

"PEAKNUT" CRINKLES makes about 30 cookies

These chocolatey-peanut butter cookies, a twist on the ever-popular chocolate crinkles, were developed in the shadow of Colorado's famous Pike's Peak, hence their name. With the powdered sugar and cocoa (*snow and dirt*), along with the peanut garnish (*rocks*), they even resemble our favorite mountain! Be sure you under bake them a bit or they'll be hockey pucks;. Cookies will firm up on the cooling racks. At altitude particularly, "Peaknuts" only stay fresh a day or two, so if you're not serving and eating them right away, freeze until needed. If you'd like to skip the cocoa and peanut garnish, they're fine.

- 1/2 teaspoon instant espresso powder or instant coffee, optional
 - 1 1/2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips, divided
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 3 tablespoons salted butter, softened
 - 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter (6 tablespoons)
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 - 2 large eggs
 - 1 1/2 cups all-purpose unbleached flour
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 1 cup salted peanuts, divided (chop 1/2 cup finely to make cookies, and use the other half for garnish)
 - 1 cup powdered sugar
 - 2 tablespoons cocoa
1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Fix rack at center of oven. Grease two cookie sheets or fit with parchment paper.
 2. In a small bowl set over a pot of simmering water, melt 1 cup of the chocolate chips, stirring until smooth. Stir in the espresso powder, if using. Set melted chocolate mixture aside to cool a bit. Reserve the other half-cup chips to add to the dough later. (You can also melt the chocolate in the microwave. See cook's notes below.)
 3. In the bowl of a standing electric mixer or in a large bowl using a hand-held mixer, beat together on medium speed the granulated sugar, butter, vanilla, eggs, and the melted chocolate for 2-3 minutes until well-combined and lightened. In a separate bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients -- flour, baking, powder, and salt. With mixer set at medium-low, slowly pour the dry ingredients into the chocolate mixture and beat until just mixed.
 4. Add the finely chopped 1/2 cup of peanuts and the reserved 1/2 cup of chocolate chips and mix at medium speed for a minute or two. Cover tightly and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
 5. Pour powdered sugar into a small bowl. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and then roll each ball in powdered sugar. Place on greased sheets and using a fine mesh strainer, dust with just a little bit of cocoa powder. Bake 8-10 minutes until the edges are dry, but the cookies are still quite moist. Sometimes they crack in the oven and this is easier to see. I like to bake these one sheet at a time, but if you bake two, switch and reverse the sheets half-way through baking.
 6. Remove to cooling racks and press a peanut very gently into the center of each cookie. Let cool completely and store in containers with tightly-fitting lids for 1-2 days or freeze for up to 2 weeks. Thaw in containers at room temperature for a few hours before serving.

COOK'S NOTES: To melt chocolate in the microwave, place chips in a microwave safe bowl or cup, cover with plastic wrap, and microwave on high for a minute. Stir, and repeat until chips are melted.