

Cookie-Swap Party Planner



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Making an assortment of holiday cookies doesn't have to mean countless days of rolling, baking, and decorating. Why not bake several batches of one kind, then trade a dozen or two with a few friends? That's the idea behind our Cookie-Swap Party.

Invite guests to join you for this festive holiday gathering, and ask them to bring a few batches of homemade cookies. Use our favorite recipes, included in this Planner, assigning a recipe to each friend. Or, have each person prepare her personal favorite holiday cookie recipe. Either way, you'll end up with a delightful mix of confections, and welcome the beginning of a very sweet tradition.

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CHECKLIST



TWO TO THREE WEEKS BEFORE

- Send out invites (remind guests to bring copies of their recipe for sharing)
- Plan menu
- Check with your local post office about shipping details (have tips handy for guests)

FIVE TO SEVEN DAYS BEFORE

- Prepare dough for cookies (freeze)
- Create labels for cookie display
- Gather wrapping/packaging materials

DAY BEFORE

- Set up platters, cake plates, and other dishware
- Buy and assemble decorating supplies (icing, decorative sugar, candy)

DAY OF PARTY

- Make snacks and drinks for guests
- Bake cookies (allow time to cool for decorating)

COCONUT CREAM CHEESE PINWHEELS

MAKES 30 COOKIES

This recipe was a first-place winner of Martha Stewart Living Television's Cookie of the Week Contest, submitted by Imelda Rodriguez of Palmdale, California. The recipe originated with her Filipina grandmother.

FOR THE DOUGH

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE

- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Granulated sugar

FOR THE FILLING

- 3 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut
- 1/3 cup white chocolate chips



FOLD

1. Using a hand-held electric mixer, cream butter and cream cheese until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add egg, 1 cup flour, sugar, baking powder, and vanilla. Beat on low speed until combined. Gradually add remaining cup flour. Using a wooden spoon, stir until fully combined. Divide dough in half. Shape each half into a disc, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate until firm, 1 to 2 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 350°. Line baking sheets with Silpat baking mats or parchment paper.
3. Prepare the filling: Using a hand-held electric mixer, beat cream cheese and sugar until fluffy. With a wooden spoon, stir in coconut and chips. Set aside.
4. Remove one disc of dough from refrigerator. Roll on a lightly floured surface into an 8-by-13-inch rectangle about 1/8-inch thick. With a fluted cookie cutter, cut into fifteen 2 1/2-inch squares. Place on prepared baking sheets, about 1 1/2 inches apart.
5. Place 1 teaspoon filling in center of each square. Using a fluted pastry wheel, cut 1-inch slits diagonally from each corner toward the filling. Fold every other tip over to cover filling, and form a pinwheel. Press lightly to seal.
6. Whisk together egg and oil. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush tops of pinwheels with egg mixture. Sprinkle with sugar.
7. Transfer to oven, and bake until edges are golden and cookies are slightly puffed, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer baking sheet to a wire rack to cool. Let cool for 5 minutes on baking sheets before transferring cookies to wire rack. Repeat with remaining disc of dough.

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RECIPES: FOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY COOKIES
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BASIC GINGERBREAD COOKIES

MAKES ABOUT 24 SIX-INCH GINGERBREAD PEOPLE

- 6 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temp.
- 1 cup dark-brown sugar, packed
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon finely ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup unsulfured molasses
- Currants
- Royal Icing*



- *ROYAL ICING** (Makes about 2 1/2 cups)
- 2 large egg whites, or more to thin icing
 - 4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, or more to thicken icing
 - 1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temp.

Note: Raw eggs should not be used in food prepared for pregnant women, young children, or anyone whose health is compromised.

1. Beat the whites until stiff but not dry. Add sugar and lemon juice; beat for 1 minute more. If icing is too thick, add more egg whites; if it is too thin, add more sugar. The icing may be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

FOLD

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Set aside.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Mix in spices and salt, then eggs and molasses. Add flour mixture; combine on low speed. Divide dough in thirds, and wrap in plastic. Chill for at least 1 hour.
3. Heat oven to 350°. Line baking sheets with Silpats (a French nonstick baking mat). Set aside. On a lightly floured work surface, roll dough 1/8-inch thick. Cut into gingerbread people shapes. Transfer to prepared baking sheets.
4. Cut out desired decorations and place on cookies. Press currants into dough to create eyes and buttons. To create hair, roll a piece of dough into a ball and pass through a clean garlic press. Attach hair to heads. Bake until crisp, but not darkened for about 20 minutes. Let cookies cool on wire racks.
5. Decorate with royal icing.

