

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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Mmm...cookies!

You see them everywhere, in all sizes, shapes, colors, flavors, and varieties.

Cookies are easy to make and fun to eat. Who could refuse one? Just a very little one . . . it won't spoil your appetite.

Read all about these bites of joy. And then make a batch for yourself.



How many types are there anyway?

Bar cookies

Easy, easy, easy. Simply pat cookie dough into a pan, bake, and cut into bars. This group includes brownies, which were thought to have originated when someone forgot to add baking powder to chocolate cake. The first brownie recipe appeared in an 1897 Sears Roebuck catalog.

Drop cookies

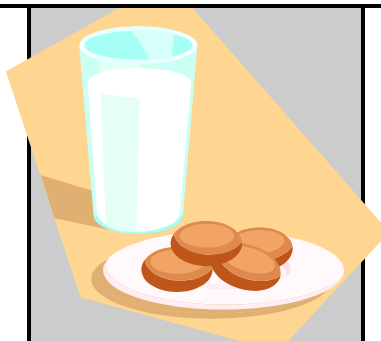
Just like the name says, these cookies are dropped from a spoon onto a baking sheet. Chocolate chip are perhaps the most famous of these, but there are myriad varieties.

Fried cookies

Some bakers are producing deep-fried cookie dough now, I kid you not. And then there are batter-dipped deep-fried Oreo cookies. But more traditional are Scandinavian rosettes made from batter placed on a special rosette iron and slipped into hot fat.

Molded cookies

These are shaped by hand to form circles, crescents, logs, you name it. Because peanut butter cookies are often pressed with a fork, they fall into this category.



Local cookie companies

Cougar Mountain Baking Company

Intense experimentation with chocolate chip cookie dough led to the creation of this Seattle-based cookie company. The name, meant to evoke a "rugged Northwest image," comes from Cougar Mountain near Issaquah, Wash.

These cookies are widely available in Northwest stores or order online. If you need to raise money, try their Cookie Dough Fundraiser.

www.cmbc.com

OregonCookies.com

A 5-year-old wanted to raise money for toys and so a family business was born.

Now this company, based in Central Point, Ore., sells its products online and even helps folks send cookies to our soldiers overseas.

www.oregoncookies.com

Pressed cookies

Dough is pressed through a cookie press or pastry tube. Spritz cookies are one variety of these.

Refrigerator (icebox) cookies

These are meant to be made ahead. Dough is rolled into logs, wrapped tightly in waxed paper or plastic wrap, and stored in the freezer. When needed, the logs are sliced into thin rounds and baked. You can slice off a few cookies or do the entire roll at once.

Rolled cookies

Most often seen at Christmas, the dough for these treats is rolled out flat to be cut with cookie cutters or anything else with a sharp edge. An upside down glass works well, too, if you just want round cookies.

Tips 'n tricks

Use sheets of parchment (found at almost any supermarket) to keep cookies from sticking to the pan. This way you can get many batches done quickly. While one batch is in the oven, place freshly formed dough on a clean sheet. When the cooked batch comes out, pull it off the pan onto a counter top and then slide the next batch onto the pan.

Store soft cookies in a container with a tight lid. A slice of apple in the container will help keep them soft.

Store crisp cookies in a container with a loose lid. Add a piece of bread to absorb any humidity in the air.

For freshly baked cookies any time, roll dough into cookie-sized balls. Place these in the freezer. Mark the container with a note about oven temperature and time needed to cook. When hunger strikes, put a few balls on a baking sheet and bake.

Mama's little baby loves shortbread

Shortbread is the most basic of all cookies: sugar (granulated or powdered), butter, and flour. Rice flour or cornstarch sometimes are added to the wheat flour to create a finer, crisper texture, and brown sugar can add a depth of flavor.

Butter gives these cookies their primary flavor and is essentially the most important ingredient. If you substitute any other fat, be prepared to enhance the flavor in another way. In 1921, the British government said that in order to be called shortbread at least 51 percent of its fat content must be real butter. Of course, outside Britain this law cannot be enforced, so ask questions if the shortbread you buy claims to be authentic.

The name shortbread is derived from its crumbly texture, which is created by adding the butter. Shortening, a related word, refers to any fat that also creates this crumbly texture. But why "bread"? Reportedly, at one time Scottish bakers created the name to prevent shortbread from being classified as a biscuit (that is, cookie) to avoid paying a government tax on such.

Scotland is considered the birthplace of shortbread, and there are many regional variations, some of which Americans just wouldn't recognize as the butter cookie we enjoy here.

The first shortbread was made from butter and finely ground oats, found in abundance on farms and thus staple foods of the poor. Until fairly recently, oats were generally considered food for horses even in the United States. For many centuries, upper classes preferred wheat flour and cream (not butter) in their foods. Shortbread has been around for a long time, but it wasn't until the time of Queen Elizabeth I that shortbread recipes made a public appearance and gained in popularity.

But even then, shortbread was only made to celebrate Christmas and the New Year – until people decided they couldn't get enough just once or twice a year.

Scottish shortbread dough is traditionally patted into a round mold, originally

Tasty cookie facts

Ruth Wakefield, who accidentally created chocolate chip cookies in 1937, was using a chocolate bar given to her by Andrew Nestlé. She received a lifetime supply of Nestlé chocolate bars in return for her recipe appearing on the back of Nestlé chocolate products.



Snickerdoodles were just one of the many foods with fun names created by early American cooks. Other cookies of the time were Plunkets, Jolly Boys, and Kinkawoodles.



Cookies were brought to North America by Dutch settlers who called them koekje. For some reason the British called them biscuits. Go figure.



Your favorite Girl Scout Cookie reveals your personality at www.littlebrownie.com/cookies/personality.html.



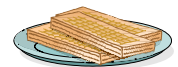
When Christmas Eve rolls around, take a peek at this site to see how many cookies Santa eats.

www.noradsanta.org/en/santasnacks.php

wooden, now more commonly ceramic. The design imprinted on the mold usually forms the cookies into wedges. If you use a mold, be sure to dust it with flour or powdered sugar before putting the raw dough in. Chill the filled mold before baking to make sure the cookies retain their shape.

You can find a wide selection of shortbread molds and baking tips by the Brown Bag company in far-off New Hampshire, online at www.shortbreadpan.com.

By the way, don't confuse shortbread with shortcake, which is made with vegetable fat instead of butter to give it a completely different texture. Shortcake is more of a biscuit (American-style, that is), with baking powder – and sometimes eggs – giving it a lift that shortbread doesn't have. Both shortbread and shortcake, however, are nice with strawberries.



Shortbread recipe

1 cup butter
1/2 cup powdered sugar
2 cups flour
1/4 cup rice flour

Cream together butter and sugar. Sift in the flours and knead into a smooth dough.

Form as you wish:

Press into shortbread molds, or
Press into an 8-by-8-inch pan, or
Divide into two balls and roll each out to form a circle 1/2-inch thick.

If not using a mold, prick dough all over with a fork and then cut into squares (in pan) or 6 wedges (each circle).

Bake at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes, or until very lightly browned. While still warm, remove from mold or pan and break into pieces.

About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

Contact the editor

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