

salty lemon shortbread

Makes 24 cookies

Finely grated zest of 3 lemons

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup/165g plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup/55g
granulated sugar

Flaky sea salt

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks/10 ounces/283g
unsalted butter, cold,
cut into 1-inch pieces

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup/30g powdered sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ preserved lemon (optional),
seeded and finely chopped

1 teaspoon/4g kosher salt

1 teaspoon/5g vanilla extract

2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups/325g all-purpose flour

Eat with

A bunch of juicy grapes at a very lovely picnic.

Do ahead

Cookie dough can be made 5 days ahead, tightly wrapped and refrigerated (or 1 month ahead, tightly wrapped and frozen). Cookies can be baked 5 days ahead, wrapped and stored at room temperature.

Just as I made sure to get anchovies into this book (see page 71), preserved lemons were bound to show up sooner or later. Sure, they are optional here (there's plenty of salt and lemon in this recipe to justify the name even without their inclusion), but they really do produce a jammy, salty, floral bop of something spectacular when you bite into a piece of one while nibbling on this otherwise straightforward cookie. Don't forget the sugar on top; the dough itself really isn't sweet enough to carry the cookie without it, plus, the way the zest gets a little crisp and dried along with it . . . it's a real chef's kiss.

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a 9 × 13 baking dish or two 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper.
- 2 In a small bowl, combine one-third of the grated zest, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and a good pinch of flaky salt. Use your fingers and rub the mixture together until the sugar is tinted yellow and smells deeply of lemon. Set aside.
- 3 In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a medium bowl with an electric hand mixer, or, bowl of a food processor), beat the butter, powdered sugar, the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup/165g granulated sugar, the remaining lemon zest, preserved lemon (if using), kosher salt and vanilla on medium-high till it's super light and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Using a spatula, scrape down the sides of the bowl and, with the mixer on low, slowly add the flour and beat just to blend.
- 4 Pat the dough into the prepared pan, using your palm or the bottom of a measuring cup to flatten to the best of your ability. Using the tines of a fork, dot the top of the shortbread dough. Sprinkle the top with the lemon-rubbed sugar, pressing it into the raw dough.
- 5 Bake until the top, bottom and edges are all nicely browned and the dough is set and firm to touch (but still slightly malleable), 30–35 minutes for the 9 × 13 pan, closer to 20–25 minutes for the 9-inch cake pans.
- 6 Let cool slightly before lifting up the parchment and removing the cookie from the pan. Using a knife, cut into 1 × 3-inch bars, or, if using round pans, 1–1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wedges.
- 7 Let cool completely before eating them all (these are better at room temperature or even the next day, I promise).