Note: When making very large cookies, use two spatulas to transfer cutout dough to baking sheets, or roll dough directly onto the baking sheet. Press cutter into the dough, and remove the excess before taking away the cutter.

COOKIE PRESS COOKIES

MAKES 2 TO 3 DOZEN COOKIES

Rich, buttery, and made with lots of vanilla, these cookies are simple to make. Use a cookie press—a hollow tube fitted with a decorative nozzle at one end and a plunger at the other—to press the cookies directly onto the baking sheet.

1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter

1 cup sugar

2 large egg yolks

3 3/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Colored sanding sugar

1. Heat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg yolks, flour, salt, and vanilla. Mix thoroughly.

2. Fill a cookie press with the dough, and turn out cookies 1 to 2 inches apart onto an unbuttered baking sheet. Sprinkle cookies with colored sanding sugars.

3. Bake until the cookies are lightly browned, 7 to 10 minutes. To ensure even baking, rotate sheet halfway through the baking process. Transfer to a wire rack, and let cool.

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RECIPES: FESTIVE PARTY BITES

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Fondue and two quick hors d'oeuvres are ideal for a festive gathering and easy to make for a busy hostess.

You can serve any number of accompaniments with the below fondue recipes. Some good choices include cubed bread and grassini (breadsticks), steamed new potato wedges, bell-pepper strips, sliced fennel in lemon juice, blanched broccoli, peeled boiled shrimp, whole cherry or grape tomatoes, and pitted green or black olives.

CLASSIC CHEESE FONDUE

SERVES 8 TO 10

Cheese fondue is best eaten immediately, since it thickens as it cools down.

- 1 garlic clove, halved lengthwise

- 1 1/2 cups dry white wine or apple cider

- 1 1/2 pounds assorted Swiss-style cheeses, such as Gruyère, Emmentaler, and French raclette, grated (about 9 cups)

- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice (about 1 lemon)

- Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

- Freshly ground white pepper (optional)

- Assorted accompaniments for dipping

1. Rub inside of a fondue pot thoroughly with cut sides of garlic halves; discard garlic. Pour wine or cider into pot, and place over medium-low heat. When liquid starts to bubble, start adding cheese by the handful, stirring until melted and combined.

2. In a small bowl, whisk cornstarch with lemon juice until cornstarch dissolves; stir into cheese mixture. Continue whisking until mixture is smooth and bubbling slightly, about 5 minutes. Season with nutmeg and pepper, if desired.

3. Transfer fondue pot to the table, and set over a warming candle. Serve immediately with assorted accompaniments, as desired.

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RECIPES: FESTIVE PARTY BITES

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SPANISH CHORIZO FONDUE

SERVES 8 TO 10

- 1 garlic clove, halved lengthwise

- 3 ounces chorizo sausage, minced

- 1 small red bell pepper, ribs and seeds removed, minced

- 1 1/2 cups plus 2 tablespoons dry sherry or white wine

- 1 1/2 pounds assorted semifirm Spanish cheese, such as manchego, Garrotxa, Mahon, and Idiazabal, grated (about 9 cups)

- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

- Assorted accompaniments for dipping

1. Rub inside of a fondue pot thoroughly with cut sides of garlic halves; discard garlic. Place chorizo and bell pepper in pot, and place over medium heat. Cook, stirring, until pepper is tender and chorizo is crisp and browned, 8 to 10 minutes.
2. Pour 1 1/2 cups sherry into pot, and reduce heat to medium-low. When liquid starts to bubble, start adding cheese by the handful, stirring until melted and combined.
3. In a small bowl, whisk cornstarch with remaining 2 tablespoons sherry until cornstarch dissolves; stir into cheese mixture. Continue whisking until mixture is smooth and bubbling slightly, about 5 minutes.
4. Transfer fondue pot to the table, and set over a warming candle. Serve immediately with assorted accompaniments, as desired.

