

WHAT??? NO CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES!

NINETEENTH CENTURY COOKIES and MODERN and PERIOD RECEIPTS

Virginia Mescher

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The word “cookie” was brought to America by the early Dutch settlers and originated from the word, *keokje*, meaning “little cake.” The spelling was eventually changed to “cooky” or “cookie.” Treats, such as cookies and cakes, were commonly taken on picnics or included, by loved ones, in soldiers’ boxes. It is easy to incorporate them into a civilian or military impression. Since cookies are a more easily transported and a more versatile item than whole cakes, they are a great snack or dessert to take to events. Knowing what kind of cookies are correct for the civil war period may present a problem and it just as important to bring correct food to an event as it is to have correct gear or clothing.

Modern cookie favorites are chocolate chip, peanut butter and oatmeal, but none of these types of cookies are correct for the civil war period. The chocolate chip cookie was developed in 1930 by Ruth Wakefield, owner of the Toll House Inn, located in Whitman, Massachusetts. She was making a butter cookie, and as a variation on her plain Do Drop batter recipe, she added chopped chunks of chocolate to the batter, thus the chocolate chip cookie was born. Up until 1899, chopped peanuts had been used as an alternative to other nuts in cookies but peanut butter was not an ingredient in period cookies. A peanut cookie was included in Eliza Leslie’s cookbook in 1837 but it was a variation of her coconut maccaroons [sic] and peanuts were used as a substitute for cocoanut [sic]. The base was beaten egg whites and sugar and the cocoanut or peanuts were blended into the egg white mixture and then baked. The first cookie recipe, that used something similar to peanut butter, appeared in the 1899 book, *Guide for Nut Cookery*, and peanut cream (a mixture of finely ground peanuts thinned with boiling water) was used rather than peanut butter. Period recipes in which oatmeal was an ingredient were oat cakes, gruel, porridge, or raised [yeast risen] gems (muffins) but there were no recipes for oatmeal cookies. The earliest cookie recipe using oatmeal as a main ingredient was found in a circa 1930s cookbook and the famous Quaker Oats oatmeal cookie recipe did not appear until 1955.

There are numerous varieties cookies that are correct for the time period and may be taken to an event instead of modern standbys. Some of the cookies listed in period cookbooks were: shortbread, almond maccaroons, lemon maccarrons, cocoanut maccaroons, apees (a caraway seed flavored cookie), kisses (meringues), New York cookies (a butter cookie), sugar biscuits (biscuit is an British term for cookies), jumbles (ring shaped sugar cookies), hard gingerbread (ginger and spice flavored sticks), gingerbread nuts (small round ginger cookies), chocolate puffs (chocolate meringues), soft tea cakes (a soft sugar cookie), nun’s puffs (cream puffs), vanities or

wonders (deep-fried egg/flour based cookie), kringles (a thick, short, sweet egg biscuit), and cracknels (a spiced parboiled and baked cookie, or a sugar cookie).

If one doesn't have access to period recipes or don't care to use a period recipe, there are plenty of modern cookie recipes that may be used. A plain sugar cookie is perfect and modern recipes for shortbread; meringues; plain or lemon sugar cookies; or spice, molasses or ginger cookies are just a few suggestions. Most of the above recipes are included in all purpose cookbooks.

Below are several modern versions of cookies that are my adaptations of similar period cookie receipts found in mid-19th century cookbooks. If you would like to experiment using the original receipt, below each of the modern recipes is a similar one from a period cookbook. Each period receipt is referenced with the source.

MODERN AND PERIOD COOKIE RECEIPTS

Apees (A lightly spiced sugar cookie containing caraway seeds, which were a favorite flavor ingredient that was often added to cakes and cookies. These were called "seed cakes" or "seed cookies")

1 tablespoon caraway seeds
1 cup butter or margarine
2 cups flour
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/3 cup milk

Bruise the caraway seeds and soak them in the milk while preparing the recipe. Cut the butter into the flour (as you would for a pie crust) until the butter is in small pieces. Add the sugar and spices and stir. Add the milk/caraway seed mixture to the flour mixture and mix well. Divide the dough in half and roll out each half on a floured surface to a 1/4" thickness. Cut with a cookie cutter and place shapes on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375° for 10 to 12 minutes. Cool on a rack.

