

Brandied Cherry-Chocolate Sin Cookies

Makes about 2 dozen (2 ¼- to 2 ½-inch) cookies

Inspired by a recipe in Alice Medrich's *Cookies and Brownies* (1999), this voluptuous chocolate cookie has been enhanced with cocoa, brown sugar, and brandy-soaked cherries. *Note:* For a more kid-friendly version, omit the cognac and add the cherries unsoaked.

Complexity:

1

Active Time:



Type:

Drop

Prep Talk: Store in airtight containers at room temperature for 5 to 7 days. *Note:* The chocolate on top will look its best if applied just before serving. It can turn dull and streaky if stored at temperatures in excess of 65 to 70 degrees F or under humid conditions.

- ½ cup fine cognac
- ¾ cup dried tart cherries
- 8 ounces premium semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1½ teaspoons cherry extract
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups pecan halves, lightly toasted, cooled, and chopped
- ¾ cup premium milk chocolate chips

Decoration (optional)

About 2 ounces premium bittersweet chocolate, melted

1. Warm the cognac in a small saucepan over medium heat. Remove from the heat and add the dried cherries. Let the cherries soak in the cognac about 30 minutes.
2. Position a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line two or more cookie sheets with parchment paper.
3. Place the chocolate and butter in the top of a double boiler over barely simmering water. Stir until melted; then cool to lukewarm. Set aside for use in Step 6.
4. Combine the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside for use in Step 7.
5. Drain the cherries and discard all but 2 teaspoons of the cognac.
6. Whisk the eggs, sugars, extracts, and 2 teaspoons cognac together in a large bowl. Gradually add the chocolate mixture. Whisk until combined.
7. Stir in the flour mixture, followed by the pecans, chocolate chips, and drained cherries.
8. Portion the dough into mounds using a level 1 7/8-inch (#30) scoop, or 1 heaping tablespoon per mound, and place the mounds 1 to 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets. Be sure to portion the cookies while the chocolate is still fluid. The cookies will be easier to drop and will have a more interesting and textured appearance this way.
9. Bake 13 to 15 minutes for a crisp outside and soft inside, or longer for a firmer cookie through and through. Cool 1 to 2 minutes on the cookie sheets before transferring to wire racks. Cool completely before storing.
10. **Decorate (optional).** Just before serving, drizzle with melted bittersweet chocolate. Place the cookies briefly in the fridge, just long enough to allow the chocolate to set, and serve.



Brown Sugar–Pecan Sweethearts

Makes about 2½ dozen (2¼ x 2½- to 2¾-inch) hearts

Hearts—plain shortbread ones, that is—are warmed with rich caramel accents of pecans and brown sugar in this meltily delicious variation of Shortbread, Straight Up.

Complexity:

1

Active Time:



Type:

Rolled

Prep Talk: The dough must be chilled 1 to 2 hours before rolling and cutting. The dough can be frozen up to 1 month with minimal loss of flavor if wrapped tightly in plastic and then foil. Store baked cookies in airtight containers at room temperature no longer than 2 weeks.

Note: The dipping chocolate will look its best if applied just before serving. It can turn dull and streaky if stored at temperatures in excess of 65 to 70 degrees F or under humid conditions.

1 recipe Shortbread, Straight Up (p. 143), almonds, granulated sugar, and powdered sugar omitted

1 cup pecan halves

½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

Decoration (optional)

1 pound premium semisweet or bittersweet chocolate, melted (for dipping)

About 2½ dozen pecan halves (1 per cookie)

1. Prepare 1 recipe Shortbread, Straight Up, replacing the almonds with the pecans, and the granulated and powdered sugar with the brown sugar.

2. Chill and roll the dough as instructed on page 143, but cut the dough into hearts with a 2¼ x 2½- to 2¾-inch heart cutter. If you plan to decorate the cookies with chocolate in Step 3, below, omit the sugar for sprinkling on the cookie tops. Bake and cool as directed on page 143 before dipping in chocolate or storing.

3. **Decorate (optional).** Pour the melted chocolate into a small (6- to 7-inch-diameter) bowl to at least a 1-inch depth. Dip half of each cookie in the chocolate. Gently shake off any excess chocolate and then wipe the cookie bottom clean by dragging it along the edge of the bowl. (This will prevent a “foot” of chocolate from pooling around the cookie.) Place the cookie on a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet and repeat with the remaining cookies. Before the chocolate sets, place a pecan half in the top center of each heart. Do not let the cookies sit at room temperature for an extended period, or the chocolate can get dull and streaky. As soon as one sheet is full, set it in the fridge about 10 minutes, just until the chocolate is firm. Serve immediately, if possible, or store as directed above.