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HAM-AND-CHEESE TARTINES

SERVES 6

- 1/2 pound Gruyère cheese, grated on the large holes of a box grater (about 2 cups)

- 1/2 pound cream cheese

- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

- 6 slices (1/2 inch thick) sourdough bread, cut from a round loaf

- 4 ounces cooked ham, cut into 12 slices

- 3 to 4 red radishes, very thinly sliced

1. Preheat oven to 400°. In a food processor, pulse half the Gruyère cheese and all the cream cheese until smooth, about 30 seconds. Transfer mixture to a small mixing bowl. Fold in the thyme, and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.
2. Place bread on a baking sheet, and toast in center of the oven, flipping halfway through, until golden brown on both sides, about 12 minutes.
3. Spread reserved cheese mixture on each slice of toast, dividing evenly, and sprinkle with remaining Gruyère. Place 2 slices of ham on each toast. Arrange radishes on top, and serve.

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RECIPES: FESTIVE PARTY BITES

CHICKEN AND BEEF SATAY WITH PEANUT SAUCE

MAKES 40 TO 50 PIECES

To make satays, you'll need bamboo skewers; soak them in water for two to three hours so they don't burn on the grill.

- 1 1/2 pounds fillet of beef or 4 whole chicken breasts

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger

- 1 onion, cut into chunks

- 4 cloves garlic

- 1 cup low-sodium soy sauce

- 1 teaspoon sambal (Indonesian chile paste) or 1 hot red chile

- Juice of 1 lemon

- 2 tablespoons sugar

- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

- Peanut Sauce*

1. Trim fat from beef or chicken. Cut into strips about 3 inches long and 1/2 inch thick. Refrigerate until needed.

2. Combine remaining ingredients in blender, and purée until smooth. Pour over meat, and mix to coat evenly. Marinate at least 1 hour or overnight.

3. Preheat grill or grill pan until hot. Thread a piece of meat lengthwise on each skewer, and grill until done, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Baste occasionally with marinade during cooking. Serve immediately with peanut sauce.

FOLD

***PEANUT SAUCE**

MAKES 1 1/2 CUPS

Peanut sauces are common accompaniments to Thai and Indonesian dishes. Use this as a dipping sauce for Chicken and Beef Satay. Sambal is available at Asian markets.

- 1 cup smooth peanut butter

- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

- 3 tablespoons soy sauce

- 1 clove garlic

- 1 tablespoon sambal (Indonesian chile paste)

- 1 tablespoon sugar

- Fresh lemon juice

- Coconut milk or water, to thin

- 1 scallion, thinly sliced

1. In a blender or food processor, combine peanut butter, oil, soy sauce, garlic, sambal, and sugar until smooth. Add lemon juice to taste.

2. With machine running, add coconut milk or water until sauce reaches desired consistency. Garnish with scallion slices. Serve.



