

# Girl Scout Cookie History

For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts and their enthusiastic supporters have helped ensure the success of the iconic annual cookie sale. Did you know that the Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world? Not only is the cookie program fun, but it also helps Girl Scouts learn life and leadership skills.

Selling Girl Scout Cookies creates opportunities to learn and grow. From learning how to interact with customers to creating budgets and taking orders, the Girl Scout Cookie Program teaches Girl Scouts invaluable skills that they'll need to succeed throughout their lives. Plus, Girl Scout Cookie proceeds stay in the community to support local councils and troops. Pretty sweet, right?

- Research the history of the Girl Scout Cookie including packaging, pricing, etc., by visiting the baker's website and the Girl Scouts of the USA website.
- Explore how packaging and ads have changed over the years.
- Discover what 5 skills you will learn by selling cookies.
- Use the original cookie recipe and bake a batch of Girl Scout Cookies.
- Create a poster or presentation to share with cookie customers.



## GSUSA Cookie History

Girl Scout Cookies were originally home baked by girl members with moms volunteering as technical advisers. The sale of cookies to finance troop activities began as early as 1917, five years after Juliette Gordon Low started Girl Scouts in the United States. Find out more about the rich history of the Girl Scout Cookie by visiting GSUSA's Cookie History page!

### Girl Scouts of the USA - Girl Scout Cookie History

[girlscouts.org/en/cookies/about-girl-scout-cookies/cookie-history.html](https://girlscouts.org/en/cookies/about-girl-scout-cookies/cookie-history.html)



## The Bakers

Two licensed bakers produce all the cookies for Girl Scouts. Which baker is used will vary by council. The bakers can make many varieties, but they must include Thin Mints, Peanut Butter Sandwich/Do-si-dos, and Shortbread/Trefoils. Plus all cookies must be kosher.

**Little Brownie Baker**  
[littlebrowniebakers.com](http://littlebrowniebakers.com)

*Little Brownie*  
BAKERS®



**ABC Bakers**  
[abcbakers.com](http://abcbakers.com)

girl scouts 



# Cookie Boxes



Photos clock-wise, starting at top-left:

Front and side of a cookie box from 1949. Courtesy Ellen DeMaio/CollectorsWeekly.com

Savannahs, Scot-Teas, Mints, and Four Flavor Shorties cookie boxes from 1960s. GSUSA

Thin Mints and Cookie Mint boxes from 1970s. GSUSA

Cream Filled cookie box from 1940. GSUSA



# Cookie Ads



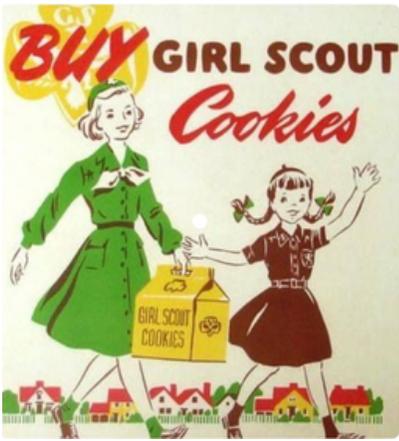
Photos clock-wise, starting at top-left:

Cookie posters from the 1970s. eBay

“Come along with us...” poster from the 1950s. CollectorsWeekly.com

Cookie ad from the 1960s. GSUSA

Cookie ad from the 1940s. GSUSA



# Girl Scout Cookies In the News

Girl Scout Cookies often make the news!  
Here are just a few examples of articles covering cookie news!

Paraphrased from Good Morning America, By [Jon Haworth](#) and [Haley Yamada](#); February 14, 2020

Veronica "Ronnie" Backenstoe joined her local Girl Scout Troop in Lake George, NY in 1932. She was 10 years old when she joined Girl Scouts and started selling cookies. Ronnie has been selling Girl Scout Cookies every year since then. When Ronnie first started selling Girl Scout Cookies in 1932, there were only three kinds of cookies available and each box only cost 15 cents. Ronnie became a Field Director for the Girl Scouts as an adult. She currently resides in Pennsylvania where she is still part of a troop!

"You know many people say, 'Oh there's not many [cookies] in the box for that much money.' Well, that's not the purpose. The purpose is to teach the girls a little salesmanship for one thing. They learn to balance their budgets. They learn to be courteous when they go to the doors and introduce themselves. It's all that little detail," Backenstoe shared with Good Morning America. "That's the purpose of Girl Scouting."

Find out more about Ronnie on our YouTube page.



Photo: Veronica "Ronnie" Backenstoe, 98. Courtesy Phoebe Ministries

## GIRL SCOUTS ARE CLAMORING FOR OLD-FASHIONED KITCHEN

Delicious Cookies Present Channel for Realization of Big Ideal of Scout Movement—Girls Are Enthusiastic.

"Give us an old-fashioned kitchen again!" is the cry of thousands of Girl Scouts in all parts of the Nation.

How? By baking cookies—1,000,000 of them—cookies so well browned and so delicious that he who tastes will say "M-m-m—good—just like mother used to make"—and ask for more.

But lacking the big, old-fashioned kitchen, the girls are doing their best in the tiny and middling kitchens of Baghdad to earn their homemakers' badges—a most important part of the Girl Scout program.

Girl Scouts, organized in 1912 by Mrs. Juliette Low, friend and associate of Sir Robert Baden Powell, father of all scouting, number more than 200,000 here and in Europe, Asia, and Africa. At a Scout camp near New York fifteen nationalities and creeds—as Girl Scouts is non-sectarian—were represented among 178 girls.

