**Stained Glass Cookies for Valentine’s Day**

As a young child I used to make a version of this cookie at Christmas. Through the years, I have transformed the recipe into a unique Valentine’s Day cookie. The dough is full of buttery goodness with a hint of almond and vanilla. The unexpected center is made from candy, and when melted resembles stained glass. Have fun putting your own spin on these beauties and embellish them with icing, sprinkles or candy. For an added bonus, give the petite center hearts as an extra hug and kiss to your Valentine!

**Ingredients**

1 cup of room temperature Challenge Unsalted Butter (2 sticks)

1 cup of sugar

2 eggs

½ teaspoon of almond extract

1 teaspoon of vanilla

3 cups of all-purpose flour

Brightly colored hard candies (lifesavers, jolly rancher, cinnamon…)

1 three to four inch heart shaped cookie cutter

1 small one inch heart shaped cookie cutter

**Directions**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.

Using a mixer, cream butter and sugar until smooth in a large bowl. Mix in eggs and almond and vanilla extract. Slowly add flour, mix until a stiff dough forms. Remove dough from bowl, and form into a large log. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour.

When chilled, remove from refrigerator and divide into three sections. Working with one section at a time, roll out into a 1/8 inch thick rectangle. Using large cookie cutter, cut as many hearts as possible and place onto prepared sheet. Using the small cookie cutter, cut a heart in the center. Remove heart to create cut out.

Unwrap candies and place into heavy duty zipper bag by color. Place a towel over bag. Using a meat mallet or rolling pin, crush candies. Place small cookie cutter back into center of the heart to use as a guide. This will keep your cookie clean and make filling them much easier. Fill each center with crushed candy. Bake cookie in oven for 10-15 minutes, or until lightly golden brown around edges, and candy has melted. Let cool. If desired, decorate with your favorite icing, sprinkles or candy.

Extra Bonus: Place remaining small hearts on cookie sheet and bake for 8 minutes or until golden brown around edges. Decorate with frosting if desired, or sprinkle with colored sugar before baking.