Note: There will be some leftover chocolate. Remove any crumbs by straining the chocolate through a sieve; then cover tightly and store at room temperature for another use.

Shortbread, Straight Up

Makes about 2½ dozen (2¼- to 2½-inch) cookies

A buttery blank canvas, shortbread shows off any flavor to the fullest. Substitute other nuts for the almonds, or mix in herbs, citrus zest, or chopped dried fruit—whatever suits your party theme best.

Complexity:

1

Active Time:



Type:

Rolled

Prep Talk: The dough must be chilled 1 to 2 hours before rolling and cutting. The dough can be frozen up to 1 month with minimal loss of flavor if wrapped tightly in plastic and then foil. Store baked cookies in airtight containers at room temperature no longer than 2 weeks.

2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
½ cup blanched slivered almonds
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup sifted powdered sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

About 2 tablespoons granulated sugar (for sprinkling)

1. In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, process 2 tablespoons flour and the almonds until the nuts are finely ground but not pasty. Add the remaining flour and salt, and process until well combined. Set aside for use in Step 2.
2. Place the butter and sugars in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Stir to bring the ingredients together; then beat on medium to medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 1 minute. Turn the mixer to low speed and add the vanilla extract. Gradually add the flour mixture, blending just until incorporated. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed to ensure even mixing.
3. Flatten the dough into a disk and wrap tightly in plastic. Refrigerate 1 to 2 hours or until firm enough to roll without sticking.
4. Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Line two or more cookie sheets with parchment paper.

FAQ: Why, when, and how should nuts and seeds be toasted?

Toasting nuts and seeds brings their essential oils to the surface and enhances their flavor. For relatively long-baking recipes, such as Basic Biscotti (opposite), there's no need to toast these items in advance since they'll toast in the course of cookie baking. However, for short-baking cookies and bars where the nuts or seeds are buried in the interior, these goodies are best toasted before they go into the batter. To toast, simply spread the nuts (preferably whole) or seeds in a single layer on a cookie sheet and set in a preheated 375 degree F oven. Bake until fragrant and lightly browned, watching closely and tossing occasionally to avoid burning. Small seeds will toast in a matter of a few minutes.

5. Roll the dough on a lightly floured surface to a ¼-inch thickness. Cut with a 2¼- to 2½-inch round, oval, or other cookie cutter. Using an offset spatula (see "FAQ" p. 146), carefully transfer the cookies to the prepared cookie sheets, spacing them about 1 inch apart.
6. Sprinkle the remaining sugar evenly over the cookie tops to thinly coat them. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, or until lightly browned on the bottom and firm to the touch. Immediately transfer to wire racks with an offset spatula to prevent breakage. Cool completely before storing.



Brown Sugar-Pecan Sweethearts (p. 25), a Shortbread, Straight Up variation



The Brown(ie)-Noser

Makes 3½ to 4 dozen (1½-inch) squares

Buttering up a teacher, boss, friend, or family member is easy with this super-charged blonde brownie. *Note:* Omit the rum if too adult for kids.

Complexity:

2

Active Time:



Type:

Bar

Prep Talk: Allow 1 to 2 hours for the bars to cool before glazing and

another 3 to 4 hours for the glaze to chill before cutting. Glazed bars should be stored in the refrigerator. (The glaze is perishable.) Unglazed brownies are better stored at room temperature. Bars will stay fresh longer if kept in the pan, tightly wrapped in foil, and cut to order. For best eating, serve at room temperature within 3 to 5 days.

Caramel Topping

8 ounces caramel candies (about 27 cubes)

¼ cup heavy cream

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

4½ teaspoons all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Butterscotch Brownies

2½ cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

¾ teaspoon salt

1¼ cups (2½ sticks) unsalted butter, chopped into
tablespoon-size pieces

2¼ cups firmly packed light brown sugar

3 large eggs, room temperature

1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

3 tablespoons dark rum (optional)

2 cups pecan halves, toasted and coarsely chopped

Ganache Glaze (optional)

