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Festive-wear suggestions for a season without parties
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Stay Warm This Winter
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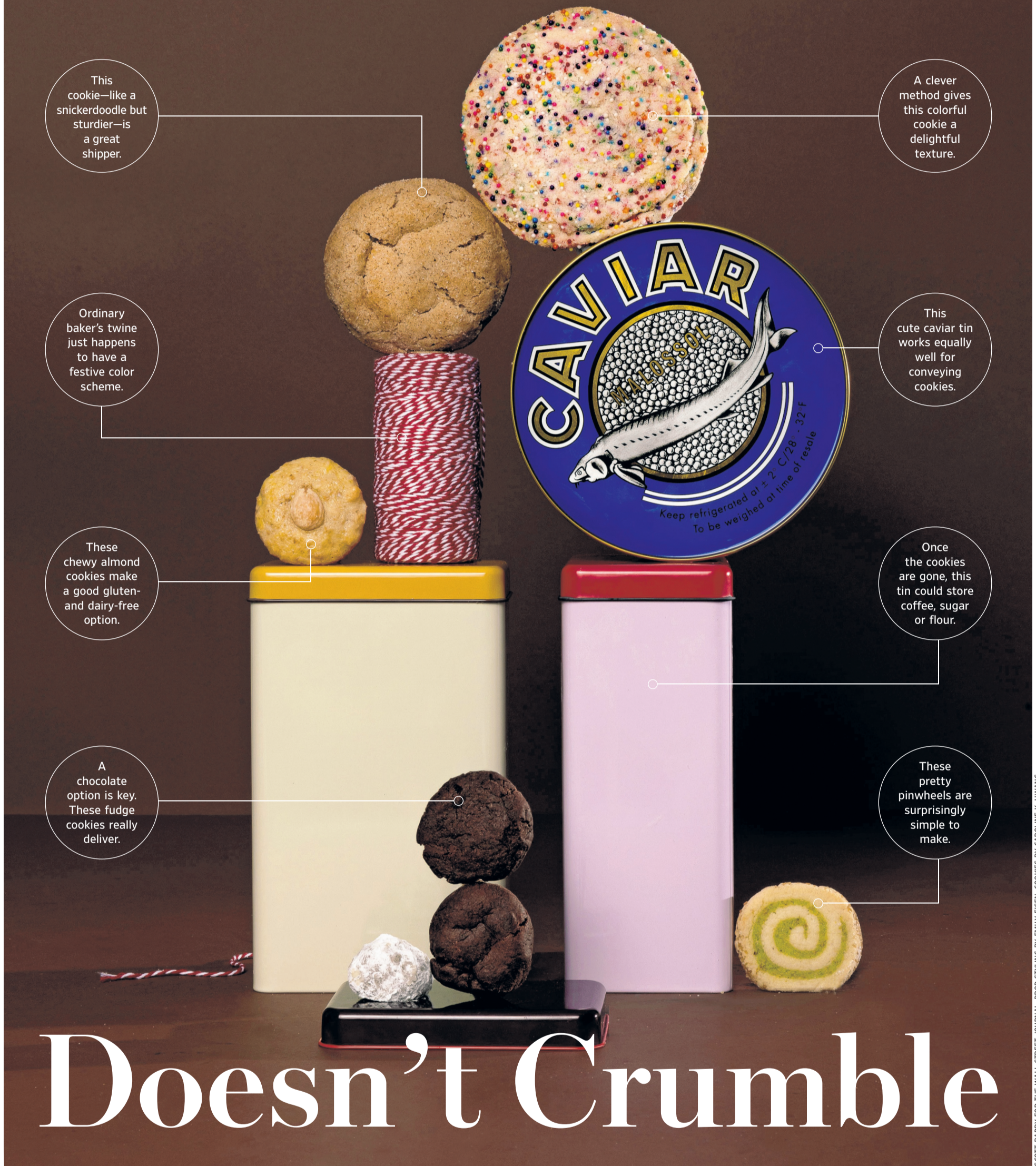


FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Saturday/Sunday, December 5 - 6, 2020 | **D1**

That's the Way The Cookie



This cookie—like a snickerdoodle but sturdier—is a great shipper.

A clever method gives this colorful cookie a delightful texture.

Ordinary baker's twine just happens to have a festive color scheme.

This cute caviar tin works equally well for conveying cookies.

These chewy almond cookies make a good gluten- and dairy-free option.

Once the cookies are gone, this tin could store coffee, sugar or flour.

A chocolate option is key. These fudge cookies really deliver.

These pretty pinwheels are surprisingly simple to make.

