

Scribal Snacks: Ushabtis and Cuneiform Lentils

In celebration of International Archaeology Day 2021, we offer this tasty exploration of two of the world's oldest writing systems—Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform. Head to the [Kelsey YouTube channel](#) to cook along with Kelsey Museum Community and Youth Educator Mallory Genauer as she creates sugar cookie ushabtis and cuneiform lentil tablets.

INGREDIENTS

Sugar Cookies

- 2 ¼ cup all purpose flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¾ cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg, at room temperature
- 2 tsp vanilla extract

Royal Icing (Small Batch)

- 1 ¼ cup confectioners sugar
- 1 large egg white
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- Blue and green food coloring

In addition to these ingredients, you will need a gingerbread man or person-shaped cookie cutter, a popsicle stick that has been cut in half, and a tube of black piping.

[Download](#) the Alphabet to Hieroglyphs and Alphabet to Cuneiform conversion charts from the Kelsey website to guide you as you write your name or initials on your ushabtis and cuneiform lentils.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar on medium-high speed for about 5 minutes.
3. Add egg and vanilla extract, beat on medium for 1 minute. You may need to scrape the sides of the bowl to ensure everything is incorporated.
4. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet until combined.
5. Divide the dough into 2 equal parts.
6. Form half the dough into a disk, wrap in plastic wrap, and place in the refrigerator. These will be the lentil tablet cookies.
7. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the other half of the dough to ¼-inch thickness. Transfer to a foil-lined cookie sheet and cover with plastic wrap. (For ease of transfer, we recommend rolling out the dough on a baking mat, or even directly on the cookie sheet itself.) Place the cookie sheet in the refrigerator.
8. Chill both doughs for 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Make the Ushabtis:

1. Remove the cookie sheet from the refrigerator.
2. Using a gingerbread man cookie cutter, cut out as many cookies as you can. You may need to reroll the dough to get extra cookies.
3. Using your fingers, press the legs of each cookie together to form a single column. This approximates the shape of a ushabti.
4. Place ushabti cookies on a prepared baking sheet.
5. Bake at 350 degrees for 10–12 minutes. While the cookies are baking, prepare the royal icing: simply mix all the ingredients together in a small bowl, adding the coloring gradually until your desired color is achieved.
6. Let cookies cool completely before adding icing. Then write your name or initials in hieroglyphs using the black piping.

Make the Cuneiform Lentils:

1. Remove the disk of dough from the refrigerator.
2. Form small balls of dough about 1 inch in diameter.
3. Using a flat surface, press balls into flat round disks, roughly ¼ inch thick.
4. Write your name in cuneiform by pressing the cut end of the popsicle stick into the dough.
5. Place cookies on a prepared baking sheet; chill cookies in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 10–12 minutes.