



Grains of truth about **COOKIES**

Definitions

Originally called “little cakes,” cookies are made with sweet dough or batter, baked in single-sized servings and eaten out-of-hand. Perfect for snacking or as dessert, cookies are consumed in 95.2 percent of U.S. households. Americans alone consume over 2 billion cookies a year, or 300 cookies for each person annually.

Cookies are most often classified by method of preparation—drop, molded, pressed, refrigerated, bar and rolled. Their dominant ingredient, such as nut cookies, fruit cookies or chocolate cookies, can also classify them. Whether gourmet, soft or bite-sized cookies, new categories are always cropping up as the American appetite for cookies continues to grow.

History

The word cookie originally came from the Dutch *keokje*, meaning “little cake.” In addition, the Dutch first popularized cookies in the United States. The British took a liking to them in the 19th century, incorporating them into their daily tea service and calling them biscuits or sweet buns, as they do in Scotland.

Sometime in the 1930’s, so the story goes a Massachusetts innkeeper ran out of nuts while making cookies. Therefore, she substituted a bar of baking chocolate, breaking it into pieces and adding the chunks of chocolate to the flour, butter and brown sugar dough. The Toll House Cookie, so named after the inn in which it was served, was a hit.

Historians credit the innkeeper, Ruth Wakefield, with inventing what has since become an American classic—the chocolate chip cookie.



Ingredients

Following are the basic ingredients used in cookie making. In addition to these, fruits, nuts, chocolates, candies and flavors are used to make the hundreds of cookie varieties that keep Americans asking for more.

Flours: Different types of flours may be used in cookie making, depending on the mix. For butter-rich cookies, all-purpose flour or a blend of cake and bread flour will maintain the desired shape and texture of the cookie. All-purpose flour also holds up better when egg yolks are used. A low gluten cake flour blends easily with whipped egg whites, and results in puffier, softer cookies.

Sugar: A finely granulated sugar is preferred for most cookie mixes unless the recipe calls for something different. Coarsely ground sugar is sometimes used for sprinkling on top of cookies but should not be used in the mix because it will result in poor baking performance. Molasses is ideal for soft cookies because it sweetens and increases moisture retention during baking. In some recipes, brown sugar, honey or corn syrup may be used as a sweetener.

Fat: Butter, margarine and vegetable shortening are the fats used in cookies in relatively high ratios to flour, sugar and other ingredients. Largely responsible for the rich taste associated with cookies, these fats also contribute tenderness and keeping qualities to the finished product. Cookies made with vegetable shortening will spread less in the oven than those made with butter because shortening will hold its shape over a wider temperature range.

Eggs: Eggs add flavor and keeping qualities to cookies, and help maintain the final shape and structure of the cookie. The whole egg, the yolks only or the whites only may be used.

Preparation

Mixing affects the overall quality and tenderness of the cookie, so recipes should be followed carefully. Thorough creaming or blending of ingredients before flour is added is important. Improper mixing can result in a tough cookie. Whip egg whites to wet peaks, rather than dry. In most cases, flour should be folded in gently to maintain tenderness of the final product.

If pans are to be greased, avoid over-greasing, which will cause cookies to spread excessively; or uneven greasing, which will cause some cookies to stick and not spread enough. Watch baking time and temperature closely. Unless directions state otherwise, remove from the oven as soon as the cookies are done and place on wire racks to cool.



High altitude baking

Directions vary among altitudes from 5,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. Ideally, the recipe will give High-altitude directions, but if not, call your nearest county extension office for assistance.

Storage

Cookies usually do not stale as quickly as other baked goods because of their high fat content. In general, store cookies in an airtight container at room temperature, or freeze in a sealed container for longer periods.

Nutritional value

One of the rewards of eating plenty of low-fat grain products, fruits and vegetables is that one can occasionally enjoy treats that are higher in fat, such as cookies. There is also increasing availability of sugar-free, low-fat and fat-free cookies.

To compare how some of the traditional favorites measure up nutritionally, see the table below:

Nutritional value (cookies listed according to ingredients used.)

ONE PIECE	WEIGHT (ounces)	CALORIES	CARBOHYDRATES (gm)	PROTEIN (gm)	FAT (gm)
Oatmeal Raisin	.5	61.0	9.0	.75	2.5
Shortbread	1.0	40.0	5.0	.5	2.0
Peanut Butter	.5	61.0	7.0	1.0	3.5
Chocolate Chip	.4	49.0	7.0	.6	2.0
Sugar Cookie	.4	60.0	8.0	.5	3.0
Brownie w/Nuts	.7	95.0	11.0	1.3	6.3

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