From *Directions for Cooking* by Miss Leslie

"Apees. — Rub a pound of fresh butter into two pounds of sifted flour, and mix in a pound of powdered sugar, a grated nutmeg, a table-spoonful of powdered cinnamon, and four large table-spoonfuls of caraway [sic] seeds. Add a wine glass of rose water, and mix the whole with sufficient cold water to make a stiff dough. Roll it out into a large sheet about a third of an inch in thickness, and cut it into round cakes with a tin cutter or with the edge of a tumbler. Lay them on buttered pans, and bake them in a quick oven (rather hotter at the bottom than at the top,) till they are of a very pale brown."

Macaroons (a cross between a meringue cookie or “kiss” and moist macaroon) These cookies do not stay crisp and dry in a humid environment as they tend to absorb moisture become sticky.

3 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup sugar
1 tablespoon flour (this helps hold the cookie together, but may be left out)
2 cups finely chopped nuts (peanuts, pecans, walnuts) or flaked coconut

Beat egg whites and cream of tartar to the soft peak stage. Slowly add the sugar until stiff peaks form. Fold in the nuts and flour. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and drop the mixture in rounded teaspoons. Bake at 400° for 5 to 7 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool slightly before removing from the cookie sheet and cool on a wire rack.

From *Mrs. Hale's New Cook Book* by Sarah Hale

“*Macaroons*. — Pound well in a mortar with the white of an egg half a pound of sweet almonds blanched, with a few bitter ones also blanched. Beat to a froth the whites of 4 eggs, and mix them with 2 lbs. of sugar. Mix all together, and drop them on paper placed on a tin. A half hour in a gentle oven bakes them.

Obs. — Cocoa [coconut] Macaroons may be made by substituting grated cocoa-nut for pounded almonds.”

Sugar Cookies or Tea Cakes (a family recipe given to me by my great-aunt)

2 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon soda
1 1/4 stick of butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine the dry ingredients. Cream the butter and sugars until smooth. Add the egg and vanilla and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the butter/sugar/egg mixture and mix until combined. Roll the dough in tablespoon sized balls and place on a cookie sheet. Flatten the balls with the bottom of a glass dipped in sugar. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cool on a rack.

Option: This dough may also be made in rings for jumbles. Instead of rolling the dough into balls, make a 4 inch long pencil shape, flatten to form a strip, and join the ends of each strip into a ring, sprinkle with sugar. and bake.

From *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt-Book* by Catherine Beecher

“*Cookies (plain)*.”

Two cups sugar.

One cup of butter, worked into the sugar.

One cup milk.

Two eggs.

A small teaspoonful of pearlash, dissolved in a little hot water.

Flour sufficient to roll.

The dough should be well kneaded before it is rolled into sheets.”

Shortbread (an old recipe from Scotland)

4 cups flour

1 cup superfine sugar (if superfine sugar is not available, whirl 1 cup of granulated sugar in the blender or food processor for a pulse or two.)

3 tablespoon cornstarch

1 pound butter, cut into pieces (butter must be used for the desired flavor)

Do not preheat the oven. Place the dry ingredients in a large bowl and add butter. Cut butter into the flour by hand or use a heavy mixer. The dough should be crumbly. Place the dough in a 11 x 17 inch pan and press it evenly in the pan. Using a fork, put holes in the surface of the dough to prevent it from bubbling. Bake at 300° for about 30 minutes until the dough is barely brown around the edges. Cut into bars or any other desired shape. Allow to cool in the pan and then remove.

