

Tips of the Trade: Baking Cookies

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If anyone knows their way around a cookie sheet it's Mrs. Fields baking expert, Rachel Matheus (the beloved cookie company has six Arizona locations). Here, we picked her brain about holiday cookie baking.



Are there certain cookies that are a big hit during the holidays?

The Cranberry White Chunk, which happens to be our most popular holiday cookie, puts a new twist on an everyday classic. Essentially, rather than including raisins in our oatmeal cookie, we use dried cranberries and add white chocolate chunks, to give them a seasonal look and taste. We love gingersnaps for our holiday season as well.

Are there certain cookies that are overdone during the holidays?

As a lover of cookies, I never get tired of them. However, if you want to do something different with your old favorites, try adding a different nut, like macadamia nuts in a chocolate chip cookie, or dip your sugar cookies in a sanding sugar or cinnamon sugar instead of frosting them.

What are some other fun ingredients to try this season?

Be creative. When doing holiday sugar cookies, I really like to use unexpected things like chocolate chips, licorice whips, Gummi Bears and fruit snacks to decorate. Don't be afraid to mix flavors - add some Red Hots to chocolate chip cookies for a hint of cinnamon or a little orange or lemon zest to a white chocolate chip cookie.

Do you have any cookie baking tricks to share?

- Refrigerate your dough 30 to 45 minutes before you bake; you will get a more even bake on your cookies when the dough is all the same temperature.
- Use cold butter and room temperature eggs - they make the texture better and help you get a nice crisp edge and a soft center.
- Measure your cookies with an ice cream scoop - that keeps them even in size and you won't get one that is doughy and one that is overbaked.
- If your cookies get left in the oven too long, transfer them immediately to a cool surface. This will stop the bake and keep the pan from overbaking them even more.

Any tips regarding shipping cookies?

Seal them up as airtight as possible before you ship, which will keep them fresh longer. You can also add a piece of bread in with them, which will help keep them soft longer (you can also use this trick to soften cookies that have become hard). If you don't have packing peanuts to fill in the box, popcorn makes a great packing material; it is lightweight and protects your cookies.