

Gluten-Free COOKIES

A collection of various gluten-free cookies is displayed on a silver tray. In the foreground, there are three stacks of cookies: a stack of six round, golden-brown cookies with a cracked surface; a stack of seven chocolate chip cookies with visible dark chips; and a stack of five round, pale yellow cookies. In the background, there are more cookies, including some with white frosting and dark toppings, and some that are darker in color, possibly chocolate or almond. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the silver tray and the cookies.

by Jeanne Basye

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Jeanne Basye



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I am...The Gluten-Free Cookie Lady

In our household any celebration or event was cookie time. As a child, I loved to help my mom bake cookies because I could lick the beaters, eat the dough and decorate the cookies. I always enjoyed the smell and anticipation of eating the cookies right out of the oven. Baking cookies was fun, easy and rewarding!

When I was 10 years old, I entered sugar cookies at the Woodbury County Fair in Merville, Iowa. My first solo attempt turned out cookies that fell apart. In going over the recipe with my mom, we discovered I had forgotten to add the eggs to make them stick together. That was my first lesson in following directions. My next attempt won a blue-ribbon at the fair. Since that time, I have been fascinated by the baking process and have enjoyed years of cookie baking, cookie gift-giving and cookie recipe collection.



Throughout the years, sharing freshly baked home-made cookies with family and friends has been a fun part of my life. Everyone in my family loves cookies, especially my husband, Jack. But in 2002, cookie baking as I had known it changed forever when Jack was diagnosed with dermatitis herpetiformis (a form of celiac disease) and we made the decision to become a gluten-free household (no wheat, rye, barley or cross-contaminated oats) to combat his disease. My emphasis became gluten-free.

I started searching for gluten-free cookies but found most of the store-bought ones dry, tasteless and expensive. At the same time, we joined a celiac support group and discovered someone was starting a Gluten-Free Cooking School. I signed up for classes and soon was experimenting and creating gluten-free cookie recipes. I would bake gluten-free cookies and bring them to the cooking class for class members to taste and evaluate. Each time their reactions were overwhelmingly positive. Class attendees requested my recipes and always wanted to take any leftover cookies home. Encouraged, I was challenged to create more gluten-free cookies.

By 2003, I had formulated my own nutritious gluten-free flour mixture. I was asked to teach cookie classes at the Gluten-Free Cooking Club/School and write a cookie column for their newsletter. Renewed vigor and commitment came in 2005, when all three of my adult step-children, Matt, Jason and Morgenne, were diagnosed with celiac disease. My mission became more personal and meaningful. Gluten-free cookies became my passion.

Being retired, I had the time, desire and motivation to create the best gluten-free cookies, and that was my goal. I turned my kitchen into a gluten-free laboratory and found many of my neighbors, friends and even strangers (over 200 people) to be willing cookie taste testers and evaluators. Each morning, neighbors lined up at my door asking what new gluten-free cookie I was creating that day! I became “The Gluten-Free Cookie Lady.” They couldn’t believe these cookies were gluten-free because they tasted as good as or better than “regular” cookies. Requests for my cookie recipes increased and inquiries for a gluten-free cookie cookbook began.

So I embarked on the greatest cookie adventure of all: to write this gluten-free cookie cookbook and share my recipes with you. All of my 150 cookie creations were evaluated for taste, texture and appearance. The best were labeled keepers and considered for my cookbook. Besides the “best of the best” cookies recipes and embellishments, I am sharing tips and information I learned along the way that will make your baking experience easier, more rewarding and earn you cookie kudos.

Gluten-free cookies are the sweetest gift there is. I hope you have FUN baking my gluten-free cookies and enjoy sharing them with others. With a little effort, you’ll receive big rewards. May your cookie jar always be full!

Jeanne Basye, The Gluten-Free Cookie Lady

For those unfamiliar with Celiac Disease, here is a short introduction. For more information, see Resources on page 159.

According to Peter Green, M.D., and other recognized medical leaders in the field, celiac disease is a genetic, autoimmune disorder affecting children and adults. Those with celiac disease (CD) cannot eat foods that contain gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, rye and their derivatives. In people with CD, gluten triggers an autoimmune response and the body attacks itself, destroying healthy tissue, such as intestinal tissue. This, in turn, interferes with the small intestine’s ability to absorb nutrients from food, which may lead to malnutrition and a host of other complications.

There are no drugs to treat celiac disease and there is no cure. The only effective treatment, according to medical experts in the field and national celiac support organizations, is a lifelong commitment to a strict gluten-free diet. This means avoiding all forms of **wheat** (including bulgur, couscous, durum, einkorn, emmer, faro, graham, kamut, matza, matzo, matzah, seitan, semolina, and spelt also called dinkie) and related grains: **barley, rye and triticale**. Current research has shown that most people who are gluten-free can consume oats that have not been cross-contaminated with the forbidden grains. Consuming gluten-free oats (also called pure, uncontaminated oats) is a personal decision. **Note:** Gluten-Free always means wheat-free. However, products labeled Wheat-Free are not necessarily gluten-free. They may contain other forbidden grains. Always read labels.

Cookie-Baking FUNdamentals

What makes a great gluten-free cookie? First you must start with wonderful cookie recipes (you already have them in this cookbook!). Then you must understand gluten-free cookie baking FUNdamentals. After that, you can bake award-winning gluten-free cookies that everyone will rave about and love to eat.

Look inside and find the essential cookie-baking FUNdamentals.

