

Cleo Coyle's Biscochitos

Text & photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi, who writes the [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini

Biscochitos (aka bizcochitos) are tender shortbread cookies irresistibly flavored with anise and cinnamon. Originally developed by Spanish settlers in the New Mexico Territory, biscochitos are traditionally served at weddings, birthdays, and religious holidays, including Christmas. These tasty cookies are also enjoyed with coffee or milk in the morning and after dinner with wine or *again (you guessed it) coffee!*

As for my approach to this cookie, I tried to imagine how our amateur sleuth (coffeehouse manager Clare Cosi) would have adapted the traditional recipe. First I assumed that Clare would make her biscochitos using a combination of **butter and vegetable shortening** instead of the traditional lard. Then I assumed she'd use **Italian Marsala** for the wine; and finally, Clare would have replaced the anise seeds, which can be bitter, with **anise extract**, something her nonna would have used in Italian cookies like pizzelle and biscotti. For the shape, I'm sure Clare would have chosen a cookie cutter that reminded her of a golden Southwestern sun. And that's how I arrived at the recipe you see in this post. May you bake it with love and eat with joy...



Free Recipe Guide to **Holiday Buzz**, [click here.](#)

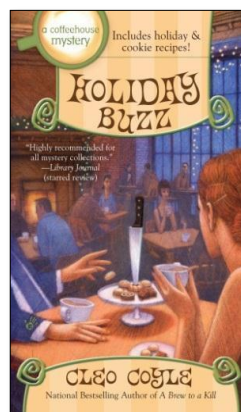
Happy Holidays!

~ Cleo Coyle, author of [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#)

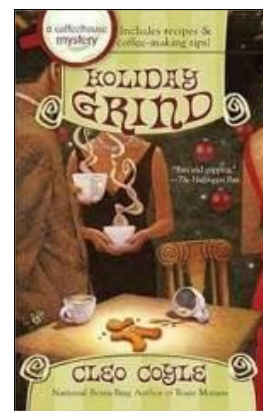
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You can find many more holiday recipe ideas in the recipe sections of our Coffeehouse Mysteries [Holiday Buzz](#) and [Holiday Grind](#).

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Makes about 6 dozen cookies of 2-inches in diameter, rolled slightly under ¼-inch in thickness (these cookies are sometimes rolled thicker, just note that they will make a smaller amount)

Ingredients:

For dough:

½ cup vegetable shortening

½ cup butter

¾ cup sugar

Pinch of salt

1 egg, lightly beaten with fork

½ teaspoon anise extract (*increase to ¾ teaspoon for stronger anise flavor*)

¼ teaspoon of vanilla extract

3 cups flour

¼ cup Marsala (or brandy or port or wine)*

For cinnamon-sugar finish:

¼ cup sugar + 1 teaspoon cinnamon

**NOTE: If you do not wish to use alcohol, substitute milk or water.*

Step 1 – Make the dough: Cream the shortening, butter, sugar, and pinch of salt until fluffy. Blend in the egg, vanilla, anise and vanilla extracts. Mix in the flour (dough will be very dry and crumbly). Add the ¼ cup Marsala (brandy, port, or wine) and mix only until the dough comes together.

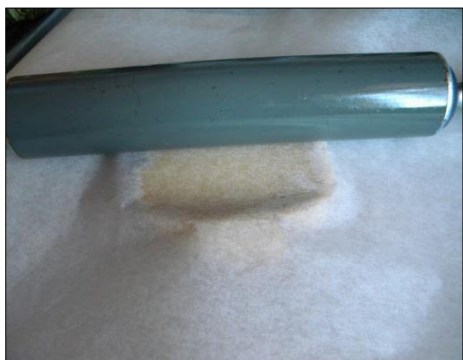
WARNING: Adding too much liquid at this point will toughen your cookies. If your climate is very dry and the dough is truly too dry and crumbly and needs more liquid, then add Marsala (brandy, port, or wine) in very small increments—no more than one teaspoon at a time—until the dough comes together.

Step 2 – Chill: Form dough into a disc, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for at least thirty minutes, or up to 6 hours (but no longer for best results).

Step 3 – Roll, Cut, Sprinkle, and Bake: Preheat your oven to 350° Fahrenheit. If the dough is chilled to the point of hardness, allow it to warm. Roll the dough out (**for best results, see my tips on next page**) and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Mix the cinnamon sugar in a bowl and generously sprinkle the cookie tops. Bake for about 10 to 13 minutes. These cookies freeze beautifully. See my notes about storage on the next page...



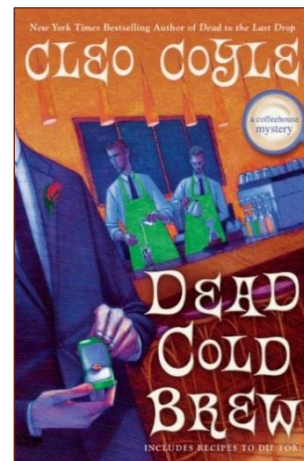
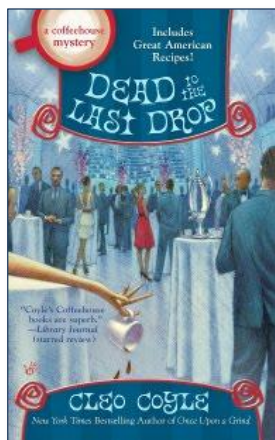
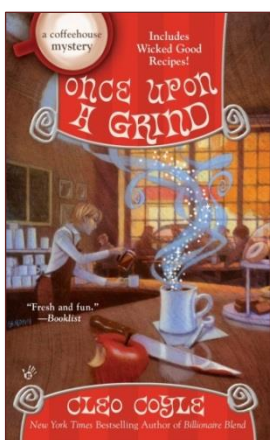
CLEO COYLE'S TIPS ON ROLLING DOUGH: For best results, do not use flour. Simply roll out the dough between two pieces of parchment paper. This is a much better method of working with dough (and preventing sticking) than using flour. Adding flour toughens cookie dough while this method keeps it tender.



Once the dough is rolled out, slide it (parchment paper and all) onto the baking sheet and slip the pan into the refrigerator until cold. This will make the dough easier to cut. Remove top layer of parchment paper, stamp out cookies. Remove excess dough between the cutouts. (I use a knife tip for this.) Add scraps to remaining dough to be rolled again. Sprinkle unbaked cookies with cinnamon sugar, place pan into oven, and follow baking directions in Step 3.



Final note: These cookies freeze well. Stack them into a wax paper-lined plastic container first. No defrosting needed, especially when dunking them into a cup of tea or (even better)...coffee.



Eat with joy! ~ Cleo

The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](http://www.CoffeehouseMystery.com) are bestselling culinary mysteries, set in a landmark Greenwich Village coffeehouse. Each includes the added bonus of recipes. To learn more and see more recipes, visit Cleo's online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com

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