

Continued from Page 1

any sugar, which makes it a terrific addition to chocolate mousse, buttercream or even a whipped cream frosting. But there's a fine line here between delicious and overkill. If you're improvising with your favorite mousse recipe, add the peppermint by the drop, not the teaspoon.

And never add it to melted chocolate directly. The addition of any small amount of liquid makes melted chocolate seize up into a grainy, unusable mass.

**ONLINE**

Go to [www.mercurynews.com/food&wine](http://www.mercurynews.com/food&wine) for a recipe for Chocolate Crepes with Peppermint Ice Cream.

When Luchetti makes peppermint-chocolate bark, for example, she uses crushed peppermint to add flavor, color and sparkle. The only problem is, the little round candies are white inside.

"You don't get the red color, which is a drag," Luchetti says. "If you're going to do the whole peppermint thing, you want that red. It's so much a visual thing."

But using the smallest, thinnest candy canes you can find will maximize the ratio of red stripe to white.

That's what inspired Tosi's favorite winter holiday cookie.

"We like our cookies to celebrate the holidays, too," she says, her laughter wafting across the phone lines as she describes the immense box of candy canes that arrived at the Milk Bar one day. "And my mom loves to send stuff to help celebrate."

The result was a crushed peppermint extravaganza, with sparkling, striped candy shards emerging from treats laden with cornflake crunch, mini-chocolate chips and mini-marshmallows. Just one of the huge, sugary cookies could keep Santa — and all his reindeer — fueled for hours. And the cookies' ability to stay fresh for nearly a week at room temperature makes them a natural for college care packages, too.

"It's an easy thing to execute," Tosi says. "And everyone has candy canes."

The beauty of chocolate and peppermint, says Waterbar pastry chef Emily Luchetti, is that the combination elevates even the most basic dessert into holiday party fare. Among her ideas:

**Peppermint bark:** Pour melted white chocolate into a parchment-lined pan. Sprinkle with crushed candy canes. Add a layer of melted dark chocolate, and sprinkle with more crushed candy canes. Let cool, then break

**Candy cane brownies:** Halfway through baking your favorite brownies, sprinkle crushed candy over the top, so the bits sink just slightly into the fudgy interior.

**Peppermint brownies:** Press Ghirardelli chocolate-peppermint squares into brownies, as soon as they emerge from the oven, so the heat of the brownies melts the chocolate just slightly. Let cool. Then cut into brownie-mint squares.

**Momofuku Holiday Cookies**

Makes 15-20

- 16 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 cups cornflake crunch (see recipe below)
- 2/3 cup mini-chocolate chips
- 40 peppermints or 18 candy canes
- 1 1/4 cups mini-marshmallows

1. Combine butter and sugars in an electric mixer. Cream together on medium-high for 2-3 minutes. Scrape down sides, add egg and vanilla and beat for 7-8 minutes more.

2. Reduce mixer speed to low and add flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Mix just until the dough comes together. Scrape down sides.

3. Still on low, mix in the cornflake crunch and mini-chips, just until incorporated, no more than 30-45 seconds.

4. Unwrap the peppermints and transfer them to a zip-top plastic bag. With the end of a rolling pin, break the candy up into medium to small pieces — but no smaller than a Nerf. (Do not make candy powder.) Mix the candy and marshmallows into the dough, just until incorporated.

5. Using an ice cream scoop or a 1/3 cup measure, portion out the dough onto a parchment-lined sheet pan. Pat the tops of the cookie domes flat. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate 1 hour to 1 week. (Do not bake your cookies at room temperature — they will not hold their shape.)

6. Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Arrange dough at least 4 inches apart on parchment-lined sheet pans. Bake for 18 minutes. The cookies will puff, crackle and spread. They should be browned on the edges and just beginning to brown toward the center.

7. Cool completely on pans before transferring to an airtight container for storage. Cookies will keep fresh for 5 days at room temperature, or frozen for 1 month.

**Cornflake Crunch**

Makes about 4 cups

- 5 cups cornflakes
- 1/2 cup instant milk powder
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 9 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Preheat the oven to 275 degrees. Pour the cornflakes into a large bowl and crush them with your hands to a quarter of their original size. Add the milk powder, sugar and salt and toss to mix. Add butter and toss to coat. The butter will act as glue, binding dry ingredients to cereal and creating clusters.

2. Spread the clusters on a parchment-lined sheet pan and bake for 20 minutes, or until they look toasted, smell buttery and crunch gently when cooled slightly. Cool the cornflake crunch completely before using. The crunch will keep fresh for 1 week at room temperature, or a month in the fridge or freezer.

— Christina Tosi, "Momofuku Milk Bar" (Clarkson Potter, 256 pages, \$35)

*\*  
Kathy Callalax's  
Changes for Baking*

*Cut the 1/3 cup "cookie" into quarters.*

*Place 2" apart on cookie sheet.*

*Bake for 10-11 minutes at 325°.*

*Check for the brown edges.*

*When I made the 1st ones they ran together & burned. They were definitely too big.*

*I used little candy canes to get the red color*