

The secret is out: DoubleTree's chocolate chip cookies

By Rick Nelson

Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Some hotels use frequent-guest points programs to foster customer loyalty.

The DoubleTree chain, a part of the Hilton universe, obviously believes in following a more instant gratification route by offering free chocolate chip cookies to its guests.

The numbers speak to the program's popularity. The company says that it serves more than 30 million cookies a year at its 500-plus properties around the world. That averages out to about 165 cookies a day per hotel, every day.

Good news: For the first time, DoubleTree is sharing its popular recipe.

"We know this is an anxious time for everyone," said DoubleTree Senior Vice President Shawn McAteer in a statement.

"A warm chocolate chip cookie can't solve everything, but it can bring a moment of comfort and happiness. We hope families enjoy the fun of baking together during their time at home, and we look forward to welcoming all our guests with a warm DoubleTree cookie when travel resumes," McAteer said.

DoubleTree isn't the only major company to recently reveal its culinary secrets. Chipotle shared its guacamole recipe and Ikea released instructions for its famous Swedish meatballs.

The DoubleTree cookie differs from its classic Toll House chocolate chip cookie counterpart in several key aspects.

For starters, it really packs in the chocolate and the nuts, in noticeably greater volumes.

Slightly larger amounts of granulated sugar and vanilla extract also set it apart; what cookie isn't improved by more vanilla extract?

Rolled oats give this cookie added heft, although the



Rick Nelson/Minneapolis StarTribune-TNS

DoubleTree signature cookies.

inclusion of small amounts of lemon juice and ground cinnamon don't seem to contribute much. There's also a lower oven temperature and a longer baking time.

(That the recipe includes instructions on freezing and thawing indicates that the hotel relies upon the ease of pre-made dough — a kind of Cookies on Demand program — which means that you can, too. I know I'll keep a stash of this dough in my freezer.)

All the tweaks add up to a winning formula. Bake it, you'll like it.

And there's more

Interested in other appealing chocolate chip cookie recipes? We're here for you.

Several years ago, I conducted a bake-a-thon that eventually narrowed to five alternatives to the Toll House ritual.

The best, from the New York Times, relies upon a mix of cake flour and bread flour, a serious investment in bittersweet chocolate and a 24- to 36-hour refrigeration period; the results are exceptional and worth the additional effort. Find the recipe at strib.mn/1DG8DCa.

Four others from the case study also have their merits. They stand out, in part, because they also invoke out-of-the-box ingredients, including almond flour, milk chocolate, toasted pecans, cold butter, dark brown sugar and corn syrup. Find them at strib.mn/1CZxlij.

A few years ago, local baking blogger and cookbook author Sarah Kieffer made headlines with her flattened, wrinkled twist on the standard chocolate chip cookie, published in her "The Vanilla Bean Baking Book." Find the story — and the terrific recipe at strib.mn/2yfvvPO.

An urban myth

Finally, the release of this DoubleTree recipe recalls a similar corporate reveal, years ago, when Neiman Marcus shared the formula for its famous chocolate chip cookies in response to incorrect reports that the restaurant charged for the recipe.

It's an outstanding cookie, and a great story that existed even in the early 1980s when Taste readers would send outraged letters about this recipe to the staff.

"Our chocolate chip cookie is

the subject of a classic 'urban myth?'" writes chef John Garvin in "Neiman Marcus Cookbook."

"Honestly, no one at Neiman Marcus has ever, ever, charged for this recipe. My very first week on the job, I received a letter complaining about someone who knew someone who had been charged for the cookie recipe.

"I took the note to our public relations department and asked about it. I was quickly brought up to speed about the infamous hoax regarding our chocolate chip cookie recipe. It had started years ago as a kind of chain letter sent through the mail that circulated around the world," wrote Garvin.

"I was assured that the rumor had been squelched, but back in the mid-1990s, the internet was opening up in a big way. Everyone was getting online, it seemed, and we witnessed this urban myth traveling the world again through cyberspace!

"I suggested we come up with a real recipe for chocolate chip cookies, and after extensive testing and tasting, this is the result. Next, we published it on the Neiman Marcus website for all to have for free.

