



Cookie Break

Every holiday season, bakery owner Agnes Hsu invites her friends to a new kind of cookie swap, where each treat comes with a recipe—and a charity—attached.

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STYLING LEIGH NOË

holiday | celebration

“Cookies are the great American dessert,” says Agnes Hsu. As owner of the Teacake Bakeshops in California, she specializes in making perfectly delicious little sweets for her loyal patrons. But when the holidays roll around, she invites her friends to share their favorite cookies—each representing a charity—and vote with cash for a winner.



Cookie cards

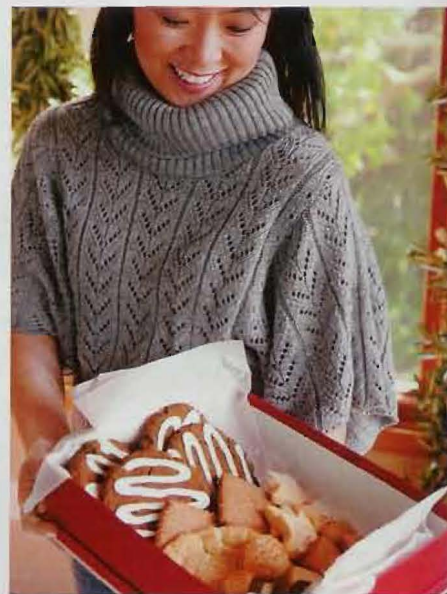
The handmade invitations, *left*, come with a tiny cookie cutter tucked inside a pocket made of fun striped paper. Agnes ties two flat cards with details together with red-and-white twine and tucks them in an inexpensive red box.

Label maker

Every cookie station, *above*, has a simple tag, stamped with a number, so voters can keep track of which cookie is which.

Take out

After the guests have tasted the cookies and enjoyed pink champagne punch, they circle the table and choose cookies to take home in decorative boxes lined with parchment paper, *below*.



“We do a lot of philanthropic work at Teacake Bakeshop, and I love making that a part of the festivities here, too.” Agnes Hsu

Voting booth

The voting station is a stretched canvas (available at art supply stores) covered in holiday paper and glued-on envelopes. Each partygoer votes for her favorite cookie with cash. The winner then donates all the money to her charity of choice.





Chocolate Mint Sandwich Cookies

PREP 35 min. BAKE 10 min. per batch CHILL 1 hr. OVEN 350°F

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/3 cups unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tsp. espresso powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 cups butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- Peppermint Cream Filling, below

1. In a large bowl, stir together flour, cocoa powder, espresso powder, and salt; set aside.
2. In a very large mixing bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar. Beat until combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in eggs until combined. Beat in as much of the flour mixture as you can with the mixer. Using a wooden spoon, stir in any remaining flour mixture. Divide dough in half. If necessary, cover and chill for 1 to 2 hours or until dough is easy to handle.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll half of the dough at a time until 1/4 inch thick. Using a 2 1/2-inch round cookie cutter, cut out dough. Place 1 inch apart on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are firm. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool. Fill cookies with Peppermint Cream Filling. Chill for at least 1 hour before serving. Store in the refrigerator up to 3 days. Makes about 24 sandwich cookies.

Peppermint Cream Filling: In a large bowl, beat 1 cup softened butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed until fluffy. Add 2 teaspoons vanilla and 2 teaspoons peppermint extract. Beat in 2 1/2 cups powdered sugar. Beat in 2 tablespoons milk. Beat in another 2 1/2 cups powdered sugar until smooth. Tint with green food coloring, if desired. If necessary, beat in additional milk to make spreading consistency. Makes about 2 2/3 cups. ■

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