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Chocolate-Lover Cookies

Calling all chocolate fans: white and milk chocolate, bittersweet, semisweet and unsweetened chocolate await you. As chocolate lovers attest, you can never get too much chocolate. Chocolate aficionado testers loved Triple Chocolate Macadamia and White Chocolate-Macadamia. They said both belong in the Cookie Gourmet Hall of Fame.

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Top: Double Chocolate Delights (p. 57)

Middle: Chocolate Roloz (p. 54)

Bottom: White Chocolate-Macadamia (p. 59), Triple Chocolate Bliss (p. 58)

Napkin: Chocolate Crème-Filled Miniwiches (p. 51)

Chocolate Know-How:

Not all chocolate or chocolate chips are created equal. It's the quality of the chocolate that determines the difference between a good and a great chocolate cookie. To assess a chocolate's quality, read the label and look for a high cocoa-solid content, the best chocolate contains 50 percent or more.

Well-known domestic brands include Baker's, Ghirardelli, Guittard and Scharffen Berger. Premium imported chocolate, such as Callebaut (from Belgium), El Rey (from Venezuela), Lindt (from Switzerland), and Valrhona (from France) are now widely available in supermarkets or specialty stores. Bake with the chocolate that tastes best to you. Price and personal preference will dictate which chocolate to use.

Unsweetened cocoa powder is made from ground roasted cocoa beans. It is pure with no added ingredients. Two types of cocoa powder used in baking are **natural** such as Hershey's and **Dutch-processed** such as Droste. Natural cocoa powder is acidic and has a strong full-bodied, more chocolate flavor. Dutch-processed cocoa has been treated with an alkaline solution to reduce the natural acidity. It is darker in color and has a milder more delicate flavor. Do not substitute an instant cocoa mix which is filled with sugar and other ingredients.

Unsweetened chocolate is made from pure chocolate liquor, about 45 to 47 percent, and must contain 53 to 55 percent cocoa butter. It has healthy antioxidant properties but has a bitter taste and relies on sweeteners in the recipe to make it palatable. Wrapped individually in 1-oz. squares, it is available in 8-oz. boxes. Do not substitute semisweet or bittersweet for unsweetened chocolate.

Bittersweet and semisweet have sugar, lecithin (a natural soybean product), and vanilla added. These products must contain at least 27 percent cocoa butter. Bittersweet must have at least 35 percent chocolate liquor; while semisweet has 15 to 35 percent chocolate liquor. Bittersweet and semisweet chocolate are interchangeable in recipes and may be found individually wrapped in 1-oz. squares or chips.

Milk chocolate is sweetened chocolate to which dry milk powder, sugar and vanilla have been added. It must contain at least 10 percent chocolate liquor and minimum of 12 percent milk solids.

White chocolate is not considered "real" chocolate because it contains no chocolate liquor. It is made of sugar, cocoa butter, milk solids, lecithin and vanilla. Quality white chocolate has a creamy color, contains high cocoa butter content and no vegetable shortening. Read the label and check the ingredients for the words "cocoa butter" listed as the second ingredient, if not listed, don't purchase. Imitation white chocolate is made with vegetable oil instead of cocoa butter and has a waxy, inferior flavor. It will not perform the same as a product with cocoa butter.

To store chocolate: Keep chocolate in a cool (ideal temperature between 65 and 70°) dark place away from heat, light and moisture. Well wrapped and stored properly, unsweetened, bittersweet and semisweet chocolate keep up to 18 months. A dusty white coating called "bloom" may appear on chocolate during storage. There is nothing wrong with the chocolate except its appearance.

Milk and white chocolate, due to their high milk contents, have a much shorter shelf life and can go rancid easily. Use milk chocolate within 6 months and white chocolate within 4 months of purchase.

For Best Results:

- Read entire recipe to ensure necessary ingredients and equipment are on hand or if any advance procedure needs to be done.
- Have **all** ingredients at room temperature. Use quality ingredients.
- Preheat the oven at least 15 minutes. Keep ovenproof thermometer inside oven to ensure accurate temperature.
- Measure accurately and mix according to directions. Scrape bowl often to ensure homogenous dough.
- Use spring-release cookie scoop for uniform size that bakes evenly and at same time.
- Bake one cookie sheet at a time on the middle rack of the oven. Use quality cookie sheets.
- Check cookies at the minimum baking time; continue baking, if necessary, in one-minute intervals. Every oven bakes a little differently. Bake one "test" cookie to gauge baking time in your oven. Better to underbake than overbake.

Chocolate Chip Pralines

These cookies warrant star billing in a whole repertoire of chocolate chip recipes your family will relish. You'll need to make praline pecans ahead of time before making this cookie recipe.

2¼ cups The GF Cookie Lady's Flour (page 4)
1¼ teaspoons xanthan gum
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1½ cups coarsely chopped praline pecans (page 128)

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
2. Sift flour, xanthan gum, baking soda and salt in bowl; stir. Set aside.
3. Beat butter, brown sugar and vanilla in large mixer bowl on medium speed until creamy, about 4 minutes. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in chocolate chips and nuts.
4. Measure dough in 2 tablespoon portions; drop 3 inches apart on prepared sheet. With hand, slightly flatten dough to ½-inch thickness.
5. Bake **11 to 13 minutes** or until light golden brown. Cool 4 minutes on cookie sheet then transfer to wire rack to cool completely.
6. Store in airtight container up to 2 days or freeze up to 2 months.

Makes 2½ dozen (2½-inch) cookies

Cookie Tips:



Praline pecans make wonderful hostess gifts—wrapped in cellophane bag with a colorful ribbon.



For convenience, find praline pecans in supermarkets. Read labels.



Variation:



Replace praline pecans and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract with Maple Nuts (page 128) and 1 teaspoon maple extract. Yummy!