Doesn't Crumble

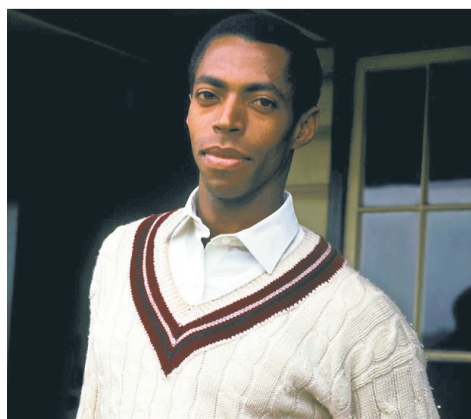
By GABRIELLA GERSHENSON

THIS SEASON, many of us are scaling back our holiday celebrations. But even if you can't gather with everyone you love, you can still feed them. Spread holiday cheer—remotely—by baking and mailing packages of comforting cookies. Sharing cookies is a longstanding holiday ritual.

If there were ever a year to ship our loved ones cookie tins brimming with cheer, this is it. With these top techniques from pro bakers, festive treats arrive fresh, intact and full of sparkle

This time of year, kitchens turn into production facilities to supply cookie swaps, tree-trimming parties and holiday open houses. Even in normal times, some of those cookies would travel by mail. But in 2020, shipping cookies takes on new resonance. "I don't know of a better gift than to bake for someone," said Kelly Fields, author of "The Good Book of Southern Baking" (Lorena Jones Books) and owner
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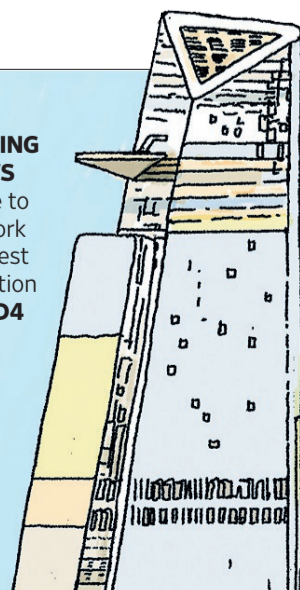


CRICKET CHIC
The inscrutable sport's cable-knits and woolly whites are trending stateside **D2**



LAW OF THE GARLAND
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EATING & DRINKING

Delicious Deliveries

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of Willa Jean restaurant in New Orleans. "Baking is my love language."

First, you need to choose your cookies. Ms. Fields ships baked goods from Willa Jean nationwide via the mail-order-food site Goldbelly. She recommends sticking with sturdy varieties for shipping—drop cookies, shortbreads, biscotti. Stay away from iced or filled cookies, or any that are brittle or tender. "I love pecan sandies enough that if somebody was to ship them to me, I would enjoy the crumbs as much as the cookie," said Ms. Fields. "But not everybody is of that opinion."

Picking durable cookies is a good excuse to forgo fussiness altogether. Put away the frosting tubes, rolling pins and cookie cutters, and let lower-maintenance flourishes—powdered sugar, sprinkles, sanding sugar—do the dazzling. "If I did the thing where I made cutout cookies with the sugars and royal icing decorations and piping bags, then you have to wait for them to dry," said Claire Saffitz, author of "Dessert Person" (Clarkson Potter). "I don't have time to do that anymore. I like cookies that don't require decoration and look pretty on their own." Her slice-and-bake pistachio pinwheels, with their hypnotic, swirly green pattern, are both stunning and surprisingly simple to make.

While some bakers feel compelled to churn out a smorgasbord, it's OK to stick with one variety. "There are people who would be super pumped to get a dozen chocolate chip cookies, and equally excited to get a dozen of three or four different kinds," said Ms. Fields. "Whatever you're going to have the most fun with is the right number."

If you're sending a single type, consider going big. Sarah Kieffer, author of "100 Cookies" (Chronicle Books), was catapulted to fame by her pan-banging cookie method, which involves lifting and dropping the baking sheet to create ripples in the cookie, crisp edges and chewy centers. Her confetti pan bangers, dotted with colorful sprinkles, span about 5 inches and make a stupendous solo offering. So would the bulla cookie from Paola Velez, co-founder of Bakers Against Racism and executive pastry chef of La Bodega Bakery, Compass Rose and Maydan in Washington, D.C. She borrows the flavors of the spiced Jamaican bulla cake and applies it to a massive snickerdoodle-style cookie.

I like cookies that don't require decoration and look pretty on their own.

Whatever cookies you choose, you want to make sure they ship fresh and in one piece. To start, make sure they've fully cooled before you pack them. In fact, Ms. Saffitz and Ms. Kieffer say shipping them frozen keeps them fresher longer. Then, package the cookies in a zip-top bag, a polypropylene bag or a tight wrapping of plastic. If you're sending multiple types of cookie, pack each variety separately so the soft cookies stay soft, the crisp cookies stay crisp, and none of them pick up flavors from the others.

