**Ginger Biscuits**

200 g unsalted butter, room temperature and softened

200 g caster sugar

310 g golden syrup

15-30g ground ginger (I use Indian ginger)

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp nutmeg

1 tbsp dark rum (I used Vanilla spiced rum)

2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

15 ml milk

500g self-raising flour

1 tsp salt

* Mix sugar and ginger then mix in butter and syrup until uniform.
* Mix bicarbonate of soda with milk and stir into above mixture.
* Add flour and salt and mix as little as possible until uniform.
* Form balls of dough, 18g each, and place, spaced out, on a buttered or non-stick baking sheet.
* Do NOT flatten the balls.
* Bake 17-19 minutes at 170°C. Make sure that the oven is properly up to temperature.
* Let them fully cool before removing from the tray (they will be very soft when they first come out but, after 10-15 minutes, will have hardened). Twisting the tray or dropping it a few centimeters onto a hard surface tends to loosen most of them. The remaining few can be removed by holding them with as many fingers as possible and rotating around the vertical axis. Don't try to prise them off a tray as they just crack and snap. Alternatively, use a proper baking sheet and they just slide off.
* Place immediately in a sealed container and leave for a week or two for best results. Initially the ginger taste will be masked by ‘baking flavours’ and butter and bitterness might be dominant but once they’ve ‘matured’ for a week or two they’ll taste like they’re supposed to.
* They are very hydroscopic so keep moisture away as much as possible. I often split the biscuits across multiple containers so that as few as possible are exposed to damp air. They can last for many weeks, if not months, this way. Keeping silica gel or a tea bag in the container helps absorb moisture.

Makes about 70 biscuits.

**Notes**: The dough should be stiff and slightly sticky, but not enough to coat your hands after rolling a few of them. Add flour to the mixture a couple of tablespoons at a time until the mixture is ‘right’. One tablespoon of rum seems to need two to three tablespoons of flour to return the mixture to non-sticky.

By juggling the amount of rum and flour, the baking time and temperature you should be able to get them to flatten but not spread and bake through without soft spots but not burn. It's a delicate balancing act. Normally I have to do two batches because they don't all fit in the oven. The second batch has to be done for a minute or two less so as not to burn. Obviously there are also gradients inside the oven, front to back, top to bottom which affects the final look and texture.

The Le Creuset baking sheets work really well for these and need no greasing. I don’t like traditional lipped trays because, I think, the lips cause the airflow in a fan oven to eddy and this creates hot spots and thus some come out darker than others.

Variants:

1. Add oils for flavouring (orange is my favourite)
2. Chocolate chips – freeze the chips before using so that they retain their shape in the oven. The chocolate chips have a habit of sticking to the tray so use more grease.
3. More ginger. 25g of ginger powder is my norm but the strength depends on the source and age of the powder. Stem ginger or glace ginger is a nice addition but also makes them a bit more sticky on the tray.