



Katie Ranck and Peggy Good break apart and taste test festive chocolate bark (see recipe in article).



From left Bonnie Ranck and Pat Redmond ready cookies for a busy oven.



Three generations gather to bake and exchange cookies. From left are Esta Hake, Sue Nelson, Lorraine Nissley, Curtis Kunjappu, Pat Redmond, Robin Shoff, Peggy Good, and Bonnie Ranck.



Pat and Peg share a laugh as they work on packaging cookies.

## What's Christmas Without Cookies?

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Sections Staff

LEOLA (Lancaster Co.) —  
*Cookies, cookies everywhere.  
Baked for fun, made to share  
Home-baked cookies —  
Cookies by the pound  
A better way has not been  
found*

*To make these confections  
Favorite Christmas treats  
Than to make them together  
Celebrating good eats!  
There must be lots of choco-  
late*

*(The kinds are limitless!)  
Chocolate crinkles, chocolate  
chips, or garnished with a  
Hershey's kiss.  
There are other favorites,  
(date balls are always  
around)*

*Along with sand tarts,  
The varieties abound.  
So put on your apron  
Or don your chef's hat.  
It's time to bake cookies  
That's where the Christmas  
spirit's at!*

Everyone wants to make the most of the holidays, however with church programs, trips to shopping malls, office parties, or family get-togethers, you may find yourself "dashing through the snow" and wondering where the spirit of Christmas has gone.

To enjoy the season and be productive at the same time, several generations of the Nissley family have been combining forces and doing a cookie bake and exchange for many years.

The annual event allows them to not only get an abundance of cookies, but also time to enjoy being together over the holidays.

"Even if I lived in California I would come home for the cookie bake," said Pat Redmond.

Family members take turns hosting the day. Sisters, aunts, mothers, daughters, and cousins come to cookie bake day, anticipating a day of laughter, catching up, and of course eating warm cookies right from the oven. Everyone brings one, two, or even three kinds of cookies, bars, or bread loaves to share. Although most of the confections are already baked, the time together would not be the same without lots of cookies being made throughout the day.

This year about 70 dozen cookies were distributed between the bakers. Even though the number is substantial, the cookies are used as gifts for coworkers, teachers, bus drivers, and friends, served at holiday parties, or sent to far-off relatives, so they are quickly eaten by eager taste-testers.

This year peanut blossoms, pecan tussies, chocolate crinkles, festive chocolate bark, blueberry and cranberry bread, double chocolate snowquakes, toffee bars, molasses drops, peanut butter temptations, dateballs, chinese chews, and chocolate chip, cream cheese, and cherry icebox cookies were baked and exchanged.

Although some of the same cookie selections show up each year, the bakers also try new varieties and exchange recipes.

Whether or not you bake cookies by yourself or with others, here are a few hints and tips to make holiday baking fun. Although it's too late for this year's pre-Christmas baking, clip this article for reference for next year's baking marathon.

These tips are from allrecipes.com.

Fats (butter, margarine, shortening, and oil), are the main players in how the cookies spread. Shortening and margarine are more stable than butter, which helps keep cookies in their original shape. Oil will also help cookies keep their original shape. Butter melts at a lower temperatures than those other fats, so cookies may spread out more, however many people prefer the taste that butter lends to cookies. Additionally, the amount of fat plays a role, since more fat will mean that the cookies will tend to be flatter and chewier to crispier.

Fluffier cookies come with less fat.

Flour is also a consideration, since flours with a high protein content (bread and all-purpose flours) will yield cookies that tend to be flatter, darker, and crispier in contrast to cookies made with cake or pastry flour.

Sugar is also a consideration. White sugar makes a crisper cookie than brown sugar or honey. Brown sugar in cookies actually absorbs moisture, so the cookies will stay chewy. Lowering the amount of sugar called for in a recipe will make the cookies more puffy.

Eggs are a staple in many cookie recipes. If egg is the liquid, it will help make the cookies fluffy, while water or other liquids will make the cookies spread.

Also, egg yolks will help to add moistness while the whites will make the cookies drier.

The way you make your cookies is also important. The creaming step — where the fat and the sugar are whipped together until fluffy — pulls air into the batter. While you need this air to make your baking soda and/or baking powder work, be conservative.

Combine the wet and dry ingredients, but do not whip them.

Your oven also helps to determine your cookie's final appearance.

Chilling the dough will help the cookies hold their shape and be a little more cakelike.

Besides your oven, you will also want to think about your cookie sheets. While your great grandmother's thin sheet may hold sentimental value, buying a newer, insulated baking sheet will allow air movement and produce puffier cookies.

Standard semi-thick sheets will yield flat crisp cookies. Greasing your sheets will also help the cookies to spread, however you run the risk of cookies sticking to the sheet, so parchment paper may be a good investment for the serious cookie baker.

Do not be afraid to slightly underbake your cookies if you want cookies to be chewy. The edges can be slightly golden but the middle will look slightly raw.

Here are two new recipes from the Nissley family's cookie bake this year:

### DOUBLE CHOCOLATE SNOWQUAKES

1½ cups all-purpose flour

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