Cranberry-Fennel Double-Baked Dunking Sticks

24 straight-cut dunking sticks; 2 sticks per snack-dessert portion | Active 30 min | Cook 64 min | Total 150 min

Ingredients

- 150 g all-purpose flour
- 100 g fine semolina
- 100 g fine sugar
- 4 g baking powder
- 2 g fine salt
- 2 g fennel seeds, lightly crushed
- 4 g finely grated zest from a washed orange
- 100 g beaten egg without shell, about 2 large eggs
- 30 g unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 60 g dried sweetened cranberries, chopped if large

Set out

Oven, Two rimmed trays with at least 40×30 cm usable area, Baking paper, Digital scales, Mixing bowl and spoon, Fine grater, Ruler, Serrated knife and board, Rack, Partitioned airtight gift box

Allergens

Wheat, Egg, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C) and line one tray. Mix the flour, semolina, sugar, baking powder, salt, fennel and zest. Stir in the egg and melted butter, then work in the cranberries until the dough holds together. Do not taste raw dough.

2. Divide into two equal portions of about 276 g. With barely damp clean hands, shape each into a 24×5 cm log, about 2-2.5 cm high. Place the logs at least 6 cm apart on the 40×30 cm tray.

3. Bake 25-28 minutes, until the logs are firm, set through the center and lightly golden. A central check should reach at least 160°F (71°C), and a cut surface must not show raw flour or glossy dough. Cool on the tray 15 minutes. Reduce the oven to 300°F (150°C).

4. Transfer one log at a time to the board. Using a serrated knife, make twelve straight slices of approximately 2 cm each from each log, for 24 total. Lay the slices cut-side down across the two lined trays, leaving small gaps.

5. Bake 18 minutes. Turn every slice and exchange the trays between shelves; bake another 15-18 minutes. Cool one test piece for 2 minutes:it should feel dry and snap rather than bend. If its middle is soft, give the full batch another 5 minutes and check again.

6. Cool all the slices on a rack for at least 40 minutes after the second bake. Count two sticks per serving and pack only when completely cool. If the room is damp, pack in small airtight batches rather than leaving the biscuits exposed on a tray.

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Bring it

Count all twenty-four completely cooled sticks into a partitioned airtight box, or make twelve two-piece paper packets inside a closed carrier. Keep the container dry and apart from moist cakes; these unfilled, fully baked biscuits do not need cold buffet holding.

Finish at the gathering

Ready to serve. Bring the box and small tongs. A host-provided hot drink is a serving option, not an ingredient or required part of this complete recipe; the biscuits can be eaten on their own.

Make it yours

For a winter reading night, offer two crisp sticks per person. For an all-year housewarming, divide the same batch into six four-stick gifts and include the made-on date and short quality window.

Ingredient labels

Semolina is wheat. Butter supplies milk; check dried-fruit processing labels for additional allergens or cross-contact. The base has no added nuts, but that is not a certified nut-free claim.

A useful detail

The 150-minute plan allows 20 minutes to mix and shape, 28 for the first bake, 15 initial cooling, about 7 slicing, up to 36 for the second bake and 40 final cooling, with 4 minutes for checking. Longer drying may be needed if the first logs were thicker. These are intentionally crisp biscuits, not soft cookies.

Another way

Replace the 60 g dried cranberries with 60 g chopped dried apricot, using pieces no larger than a cranberry.

Replace 2 g fennel with 1 g ground cardamom and add 1 g extra flour to keep the dry ingredient total unchanged. Keep the orange zest and two-stage bake.

Keep it well

Cool completely and store airtight at a cool, dry room temperature for up to 5 days for quality. Separate from moist fruit cakes and do not add a fresh filling to the box. Freeze airtight for up to 1 month if making earlier; thaw in the closed container. No validated long shelf life or unrefrigerated mailing claim is made.