From *Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book*

“*Scotch Cake*. — Take a pound of fresh butter, a pound of powdered white sugar, and two pounds of sifted flour. Mix the sugar with the flour, and rub the butter into it, crumbled fine. Add a heaped teaspoonful of mixed nutmeg and cinnamon. Put *no water*, but moisten it entirely with butter. A small glass of brandy is an improvement. Roll it out into a large thick sheet, and cut it into round cakes about the size of saucers. Bake them on flat tins, slightly buttered. This cake is very crumbly, but very good, and of Scottish origin. It keeps well, and is often sent from thence, packed in boxes.

Ginger Cookies (a favorite of our family, given to me by my eldest son's godmother)

3/4 cup shortening (shortening works better than either butter or margarine)
1 cup sugar
1 egg, beaten
4 tablespoons molasses (for a lighter flavor, honey or golden syrup may be used)
2 teaspoon soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
2 cups flour
Additional sugar for rolling

Cream the shortening, sugar, egg and molasses. Combine the dry ingredients and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture and mix well. Form the dough into small balls and roll them in additional sugar. Place the balls on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 350° for 7-10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. The cookies will flatten and the surface will have a cracked appearance.

From *The Housekeeper's Encyclopedia* by Mrs. E. F. Haskell

“Gingersnaps. — One-fourth of a pound of butter, and the same of lard, mixed in a quarter a pound of brown sugar, a pint of West India molasses, ginger according to its strength, and cinnamon according to taste; add one quart of flour, two teaspoons of soda, dissolved in a wine-glass of milk and flour, to enable you to roll it thin. Bake in a moderate oven.”

TRANSPORTING AND SERVING THE COOKIES

Now that the cookies are baked, the problem arises as to how to transport them to an event and have them remain in one piece and fresh. If it is just a one day event, they may be just placed on a plate and covered with a linen napkin. Wax paper, such as we have today, was not available in the 1860s. For transporting smaller amounts of cookies, wrap them in plain white paper (the larger sized ledger, 11 ½ x 17 inches, is the most practical] and tie the packets shut with string. If you are taking a larger number of cookies, line a simple wooden pantry box (similar to Shaker boxes) with a cotton or linen towel (a plain towel, not a terry towel) and place the cookies in the box. This will not completely keep the humidity away from the cookies, but in most circumstances it will keep them fresh for the weekend. In the book, *The American Home Cook Book*, a round tin cake box is pictured and the caption reads, “The Japanned Tin Boxes keep cake, bread, &c., perfectly fresh without the undesirable moisture of the stone jar.” An original or reproduction period tin box would be ideal but is not always available or affordable. If one does not have wooden pantry box or appropriate tin container, paint the outside of a modern tin box semi-gloss or glossy black so that it resembles a japanned box. There are some noticeable differences in period and modern tin boxes (such as the rolled edge of the lid and the slightly indented bottom of the modern boxes), but for most people this is a practical solution and much better than pulling out a plastic container or plastic bags. As mentioned above, stoneware crocks were used for storing baked goods, but were not ideal; they are heavy to transport and may break. The cookies may be served either from the pantry or tin box or a portion placed on a china plate. To keep the flies away, just cover the plate with a napkin or towel. Wire dish covers were used to protect the food from flies and dust, but finding a correct reproduction one is fairly difficult.



Japanned Tin Box

Since refreshing beverages are great companions for cookies, please refer to the archived article that was published in May/June, 2003 in *Virginia's Veranda*.

If you would like to study and prepare more period cookie recipes, we sell several facsimile cookbooks, on our webpage, that contain a number of other cookie recipes. The books are: *Mrs. Hill's New Cook* by Mrs. A. P. Hill, *Book, Beadle's Dime Cook Book* by Mrs. Victor, and *Seventy-Five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes, and Sweetmeats* by Miss Leslie. Click on the *Facsimile 19th Century Books* link and scroll down to the appropriate book.

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