Once they're bagged, nestle them snugly in an airtight container, such as a cookie tin, or in a pastry box. "You want to pack it really well so it doesn't move around at all," said Michelle Polzine, author of "Baking at the 20th Century Cafe" (Artisan). "If you shake it and hear something inside, you need to put more stuff in there." Use anything from more cookies to crumpled wax paper to fill the empty spaces. When the fit is cozy, place the tin in a shipping box slightly larger than the tin itself, and surround it with padding so that it's well-insulated and doesn't budge. Ms. Polzine likes to use vintage linens and cloth, which become part of the gift. Paper works fine, too.

Some bakers ship overnight, despite the expense, to ensure freshness. Others are more easygoing. "If it's the kind of cookie that is going to make it through the mail, it's not urgent," said Ms. Saffitz. "Two-day is best because you want to maintain some kind of freshness." If gifting locally, simply leave a tin on the recipient's doorstep—something Ms. Kieffer does each year. "It's a nice way to meet your neighbors," she said. "I never had anyone get mad because I left them cookies."

► Find recipes for pistachio pinwheels, spiced bulla cookies and fudge cookies at wsj.com/food.



Walnut and Buckwheat Russian Tea Cakes

This rich and fragrant cookie gets its unique, nuanced flavor from lightly toasted walnuts and earthy buckwheat flour. Most of the sweetness comes from a generous coating of confectioners' sugar, because of the small cookies' round shape, there is little risk of their breaking as you toss them in the sugar while still warm. Bonus: Because they are made with buckwheat flour, these cookies are gluten-free.

Active Time 20 minutes
Total Time 1½ hours
Makes About 50 small cookies

2 sticks (½ pound) unsalted butter, at room temperature
⅓ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup walnut pieces, toasted, cooled, and finely chopped
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
2 teaspoons water
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 teaspoons strong brewed coffee, cooled
2 cups buckwheat flour
1 cup confectioners' sugar

- Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Line two sheet pans with parchment paper.
- Use an electric mixer to beat together butter, granulated sugar, walnuts and salt on medium-high speed until mixture is super fluffy, 3-4 minutes. Scrape down bowl. With mixer at low speed, add water, vanilla and coffee. Gradually add buckwheat flour, mixing until well combined.
- Measure out ½ ounce (1 scant tablespoon) dough at a time and roll into balls. Arrange dough balls on prepared sheet pans, spaced about 1 inch apart.
- Bake cookies until puffed and set, 15-20 minutes. (Because the cookies are dark, color is not a good way to judge doneness. Bite one to check. The texture should be sandy all the way through.) Let cool slightly, then roll in confectioners' sugar to coat while still warm.
- Once cookies are cool, sift a blanket of confectioners' sugar over them. Cookies will keep in an airtight container for 3 days.

—Adapted from "Baking at the 20th Century Cafe" by Michelle Polzine (Artisan)

LEADER OF THE PACKING / TIPS FOR SHIPPING IN SHIP SHAPE

Holiday cookie packaging must be functional as well as fun. Here's how the pros get treats to their destinations looking and tasting their best.

For Freshness

To keep crisp cookies crisp, Ms. Velez slips in a food-grade **silica packet**. To keep soft cookies soft, she packs them with a small piece of **bread wrapped in parchment**. And she places **squares of wax paper** between big cookies.

For Packing

Use **zip-top bags, plastic wrap** or fancier **polypropylene bags**. For her Russian tea cakes, Ms. Polzine uses 3½-by-7½-inch **star-patterned cello bags** (100 bags for \$8, papermart.com). For large cookies, try 6-by-8-inch **flat polypropylene bags** (\$2

for 100, clearbags.com), and tie them with **twist-ties** or **baker's twine** (\$9, nycake.com).

For Padding

Crumple **wax paper** to make the cookies snug in the tin, and use **crinkle paper** (\$20, papermart.com) to pad out the shipping box.

For Boxing

Fill a **caviar tin** (\$11 for an 1,800-gram tin, markys.com) with the Russian tea cakes or a stack of the pan-banging sugar cookies. Tall **Hay Design tins** (\$9, us.hay.com) are ideal for packing small cookies, such as the marcona almond or fudge cookies. **Plain tins** (\$3-\$10, containerstore.com) in different shapes and sizes are always useful, as are **cardboard pastry boxes** (\$16 for ten 9-

by-5-by-4-inch boxes, brpboxshop.com). To decorate them, Ms. Fields orders **custom stickers** (sticker-mule.com). Tuck a **description of the cookies** into each box—Ms. Kieffer likes to warn for nut allergies—or label bags with **painter's tape** and a **Sharpie**. Ms. Saffitz suggests recycling old **coffee cans, Pringles cans** or **shoebboxes**. And you can purchase **tinned cookies** like Royal Dansk Danish Butter Cookies (at most supermarkets), Lazzaroni Amaretti Di Saronno (\$17, piccologastromia.com) or Maison Peltier cookies (\$15, mypanier.com), and refill with your own. Whatever container you use, a lining of **gingham waxed tissue paper** (\$5, containerstore.com) will pull it together nicely. —G.G.