1 recipe Ganache (p. 150), chocolate increased to 1 pound

1. **Make the Caramel Topping.** Unwrap the caramel candies and combine with the cream and butter in a small nonreactive (stainless steel or coated) saucepan. Place over medium heat and cook, stirring regularly to prevent scorching, until the caramels and butter are completely melted and the mixture has boiled. Remove from the heat. Stir in the flour, mixing well to break apart any lumps. Add the vanilla extract and set the topping in a warm place so the caramel stays fluid while you prepare the brownie batter.
2. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 10 x 15 x 2-inch glass baking dish (sometimes called a roasting pan, p. 10) with foil, leaving a 1-inch overhang around the top edge of the pan. Smooth out any big wrinkles in the foil and then lightly coat the foil with nonstick cooking spray.
3. **Mix the Butterscotch Brownies.** Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt together in a medium bowl. Set aside.
Place the butter in a medium (3-quart) saucepan over low heat. Once the butter has fully melted, remove it from the heat and stir in the brown sugar, mixing until smooth. (*Note:* Don't be

surprised if the butter and sugar do not completely come together at this point; some separation is normal.) Cool a few minutes; then add the eggs one at a time, whisking well after each addition. Add the vanilla extract and rum, if desired. Gradually add the flour mixture, whisking all the while to keep the batter lump free. Stir in the pecans.

Turn the batter into the prepared pan and level with a small offset spatula. (The batter will be less than 1 inch thick, but it will bake to about twice its original thickness.)

4. Drizzle the caramel topping evenly over the batter. (If the caramel has thickened and is difficult to drizzle, gently reheat it.) Marble the top (and break apart any large caramel blobs) by drawing a spatula through both the topping and the batter in a random pattern.
5. Bake until a cake tester inserted into the center comes out with moist crumbs on it, and the brownie has pulled away from the edges of the pan, about 35 to 40 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely in the pan. (Areas that had larger helpings of caramel topping may sink slightly, but don't worry; the ganache will completely cover any holes.)
6. **Prepare and apply the Ganache Glaze (optional).** Make the glaze only after the brownies have completely cooled. Follow the instructions for Ganache, p. 150, but increase the chocolate to 1 pound.
While the ganache is fluid, pour it evenly over the brownie. Gently tilt or shake the pan so that the ganache completely coats the brownie top. Cover with foil, taking care to keep it from touching the ganache. Refrigerate 3 to 4 hours, or until the ganache is firm enough to cut cleanly.
7. Remove the brownies from the pan in one block by gently pulling up on the foil overhang. Place directly on a cutting board. Remove all foil, and trim any uneven edges before cutting into 1½-inch squares. For the neatest cuts, slice the bars while the ganache is firm and wipe the knife clean with a warm, damp cloth between slices. Serve at room temperature.

then foil. Store baked cookies in airtight containers at room temperature up to 1 week. (Cookies frosted with Royal Icing should also be stored at room temperature, as refrigeration can cause the icing colors to bleed and the cookies to soften.)

2 cups all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, softened
⅓ cup (⅓ stick) shortening
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 tablespoon whole milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Additional flavorings, if desired (see “FAQ,” right)

1. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside for use in Step 4.
2. Using an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and shortening on medium speed until creamy. Gradually add the sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Whisk the egg, milk, vanilla extract, and any additional flavorings (see “Variations,” below) together in another bowl. Slowly add the liquid to the butter mixture and blend thoroughly on low to medium speed until the mixture is smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed to ensure even mixing.
4. Turn the mixer to low speed and gradually add the flour mixture, mixing just until incorporated.
5. Flatten the dough into a disk, wrap tightly in plastic, and refrigerate at least 3 hours or until firm enough to roll without sticking.
6. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.
7. Roll the dough on a lightly floured surface to a ⅛-inch thickness. Cut out assorted shapes with your favorite cookie cutters. Carefully transfer the cookies to the prepared cookie sheets with an offset spatula, leaving about 1 inch between each cutout.

8. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, or until lightly browned around the edges. (Baking time varies with cookie size and thickness.) Let particularly long or delicately shaped cookies cool 1 to 2 minutes on the cookie sheet before transferring to wire racks. Otherwise, immediately transfer to racks and cool completely before frosting with Royal Icing or storing.

Variations:

Lemon-Lime: Reduce the vanilla extract to ½ teaspoon and add 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest and 1 teaspoon pure lime oil.

Cinnamon: Add 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon to the dry ingredients and reduce the vanilla extract to ¾ teaspoon. *Note:* The ground cinnamon will tint the dough pale brown.

Anise: Reduce the vanilla extract to ½ teaspoon and add ½ teaspoon anise extract. Sprinkle each cookie sheet with 1½ teaspoons whole anise seed before placing and baking the cookies.

FAQ: Are certain flavorings preferred for cookies and icings?

Opt for 100 percent natural extracts and oils whenever possible. The reason: These flavorings taste better. Though oils and extracts of the same flavor may be interchanged, oils tend to be more potent and will also hold up better in the oven. When substituting oil for extract, I generally start with about one quarter of the specified quantity of extract and gradually add more oil to taste. For sources, see page 156.

