Prep time: 20 minutes | Chill time: 1 hour | Bake time: 12–14 minutes | Total time: ~1 hour 45 minutes

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Why You'll Love This Recipe

Shortbread is the quiet hero of the cookie world: no eggs, no fuss, just butter, sugar, and flour transformed into something melt-in-your-mouth magical. Here, we dress it up with two festive additions—ruby-red dried cranberries for bright tartness and vivid green pistachios for roasty crunch. The result is a cookie that looks as good as it tastes, holds up beautifully on a

cookie platter, and ships well for gifts. Best of all, the dough comes together in one bowl and freezes like a dream.

Ingredients

For the cookies:

- 1 cup (226 g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ½ cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (30 g) powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract (optional, but lovely)
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2¼ cups (280 g) all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup (90 g) dried cranberries, roughly chopped
- ¾ cup (95 g) shelled pistachios, roughly chopped

Optional finish:

- 2 tablespoons turbinado or coarse sanding sugar, for rolling
- 2 oz (56 g) white chocolate, melted (for drizzling)

Equipment

- Stand mixer or hand mixer with a large bowl
- Whisk and spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Chef’s knife
- Plastic wrap
- Two baking sheets
- Parchment paper

- Wire cooling rack

Instructions

Step 1: Prep (5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C) and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Set them aside—you won’t need them until baking, but doing this now keeps things smooth later. Roughly chop the cranberries and pistachios so no piece is larger than a pea; this ensures even slicing and no torn cookies.

Step 2: Cream the Butter and Sugars (4–5 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

In the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or using a hand mixer), beat the softened butter, granulated sugar, and powdered sugar on medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 3–4 minutes. Scrape down the bowl. Add the vanilla extract, almond extract (if using), and salt, and beat for another 30 seconds until combined. Visual cue: the mixture should look lightened in color and hold soft peaks when the beater is lifted.

Step 3: Add the Flour (2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Reduce the mixer to low speed and add the flour in two additions, mixing just until the dough comes together and no dry streaks remain. Do not overmix—overworked dough means tough shortbread. The dough will be crumbly at first, then suddenly clump into a cohesive mass.

Step 4: Fold in the Mix-Ins (1–2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Remove the bowl from the mixer. Add the chopped cranberries and pistachios and fold them

in with a sturdy spatula or your hands until evenly distributed. The dough should be soft but not sticky.

Step 5: Shape and Chill (10 minutes active | 1 hour chill | Intensity: Low)

Divide the dough in half. On a sheet of plastic wrap, shape each half into a log about 8 inches (20 cm) long and 1½ inches (4 cm) in diameter. Roll each log tightly in the plastic wrap, twisting the ends to seal. If using turbinado sugar, scatter it on a plate and roll the logs in it before wrapping for a sparkly, crunchy edge. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to 3 days. (For longer storage, freeze the logs for up to 3 months; slice from frozen, adding 1–2 minutes to the bake time.)

Step 6: Slice (5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Unwrap the chilled logs and, using a sharp chef's knife, slice into ⅓-inch (8 mm) rounds. Rotate the log a quarter turn after each cut to keep the slices round. If a cookie crumbles slightly at the edge, gently press it back together with your fingers. Arrange slices 1 inch apart on the prepared baking sheets.

Step 7: Bake (12–14 minutes | Intensity: Low–Medium)

Bake one sheet at a time on the center rack for 12–14 minutes, until the edges are just barely golden and the tops look set but still pale. Watch closely after 11 minutes—shortbread goes from perfect to overbaked quickly. Rotate the pan halfway through if your oven runs uneven.

Step 8: Cool (10 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Let the cookies rest on the baking sheet for 5 minutes—they're fragile while hot—then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. If drizzling with white chocolate, melt it in 20-second microwave bursts, stirring between each, then drizzle over cooled cookies with a fork or piping bag. Let the chocolate set for about 15 minutes.

Time & Intensity Summary

Stage	Time	Intensity
Prep & chopping	5 min	Low
Creaming butter & sugar	4–5 min	Medium
Mixing dough	3–4 min	Low
Shaping logs	10 min	Low
Chilling	1 hour	None (passive)
Slicing	5 min	Low
Baking	12–14 min	Low–Medium
Cooling & finishing	25 min	Low

Tips for Success

- Softened butter matters. It should yield to gentle pressure but not be greasy or melted. Cold butter won’t cream; melted butter makes flat, greasy cookies.
- Chop mix-ins small. Large cranberry pieces tear the dough during slicing.
- Slice cold, bake cold. Chilled dough holds its shape and gives you those crisp, clean edges.
- Don’t brown the tops. True shortbread stays pale; only the edges should color.
- Use a scale if you can. Flour volume varies wildly—280 g is your target.

Variations

- Orange-Cranberry: Swap the almond extract for 1 teaspoon orange zest.
- Cherry-Pecan: Replace cranberries with chopped dried cherries and pistachios with pecans.
- Chocolate-Dipped: Dip half of each cooled cookie in melted dark chocolate and let set.
- Gluten-Free: Substitute a 1:1 gluten-free baking blend for the all-purpose flour (choose one with xanthan gum).

Storage & Make-Ahead

Store cooled cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week, separating layers with parchment. The dough logs can be refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for up to 3 months—slice and bake straight from the freezer. Baked cookies freeze well for up to 2 months; thaw at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

Nutrition Information

Per cookie (based on 24 cookies, without optional turbinado sugar or white chocolate drizzle):

- Calories: ~135
- Total fat: 8 g (4 g saturated)
- Cholesterol: 15 mg
- Sodium: 45 mg
- Total carbohydrates: 14 g
- Dietary fiber: 1 g
- Total sugars: 6 g
- Protein: 2 g