

BLACK PEPPER-PISTACHIO SHORTBREAD

from *The Washington Post*, [washingtonpost.com/recipes/black-pepper-pistachio-shortbread/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/recipes/black-pepper-pistachio-shortbread/)

Ingredients

1 stick (8 Tbsp.) unsalted butter at room temperature

1/2 c. powdered sugar

1 c. all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling

1/2 c. finely chopped roasted pistachios or other nuts

1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1/2 tsp. fine sea salt

Water, as needed

Using the paddle attachment of a stand mixer, beat the butter and sugar until smooth and creamy, about 4 minutes.

Add the flour, nuts, pepper, and salt. Mix on low speed until just incorporated, scrape down the sides of the bowl, and mix on low for 1 minute more. If the dough is still crumbly, add water, 1 tablespoon at a time, just until a dough forms.

Flour a work surface and turn out the dough onto it. Shape the dough into a 1-inch thick disc, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least one hour.

Preheat the oven to 300°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone liners. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let rest for 30 minutes.

On a lightly-floured work surface, roll the dough to 1/4 inch thick. Using a 2" cookie cutter, cut out about two dozen cookies, rerolling the scraps as needed. Please at least 1/2 inch apart on prepared baking sheets and bake for 17-20 minutes until lightly browned.

Common pepper blends

European: A blend of black and white peppercorns named because Europeans tend to be more favorable to white peppercorn than Americans.

French: A blend of green and black peppercorns popular in French cuisine for the zesty flavor in green peppercorn.

Four peppercorn: A blend of black, white, green, and pink peppercorns for a blend of peppery, spicy, and floral flavors. Excellent to use in stir-fries and stews.

Lazy man's shake: A combination of ground pepper and salt, ranging from 1 part pepper to 12 parts salt to 50/50.

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TASTE TEST

April 2024



PEPPER

With mentions dated more than 3,000 years ago, pepper has a rich history in medicine, spice trades, and as currency. In 408 A.D., 3,000 lbs. of peppercorn was used as part of the ransom for the city of Rome. During the Middle Ages, pepper was commonly used to pay rent, dowries, and to buy serfs their freedom.

Pepper gets its flavor from the piperine alkaloid and other volatile oils from the plant. The intensity of the flavor comes from the age of the peppercorn when picked. Green peppercorn has not ripened so the flavor is more fruity and zesty; black and white peppercorn has been allowed to fully mature and the difference comes from the treatment afterwards.

FUN FACTS

"True" peppers can only come from the piper genus. The most common forms are green, black, and white peppercorns, while long and cubeb peppers are closely related. Pink peppercorns, grains of paradise, Sichuan peppers, and Sansho provide their own unique flavors, but are ultimately imitators of "true" pepper.



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Cacio e pepe di Leonardo Vignoli

from *Tasting Rome: Fresh flavors and forgotten recipes from an ancient city* by Katie Parla & Kristin Gill, Clarkson Potter, 2016.



Cacio e pepe is the base recipe in the four *pasta romana* (Roman pastas). (Makes 4-6 servings)

Ingredients

Sea salt
1 lb spaghetti
2 cups of finely grated Pecorino Romano*
2 tbsp ground black pepper (plus more to taste)

Instructions

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil over high heat. Salt the water. When the salt has dissolved, add the pasta and cook until al dente, approx. 8-10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine 1 ½ cups of the Pecorino Romano, the pepper, and a small ladle of pasta cooking water. Using the back of a large wooden spoon, mix vigorously and quickly to form a paste.

When the pasta is cooked, use a large strainer to remove it from the cooking water and quickly add it to the sauce in the bowl, keeping the cooking water boiling on the stove. Toss vigorously, adding more hot pasta water a tablespoon or two at a time as necessary to melt the cheese and to obtain a sauce that completely coats the pasta.

Plate and sprinkle each portion with the remaining Pecorino Romano and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

*Substitute Parmigiano-Reggiano if necessary.

Variations

Pasta romana variations were created based on the availability of each ingredient, and are staples in every Roman restaurant.

Cacio e pepe: Pecorino Romano and pepper with spaghetti or tonnarelli pasta

Pasta alla Gricia: Pecorino Romano, pepper, and guanciale (smoked pork cheek or jowl) with spaghetti or rigatoni pasta

Pasta all' Amatriciana: Pecorino Romano, pepper, guanciale, and tomato with bucatini pasta

Pasta alla Carbonara: Pecorino Romano, pepper, guanciale or pancetta (cured pork belly), and egg yolk with spaghetti or rigatoni pasta

Black Pepper Beef & Cabbage Stir Fry

from New York Times Cooking, <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1020506-black-pepper-beef-and-cabbage-stir-fry>



This quick dish is made mostly from pantry staples. A full tablespoon of pepper adds a lightly spicy bite to the dish.

Ingredients

1 Tbsp. whole black peppercorns, coarsely crushed*
3 cloves garlic, grated
2 tsp. light brown sugar
1 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. kosher salt
3/4 lb. sirloin steak, thinly sliced crosswise
3 Tbsp. sunflower or vegetable oil
2 Tbsp. soy sauce
1/2 head small green cabbage, thinly sliced (about 8 oz.)
1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar
1 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
2 scallions, thinly sliced
Cooked rice for serving

Instructions

Mix the first 5 ingredients in a medium bowl. Add the sliced steak and toss to combine.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add steak and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 4 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Add the soy sauce and toss to coat, cooking for about 1 minute longer. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the beef to a bowl or plate.

Add the cabbage to the pan and cook, unstirred, for 1 minute until some pieces start to brown. Then stir and cook cabbage occasionally for 4 to 6 minutes or until crisp-tender. Stir in vinegar and season with salt to taste, if desired.

Return the steak and juices to the skillet and cook, stirring, until warmed through, about 1 minute. Top with sesame seeds and scallions and serve with rice.

*Helpful tip: Substitute 2-3 tsp. of ground black pepper for the peppercorns, if desired.