Ganache

Makes about 2 ½ cups

This decadent chocolate and cream blend easily morphs from satiny glaze to creamy filling simply by setting it in the fridge. It can also be made with either dark or white chocolate with only minor adjustments.

Complexity:

1

Active Time:



Type:

N/A

Prep Talk: Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 1 week or in the freezer up to 1 month. Thaw at room temperature before using.

12 ounces premium semisweet chocolate (see “FAQ,” right),
finely chopped or ground in a food processor
1½ cups heavy cream
1 tablespoon light corn syrup

1. Place the chopped (or ground) chocolate in a large bowl so it forms a shallow layer. Set aside.
2. Pour the cream into a medium (3-quart) nonreactive (stainless steel or coated) saucepan. Place over medium to medium-high heat and scald the cream. (That is, heat the cream to just below the boiling point. The cream will put off steam, but no bubbles should break on its surface.)
3. Immediately strain the hot cream through a fine-meshed sieve directly onto the chocolate. Let the mixture sit 1 to 2 minutes without stirring, and then gently whisk until the chocolate is entirely melted. (If the chocolate does not completely melt, set the bowl over barely simmering water in a double boiler and stir regularly until smooth. Do not overheat, or the ganache may break.) Stir in the corn syrup.
4. To use the ganache as a glaze, pour it while lukewarm. Alternatively, for piping ganache, pour it into a shallow pan to a ½- to ¾-inch depth, cover, and refrigerate 20 to 25 minutes, or until slightly thickened. Stir occasionally during chilling to maintain a uniform consistency. (Hard, overchilled pieces of ganache should be broken up, as they can easily clog pastry tips when piping.) Chilling time will vary with starting ganache temperature, refrigerator temperature, and depth of the ganache. Watch the ganache closely, as it can quickly overchill and become difficult to pipe.

Variation: White Chocolate

Makes about 1¾ cups

Substitute premium white chocolate (see “FAQ,” right) for the semisweet chocolate in Step 1. Reduce the cream to ¾ cup and proceed as directed above.

FAQ: What is “premium” chocolate?

“Premium” chocolate, by my definition, is made with 100 percent cocoa butter and no hydrogenated or saturated fat substitutes, such as palm or coconut oil. Premium chocolates can be pricey, but their texture and flavor are superior to those of cheaper brands. Most grocery stores carry premium brands. Look for Valrhona, Scharffen Berger, Guittard, Lindt, or Ghirardelli.

Italian Buttercream

Makes about 4½ cups

Unlike classic American buttercream, which consists primarily of butter and powdered sugar, this icing starts with whipped egg whites and ends up fluffy and light—ideal for cookie toppings and fillings.

Notes: 1) Though the egg whites in this recipe are heated, pasteurized whites can be substituted to minimize the risk of food-borne illness associated with raw eggs. Use about 2 tablespoons pasteurized whites for every large white. 2) If a recipe calls for any fraction of Italian Buttercream, it is best to make a full batch and portion off what you need. (The ingredient quantities below are too small to mix practically in any smaller quantity.) Leftover icing may be frozen for later use, as described below.

Complexity:

2

Active Time:



Type:

N/A

Prep Talk: Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 1 week or in the freezer up to 1 month. Once refrigerated or frozen, the icing must be softened to room temperature and re-beaten before use.

4 large egg whites, room temperature (or 8 to 9 tablespoons pasteurized egg whites)
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
⅔ cup granulated sugar
⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
1⅔ cups (3 sticks plus ⅔ tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract (increase to 1 tablespoon if you do not add other flavorings)
Additional flavorings, if desired

1. Combine the egg whites and cream of tartar in the bowl of an

¼ teaspoon baking soda
1 (14-ounce) can (about 1 cup plus 3 tablespoons)
sweetened condensed milk
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 large egg yolk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1½ cups peeled, shredded carrots (about 1½ large carrots,
4 ounces each)
1½ cups walnut halves, lightly toasted and chopped
1 cup raisins
½ cup dried pineapple pieces, about 1 (3-ounce) bag,
finely chopped (optional)

¼ cup powdered sugar (for dusting, optional)

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9 x 13 x 2-inch baking pan with foil, leaving a 1-inch overhang around the top edge of the pan. Smooth out any big wrinkles in the foil and then lightly coat the foil with nonstick cooking spray.
2. **Make the Shortbread Crust.** Combine the flour, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade. Add the butter and process until the mixture just clings together in a ball, about 15 to 20 seconds. Pat the crust into an even layer in the prepared pan. (It may not appear as if you have enough dough, but the crust will puff upon cooking.) Generously prick the dough with a fork.
3. Bake the crust 20 to 25 minutes, or until lightly browned and firm to the touch. (Prick the crust again about midway through baking if it appears overly puffed.) Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely before topping, about ½ hour.
4. **Mix the Carrot “Cake” Topping.** Combine the flour, spices, salt, and baking soda in a small bowl and set aside.
In a large bowl, whisk together the sweetened condensed milk, brown sugar, eggs, egg yolk, and vanilla extract. Beat until well combined. Gradually whisk in the flour mixture, taking care to break apart any lumps. Stir in the carrots, walnuts, raisins, and,

if desired, pineapple. Pour the topping over the cooled crust and evenly distribute the goodies.

