on 2 parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing 3" apart. Bake 1 sheet of cookies until they have spread and are slightly cracked and just set around the edges and streusel is lightly browned, 8–10 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes on baking sheet. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Bake remaining sheet of cookies.

DO AHEAD: Dough can be rolled into balls 2 weeks ahead. Freeze on a baking sheet; transfer to resealable plastic freezer bags. Let sit at room temperature 30 minutes before rolling in streusel and baking.