

BUSY LITTLE ENGINE™

In “The Busy Little Engine,” the narrator suggests that Busy Little Engine and Pig could pretend they have a cookie factory. Since a factory needs big piles of ingredients, the narrator suggests that they take some train cars and go on an (imaginary) adventure to pick up the ingredients. They pick up flour, sugar, and butter. Can you really make cookies with just flour, sugar, and butter? Yes! Pig’s grandmother makes the most delicious shortbread cookies we’ve ever tasted. Try them out and tell us what you think!

This recipe may be simple enough for young children to handle, but use of the oven requires supervision by a grownup.

Grandma Pig's Famous Shortbread Cookies™

3/4 cup butter (1 1/2 sticks)

1/4 cup sugar

2 cups flour

Mix the butter and sugar thoroughly in a mixing bowl. It's easiest if you take the butter out of the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for a little while first. After you've mixed the butter and sugar, add the flour by working it in with your hands (messy but fun!). Then, put the mixing bowl with the dough in the refrigerator and let it chill for a while so it will be easier to cut it into shapes.

Preheat the oven to 350°. While the oven is heating up, sprinkle a little flour on your work surface (a clean counter works great). You will need to put the dough on the surface to cut it into shapes and the flour will keep the dough from sticking.

Next, use a rolling pin to smoosh the dough until it is flat and is about 1/3" thick (a little thicker than an average pen or pencil). Cut the dough into fancy shapes using cookie cutters or a butter knife or even an upside-down cup or glass. Dusting the cookie cutters (or other shaping tools) with flour will help keep them from sticking to the dough.

Grandma Pig likes to make train-shaped cookies and pig-shaped cookies. A simple way to make Pig's face on a cookie is to cut out a round cookie and then draw eyes, nose, and a smile on the cookie using a toothpick or the edge of a dull knife. Small holes to represent buttons or eyes or little-bitty wheels can be easily made with the end of a straw.

Put the cookies on an ungreased baking sheet and bake them for 20-25 minutes. Note that the tops of the cookies do not brown during baking, so don't overbake them! This recipe makes about 36 square inches of cookies (36 1" cookies, 24 1 1/2" cookies, 18 2" cookies, etc.). These are really good with a glass of milk!