5. Bake the bars 35 to 40 minutes, until the edges are caramel-brown and the top is slightly puffed. Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely before cutting. (For easiest cutting, allow about 2 hours for the bars to fully cool and set.)
6. Remove the bars from the pan in one block by gently pulling up on the foil overhang, and place directly on a cutting board. Remove all foil, and trim any uneven edges before cutting with a sharp knife into 1¾-inch squares. For the neatest cuts, wipe the knife clean with a warm, damp cloth between slices. Lightly dust with powdered sugar, if desired, just before serving.

No-Hassle, No-Bake Oatmeal Fudge Cookies

Makes about 2 ½ dozen (2-inch) cookies

Another wise addition to your after-school repertoire, these creamy no-bake cookies go from mixing bowl to mouth in about 30 minutes. *Note:* It is especially important to have all the ingredients measured and prepped before you start mixing. Once you reach Step 3, you will need to add ingredients quickly before the mixture begins to get firm.

Complexity:

1

Active Time:



Type:

Drop

Prep Talk: Though not essential, a candy thermometer is helpful in Step 2. Store in airtight containers at room temperature up to 1 week, or in the refrigerator if you prefer a firmer consistency.

1½ cups granulated sugar

½ cup evaporated milk

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-size pieces

¼ teaspoon salt

½ cup unsweetened non-alkalized cocoa powder, sifted

- ¾ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 2¼ cups quick-cook oats
- ¾ cup raisins
- ¾ cup pecan halves, lightly toasted and coarsely chopped

About 2½ dozen pecan halves, lightly toasted (for topping)

1. Line two or more cookie sheets with parchment paper.
2. Combine the sugar, evaporated milk, butter, and salt in a medium (3-quart) nonreactive (stainless steel or coated) saucepan. Place over medium to medium-high heat and bring to a rolling boil, stirring as needed to make sure the butter has completely melted by the time the mixture boils. Boil about 2 minutes longer, or until the syrup just registers 238 to 240 degrees F on a candy thermometer. Stir as needed to keep the mixture from scorching on the bottom of the pan. (Avoid boiling longer than specified, or the resulting mixture will harden very quickly and become crumbly and difficult to scoop.)
3. Remove the pan from the heat and immediately add the cocoa powder, whisking to break apart any lumps. Whisk in the peanut butter and vanilla extract; then stir in the oats, raisins, and pecans. (The mixture should be shiny and loose at this point.)
4. Work quickly to scoop all the dough while it is still loose. (If the dough begins to set as you scoop, the resulting texture of the cookies will be crumbly.) Portion the dough into mounds using a level 1⁵/₈-inch (#40) scoop or 1 heaping tablespoon per mound. Place the mounds about 1 inch apart on the prepared cookie sheets. Top each cookie with a pecan half, and press gently to flatten the cookies to about 2 inches in diameter.
5. Freeze the cookies 15 to 20 minutes, or until completely set. (Alternatively, place them on the counter so the kids can watch them turn into fudge. Setting time can vary considerably, depending on the ambient temperature.)

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches

Makes about 2 dozen (3-inch) sandwiches

This favorite lunch box staple-turned-cookie ranks top in its class.

Complexity:



Active Time:



Type:

Rolled; sandwich

Prep Talk: For easiest handling, the dough must be chilled at least 3 hours before rolling and cutting. Store unfilled cookies in airtight containers at room temperature up to 1 week. Once filled, the sandwiches are best eaten within a few days, as the cookies will soften next to the jam.

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup creamy peanut butter
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

¾ to 1 cup seedless red raspberry or strawberry jam (for filling)

1. Combine the flour, baking soda, and salt in a small bowl. Set aside for use in Step 2.
2. Place the peanut butter and butter in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, and beat on medium speed until well combined. Gradually add the sugars. Turn the mixer to medium-high speed, and beat 1 to 2 minutes longer, until light and fluffy. Add the egg and vanilla extract. Mix until well combined. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed to ensure even mixing. Turn the mixer to low speed and gradually add the dry ingredients, mixing just until incorporated.