Pan Banging Sugar Cookies With Sprinkles

"Pan-banging" is a technique, pioneered by cookbook author Sarah Kieffer, that produces a cookie with a photogenic, crisp, rippled edge and a soft center. This particular pan-banged cookie also has a nice crunch on the outside thanks to its coating of sugar and sprinkles. Use holiday-appropriate sprinkles to make them that much more festive. Cookie dough can be refrigerated overnight before using. Shape the dough into balls and cover with plastic wrap before chilling, and then bring to room temperature before baking. Roll in the sprinkles-and-sugar mixture while the dough is still cold.

Active time 20 minutes
Total time 1½ hours
Makes about 12 large cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
¾ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1¾ cups granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
¾ cup sprinkles, plus 2 tablespoons for coating

- Set an oven rack in the center position. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line three sheet pans with alumi-

- num foil, dull-side up.
- In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt and cream of tartar.
- Use an electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment to beat butter on medium speed until creamy,



Marcona Almond Cookies

This quick, easy recipe is a homage to the pignoli cookie, a chewy, sweet, almondy treat and a staple of Italian-American bakeries. In this riff, which also happens to be dairy- and gluten-free, marcona almonds replace the pine nuts. The saltiness of the nuts tempers the sweetness of the almond paste—not to be confused with marzipan, a different, smoother and sweeter product. Marcona almonds' high fat content makes them turn rancid quickly, so store them in the freezer to maintain freshness. If you can't find marconas, you can use salted roasted cashews instead.

Active Time 25 minutes
Total Time 40 minutes
Makes about 25 small cookies

4 ounces marcona almonds, plus about 25 whole almonds for topping
1 (7 ounce) tube almond paste (not marzipan), coarsely crumbled
¼ cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons water

- Set an oven rack in the center position and preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment and set aside.
 - In a food processor, pulse 4 ounces almonds until coarsely chopped. Add almond paste, sugar, vanilla and 1 whole egg plus 1 egg white. Set remaining yolk aside in a small bowl. Process in long pulses until you have a smooth dough. Add water to yolk in bowl, beat with a fork to combine, then set aside to use as an egg wash.
 - Transfer dough to a pastry bag. Or use a zip-top bag and snip a 1-inch opening from one corner. Pipe dough onto prepared baking sheet in 1½-inch rounds, spaced apart by about 1½ inches. (Cookies will spread slightly.) Alternatively, use a ½-ounce scoop or rounded tablespoon measure to portion dough into uniform mounds. Use a pastry brush to cover entire surface of each cookie with a thin layer of egg wash, then press a whole almond into center of each cookie.
 - Bake cookies until puffed and golden-brown all over, 10-12 minutes. Let cool completely on baking sheet before carefully peeling cookies off parchment. Store in an airtight container at room temperature up to 5 days, or freeze up to 2 months.
- Adapted from "Dessert Person" by Claire Saffitz (Clarkson Potter)

about 1 minute. Add 1½ cups sugar and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2-3 minutes. Add egg and vanilla, and mix on low speed to combine. Add flour mixture and mix on low speed until combined. Add ¾ cup sprinkles and mix until just combined.

4. Mix remaining ¼ cup sugar with remaining 2 tablespoons sprinkles. Form dough into 3-ounce (¾ cup) balls and roll in sugar-sprinkle mixture. Place 4 cookies an equal distance apart on sheet pans. Bake cookies, one pan at a time, until dough balls have flattened but are puffed slightly in center, 8 minutes. Lift one side of sheet pan up about 5 inches and gently let it drop down against oven rack, so edges of cookies set and center falls. Once cookies puff up again, after 2 minutes, repeat lifting and dropping pan. Repeat a few more times to create ridges around edge of cookies. Bake until cookies spread out and edges are golden brown, but centers are much lighter and not fully cooked, 14-15 minutes total.

5. Transfer pan to a wire rack. Let cookies cool 10 minutes, then transfer them directly onto wire rack to finish cooling. While first batch of cookies cool, bake second pan. Store cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for 2 days, or refrigerate up to 3 days.

—Adapted from "100 Cookies" by Sarah Kieffer (Chronicle Books)