

Cleo Coyle's Caramel-Dipped Hazelnut Meltaway Cookies

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

A delightful addition to holiday and dessert trays, these festive cookies marry the buttery tenderness of meltaway shortbread with the creamy sweetness of caramel and the crunchy earthiness of hazelnuts. Caramel and hazelnut are among the most popular flavors for coffeehouse lattes, which is why we included a version of this recipe in our bestselling Coffeehouse Mystery, [Once Upon a Grind](#). If hazelnuts are not available, no worries. Try walnuts or pecans. All will give you that lovely crunchy finish to a cookie you're sure to...eat with joy! ~ Cleo

Makes about 3 dozen (depending on thickness)

For the Cookies:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar, *firmly packed*
- 1 egg yolk (*use a large egg*)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour (***spoon into cup and level off***)

For the Dipping:

- 50 soft caramels or 2 cups Caramel Bits
- 2 tablespoons nut milk or half-and-half
- 1 cup finely chopped hazelnuts (or walnuts or pecans)

Cleo's Nutty Tips: If using raw, whole hazelnuts, be sure to remove the bitter brown skins. See directions on how at the end of this recipe. As for chopping, use a [nut grinder](#) or place nuts into a re-sealable plastic bag and finely crush them with a mallet or rolling pin.



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Step 1 – Make the dough: Using an electric mixer, cream the softened butter, powdered sugar, and brown sugar. Add egg yolk and blend until smooth. Add baking powder and salt and beat again until incorporated. Finally, measure the flour by spooning into your measuring cup and leveling it off (do not scoop, which will pack the flour and result in too much). Add flour and mix on low speed until blended. Flour your hands and gather the dough together, knead it slightly until smooth and form it into a ball.



Step 2 – Form log and chill: Turn the dough onto a parchment paper-covered surface and gently roll it into a log about 2 inches in diameter. Wrap the log in the parchment paper and then wrap that parchment paper in plastic wrap to prevent the dough from drying out. Chill the wrapped log in the fridge for at least 3 hours. This will harden up the log so that when you cut the cookies, they will keep their round shape. You can chill the log even longer, if you like, overnight or up to 2 days—just be sure that it's wrapped in plastic to prevent drying.



Step 3 – Slice and bake: Preheat the oven to 300° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice the chilled dough log into cookies (between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness). Bake 15 to 25 minutes. Time will depend on your particular oven and the thickness of the cookies. When are they done? The centers should still be creamy but the bottom of the cookies should be golden brown. Remove the pan from the oven, and allow the cookies to remain on the hot pan for 10 minutes. Do not remove cookies before then (cookies are fragile when warm).





Step 4 – Dip the cooled cookies in caramel and nuts: Place the finely chopped hazelnuts into a shallow bowl and set aside. Place the unwrapped caramel candies (or Caramel Bits) and nut milk (or half-and-half) in a non-stick saucepan. Continually stir over low heat until the candies melt.

If melted candies are still too thick for dipping, add a bit more milk or half-and-half, but take care not to overly liquefy the caramel. When consistency is right, turn heat to low. Gently dip top edges of each cookie into the saucepan of melted caramels, allowing excess to drain off. Dip cookie's caramel edge into your bowl of chopped hazelnuts. Gently rest dipped cookies on a wax-paper-lined pan until set.



PHOTO BY CLEO COYLE

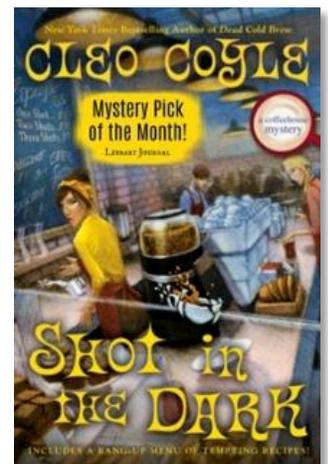
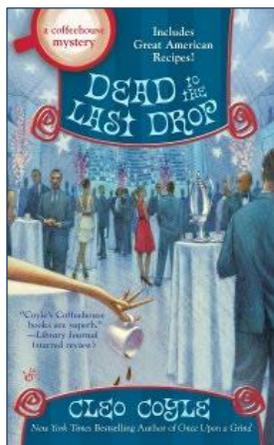
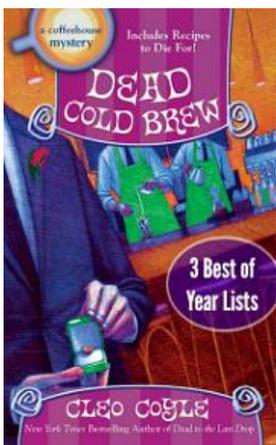
Final Nutty Tips:

How to Blanch and Toast Hazelnuts

For every 1 cup of raw hazelnuts (out of the shell), bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Stir in 3 Tablespoons of baking soda, be careful, the water will bubble up. (Don't leave out the baking soda, this is what helps break down the skins.) Add the hazelnuts & boil for 4 full minutes, stirring often. Drain nuts, pour them into a bowl of very cold water, and allow them to soak for 2 full minutes. Gently rub and roll the nuts between your open hands and the skins should fall off. A few stubborn nuts may require you to peel them individually (rinse under running water for ease). Rinse all peeled nuts clean, dry them off well with paper towels, and toast them in the oven for added flavor. To toast nuts, preheat oven to 350° F. Place whole nuts on a parchment lined cookie sheet and stir every five minutes until fragrant (10 to 15 minutes). Watch closely to prevent scorching.

Eat with joy! —Cleo

The [Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) 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 Coyle's online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com And her recipe blog at www.CleoCoyleRecipes.com



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