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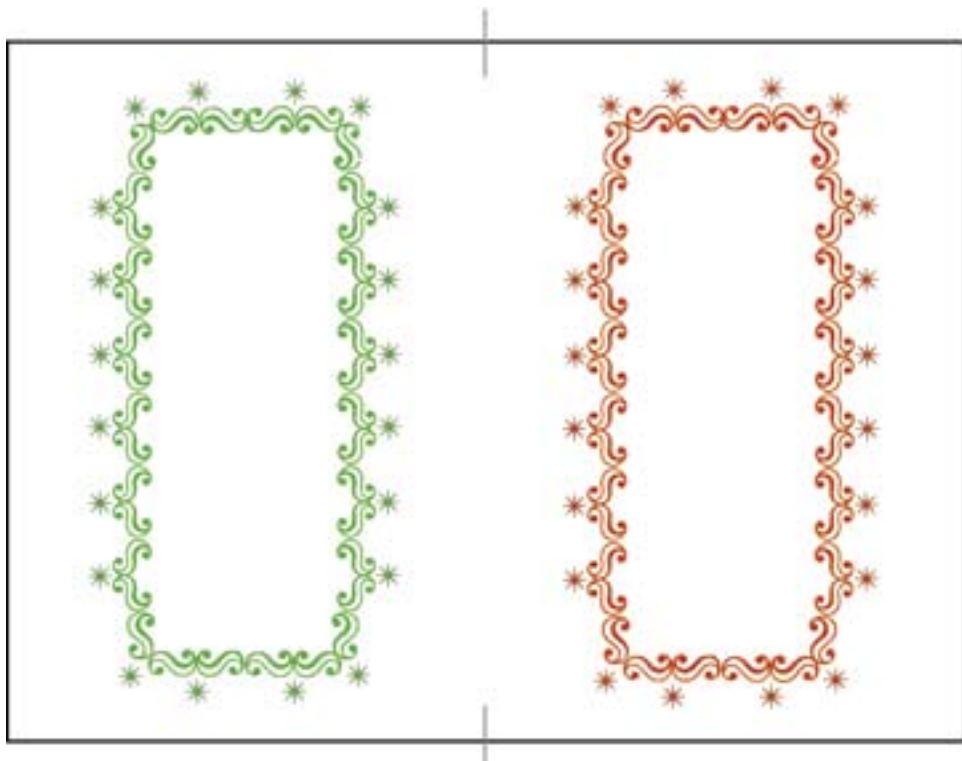
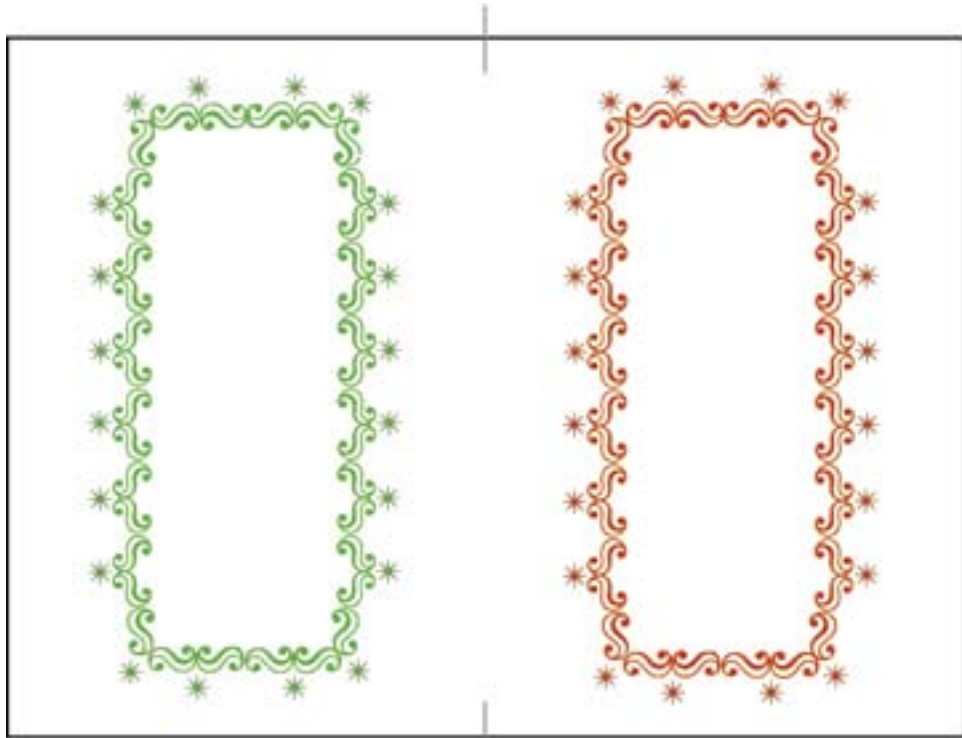
At your cookie swap, it helps to know which cookie is which. Print out the templates on the following page to make folding table cards you can set in front of each variety.



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CLIP-ART CRAFT: COOKIE DISPLAY LABELS

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DECORATING CHECKLIST



- ROYAL ICING
- SANDING SUGAR
- DRAGÉES (tiny, round hard candies)
- SPRINKLES (to add color and texture to cookies)
- COLORING AND NONPAREILS (liquid, gel and powdered food coloring add hues to icing; nonpareils provide contrast)
- WOODEN SKEWERS (for drawing with icing)
- TWEEZERS (invaluable for placing dragees and nonpareils)
- OFFSET SPATULA (perfect for spreading and smoothing out royal icing)
- ROUND TOOTHPICKS (to use in place of wooden skewers)
- PASTRY BAG (for easy handling; look for flexible and lightweight varieties)



ACTIVITY: DECORATING COOKIES



A fun activity to get everyone involved is to decorate pre-made gingerbread and sugar cookies. After everyone has completed their masterpieces, they can be sent home with a cellophane bag or plate of finished cookies—adorned with a festive ribbon.

