

Traditional Italian S Cookies (Biscotti Esse)

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These classic Italian S cookies, known as *Biscotti Esse*, are an old-school staple found in Italian bakeries and home kitchens across Italy. Their simple S shape comes from the Italian word *esse*—the letter S—and dates back to a time when cookies were made with basic pantry ingredients and mixed by hand.

Simple, unfussy, and timeless, these cookies are crisp on the outside, tender inside, and meant to be enjoyed with espresso, coffee, or tucked onto a holiday cookie tray.

Things to know about this Traditional Italian S Cookies (Biscotti Esse) recipe

- Esse cookies are traditionally pale; avoid overbaking so

they stay tender inside.

- Butter is rubbed into the flour first, creating a delicate, bakery-style crumb.
- Dough should be soft and smooth, not sticky—dust hands lightly with flour if needed.
- These cookies are lightly sweet and designed to be served with coffee or espresso.
- Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to **5 days**.
- Baked cookies freeze well for up to **2 months**.
- If you love old-school Italian baking, don't miss my other classic recipes like *Italian Amaretti Cookies recipe*, *Authentic Italian Tiramisu*, *Traditional Italian Almond Biscotti*, and my collection of *Italian Christmas cookies*. Save this recipe, share it with a fellow cookie lover, and let me know in the comments if your Nonna made them this way too ☐

Traditional Italian S Cookies (Biscotti Esse)



Makes approximately 30–36 S cookies, depending on size.

- 3 cups 360 g all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup 113 g unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs (room temperature)
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- Zest of 1 lemon

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C) and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
3. Add the cold butter and work it into the flour with your fingertips until the mixture is fine and crumbly.
4. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture.
5. Add the sugar, eggs, vanilla, and lemon zest into the well.
6. Using a fork, beat the eggs gently and begin pulling the flour in from the sides.
7. Once the dough starts to come together, use your hands to gently work it until smooth and soft. Do not overwork.
8. Transfer the dough to a piping bag fitted with a large plain tip, or shape by hand.
9. Pipe or form S-shaped (esse) cookies onto the prepared baking sheets, spacing slightly apart.
10. Bake for 10–12 minutes, until set and lightly golden on the bottom. Tops should remain pale.
11. Cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.