"So now, if the subject comes up, you'll know the inside scoop — and own the authentic recipe. And, by the way, it is a chocolate chip cookie without rival."

DOUBLETREE SIGNATURE COOKIES

Makes about 2 dozen cookies.

Note: Unbaked dough, formed into balls made from 3 tablespoons of dough, can be frozen, and there's no need to thaw the dough before baking. From DoubleTree by Hilton.

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, at

room temperature

¾ cup plus 1 tbsp.

granulated sugar

¾ cup packed light

brown sugar

2 eggs

1¼ teaspoons vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon freshly

squeezed lemon juice

2¼ cups flour

½ cup rolled oats

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

Pinch ground cinnamon

2 2/3 cups semisweet

chocolate chips

1¼ cups chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 300 degrees and line baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a bowl of an electric mixer on medium speed, cream butter, granulated sugar and brown sugar for about 2 minutes.

Reduce speed to low, add eggs, vanilla extract and lemon juice, and blend for 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium and mix until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as necessary.

Reduce speed to low, add flour, oats, baking soda, salt and cinnamon, blending for about 45 seconds. Do not overmix. Stir in chocolate chips and walnuts.

Portion dough with a scoop (about 3 tablespoons) and place 2 inches apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake until edges are golden brown and center is still soft, about 20 to 23 minutes. Remove from oven and cool cookies on baking sheets for about 1 hour.

NEIMAN MARCUS CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes about 2 dozen cookies.

Note: This dough must be prepared in advance. Instant espresso powder, such as the

Medaglia D'Oro brand, can be found in the coffee aisle of most supermarkets. From "Neiman Marcus Cookbook" (Clarkson Potter, \$45).

1¼ cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup packed light brown sugar
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 egg
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1½ cups (or more) chocolate chips or coarsely chopped chocolate
1½ teaspoons instant espresso powder

Preheat oven to 300 degrees and line baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking soda and baking powder, and reserve.

In a large bowl of an electric mixer on medium speed, beat butter until creamy, about 30 seconds. Add brown sugar and granulated sugar and beat until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add egg and vanilla extract and mix until thoroughly combined. Reduce speed to low, add flour mixture to butter-sugar mixture and mix until just combined. Stir in chocolate chips and instant espresso powder. Using a 2-tablespoon scoop, drop dough 3 inches apart onto prepared baking sheets and lightly press down on dough to spread the dough into 2-inch circles (there should be room for six or eight cookies at a time). Bake until cookies are nicely browned around edges, about 20 minutes (bake a little longer for crisper cookies). Remove from oven, cool cookies on baking sheets for 2 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.



Submitted photo

Ghost signs on the Foley Building including ads for Eddy's bread and Rainier beer.

FOLEY

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However, through the years this building has served as a location for apartments, meeting rooms, small businesses, medical offices and even a small hospital. For a short time during the early years, J.E.'s two sons ran the Foley Bros. Cigar Store selling a "high class line of clear Havana cigars," five for 50 cents. The Foley

Building at 1011 Adams/206 Chestnut is the only one

of the three buildings still standing.

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J.E. Foley was one of the major contributing citizens of La Grande. He and his wife, Mary, had three children: Jerome, Patrick and Henrietta. He was elected mayor in 1904 and later served as city manager. He retired in December 1916 and died in 1922.

There are three ghost signs on the Foley Building, showing both types of advertising — a local business sign appears at the top of the north (alley) side.

A "privilege sign" is located on the upper back corner of the west side of the building. This ghost sign is a combination of two ads — one for Eddy's bread and one for Rainier beer.

Eddy's bread was established some time in the 1920s

by J.E. "Eddy" O'Connell. Eddy was born in Iowa in 1886 and moved to Helena, Montana, at age 18 to work in a hotel. In 1909 he purchased a cafe and started baking bread for his customers. By 1919 he was solely focusing on bread and bakeries and he built up a business which he sold to General Baking Co. in 1950.

Seattle Brewery launched Rainier beer in 1878 and produced it in Washington until Prohibition in 1920. It was later picked up by other breweries and continues to be brewed today. The style of the ad, saying "It's Smoother," is that of the ones used as early as 1907 but was also used later.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

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