DECORATING TECHNIQUES:

Flooding:

To coat cookie with a shade of royal icing, use a number 1, 1 1/2, or 2 tip, and hold pastry bag 1/4 inch above the cookie. Spread icing by following the outline of cookie, leaving space along the edge for spillage, then fill in outline with icing. To close empty spaces, push icing in place with clean toothpick.

Dragging:

This technique creates a marbled look by applying a second color to flooded icing. To drag, pipe small dots or lines in a contrasting color. Working quickly, use a clean toothpick or skewer to pull icing, alternating up and down lines. Wipe off applicator after each pull, and let dry thoroughly.

To create raised designs:

For a three-dimensional effect, let the flooding layer dry for at least 2 hours, then pipe icing on top of the dried icing.

Sugaring:

Grains of sanding sugar, which is used for its sparkling effect, are 4 to 6 times larger than grains of granulated sugar. To apply sanding sugar, place the cookie on waxed paper, and sprinkle sugar over the top of the cookie. Tip the cookie upside down to remove excess sugar.

To attach dragées:

These tiny, round, inedible silver decorations can be attached to icing by piping a small dot where a dragée will be placed. Position the dragée with tweezers, and let dry.

DECORATING TIPS:

- Before starting, remove your watch and jewelry.
- To prevent clogged tips, set pastry bag upright in a glass lined with damp paper towels, or insert a toothpick in tip. (Remove before piping.)
- For small cookies, use a small, fine sieve to evenly sprinkle confectioners' sugar or cocoa.
- Royal icing made with meringue powder can be made a few days in advance and stored in pastry bags. If colors separate, gently massage bags to remix.
- Store cookies in an airtight container between layers of waxed or parchment paper.

PACKAGING CHECKLIST

- TAGS AND STICKY LABELS
- RIBBONS AND TWINE
- CARDBOARD BOXES
- STURDY PAPER PLATES
- TISSUE PAPER
- BAKING PAPERS
- CELLOPHANE
- SISSORS AND HOLE PUNCH
- OTHER TRIMMINGS



 PACKAGING AND SHIPPING COOKIES

Instead of consigning your thoughtfully shaped and baked goods to an old shoe box or used coffee can, try one of the following decorative ideas for storing and presenting them.



1. Pudding molds lined with parchment make excellent vessels for soft chocolate truffles.



2. Long, lidded bread pans, swathed in bright taffeta or velvet ribbon, are the perfect container for delicate cookies like biscotti.



3. A paint box, found in art-supply stores, displays a variety of different cookies in mini cupcake liners.

4. Even clear plastic airtight containers make pretty packages when dressed up with lengths of ribbon.



5. Heavy-duty square cake pans with notched corners are perfect for securing criss-crosses of ribbon or rickrack over parchment-paper lids.

TIPS ON SENDING BAKED GOODS THROUGH THE MAIL:



Proper preparation will ensure all of your cookies arrive fresh and in tact.

- Every gift you ship should have two basic lines of defense: It should be well packed in an inner-gift box, then well packed in a second, outer gift box.
- Choose a box that is appropriate in size to the cookie tin within. This will help keep the tins from shifting and the cookies from breaking.
- The ideal cushion is 2 to 3 inches of packing material on all sides.
- Reuse or recycle packing material like boxes, Bubble Wrap, and foam peanuts (see page 16).

PACKING MATERIALS



Air-popped Popcorn:

This inexpensive and environmentally sound material creates an ideal cushion. Toss a scoop or two of popcorn (air-popped, with no oil) at the bottom of the box. Set the cookie tin on top, and surround it with more popcorn. If you like, string the popcorn on heavy thread and finish ends. The recipient will have ready-made garland for the tree.

Bubble Wrap

Line the inside of your cookie tin with two layers of Bubble Wrap, one underneath the cookies and one on top. Pack the tin in a box neatly lined with lengths of Bubble Wrap, then fold the Bubble Wrap back into the margins between the tin and box to form a double cushion.



Eco Foam:

This is the environment-friendly cousin of foam peanuts. It is a biodegradable cornstarch product that provides excellent cushioning for fragile cookies. Its only drawback is that it melts when wet, so don't use it to pack any containers that may leak.