The object of Girl Scouts is to bring to all girls the opportunity of group experience, outdoor life and

### Scouts and Captains!

Girl Scouts and captains should send contributions to this page not later than Wednesday of each week for publication on the Sunday following. Communications should be addressed to the Scout Editor, Times-Dispatch. News items of troops and individual Scouts, as well as photographs, will be accepted.

for which proficiency badges are given are related directly to the services of women in the home as mother, nurse or homekeeper.

This briefly is the outline of the Girl Scout program. To really understand its scope and inspiration one must imagine the brown-clad Girl Scout scrubbing away at a kitchen floor, minding Mrs. Marlow's teething baby, tying up Jackie's bleeding thumb, coaxing a laggard campfire into bright flames at the end of a long day.

Richmond Times Dispatch, 28 October 1923, page 38. [blog.genealogybank.com](http://blog.genealogybank.com)

## The Selling of the Girl Scout Cookie, 1981

By FRED FERRETTI

If you believe Vonda Blanton of Wichita, Kan., the history of the Girl Scout Cookie begins, as did much of our earlier history, in Louington, Mass., and she has the recipe. On the other hand, Bob Wilson of Jupiter, Fla., swears it all started in his little bakery in Wilmette, Ill. in 1932. Not so, according to Catherine Cavelli, who says she was around when the first original Girl Scout Cookie was baked in Philadelphia in 1930. Certainly not so, says Amy Munsie, who claims to have baked the first Girl Scout Cookie in Buffalo in 1931.

And though she makes no primary baking claims, Bella Spewack, who wrote "Kiss Me Kate," takes credit for "creating" the Girl Scout Cookie during the time she worked for the scouts.

Now, you might ask, do Girl Scout Cookies manage to survive such controversy? The answer is, very nicely. What the Girl Scouts of the United States of America do is suggest, as H. L. Mencken used to, that everybody might be right, and then simply go about the business of selling cookies, usually around this time of year.

This week is Girl Scout Week, the climax of the annual selling, ordering, baking and delivering cycle. Any day now boxes ordered from the girls in the green berets will be delivered, and we can begin munching those Thin Mints, Vanchos (vanilla and chocolate cream sandwiches), coconut and cocoa Samosas, vanilla shortbread Trefels, Forget-Me-Not (the Girl Scouts' version of granola snacks), Tagalogs (chocolate covered peanut butter cookies) and Do-Si-Do (peanut butter sandwiches).

The Girl Scout Cookie, once a thin little vanilla shortbread sold as an occasional fund-raiser 50 years ago, has become a multimillion-dollar business that brings income to the Girl Scouts on every level, from national headquarters to the smallest troop. Girl Scout Cookies are manufactured and sold in such numbers that there are, "12 for every man, woman and child in the United States," according to Frances Hesselbein, national executive director of the Girl Scouts.

lion cookies this year, packed by twos in one million cellophane bags, as dessert for its passengers. They cost United \$56,000 and constitute "the largest single purchase of Girl Scout Cookies ever made," according to Charles Novak, a spokesman for the airline. The order is certainly larger than any taken by your local Girl Scout Troop, but it's still only a part of the vast numbers of cookies sold each year. In the 15 years from 1960 to 1980, cookie sales went from 38 million boxes to 108 million, and 120 million will be sold this year.

But to Mrs. Hesselbein the process of selling is as important as the numbers. "The young girls learn skills and safety in numbers," she said. "They gain

confidence. They learn to write an order, make change. They become a small part of the business world."

For each box sold, the Girl Scouts of the United States, with national headquarters at 839 Third Avenue, receives a royalty payment of 1 cent. This year those pennies will add up to \$1.2 million, which will be used to help run the Girl Scouts' national organization.

In addition, each of the 336 independent Girl Scout Councils throughout the country, through which the cookies are ordered and distributed, collects 65 cents for every box it sells. Most boxes are sold for about

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Girl Scouts sell seven different kinds of cookies

## The 5 Skills

What do girls do in the Girl Scout Cookie Program? They “Earn and Learn”—they earn funds for their activities while learning key skills that will help them in business and life. The 5 Skills apply to all Girl Scouts who participate in the cookie program—regardless of how they participate in Girl Scouting. Below are the 5 Skills and why they matter.

### 5 Skills

-  **Goal Setting**
-  **Decision Making**
-  **Money Management**
-  **People Skills**
-  **Business Ethics**



[Find out more and get other resources on GSUSA's site.](#)

Girls set sales goals and, with their team, create a plan to reach them. This matters because girls need to know how to set and reach goals to succeed in school, on the job, and in life.

Girls decide where and when to sell, how to market their sale, and what to do with their earnings. This matters because girls must make many decisions, big and small, in their lives. Learning this skill helps them make good ones.

Girls develop a budget, take orders, and handle customers' money. This matters because girls need to know how to handle money—from their lunch money to their allowance to (someday) their paycheck.

Girls learn how to talk (and listen!) to their customers, as well as learning how to work as a team with other girls. This matters because it helps them do better in school (on group projects, on sports teams, and on the playground) and, later, at work.

Girls act honestly and responsibly during every step of the product sale. This matters because employers want to hire ethical employees—and the world needs ethical leaders in every field.

## The Original Girl Scout Cookie Recipe

The Girl Scouts didn't always have boxes or bags of cookies to sell to people – they made the cookies themselves! Before 1934, when commercial bakeries got involved in baking and packaging, Girl Scouts baked their own cookies. In July 1922, *The American Girl* magazine (published by GSUSA) featured an article that included a cookie recipe. That recipe had been given to GSUSA's Girl Scout members so they could bake and sell their own cookies.

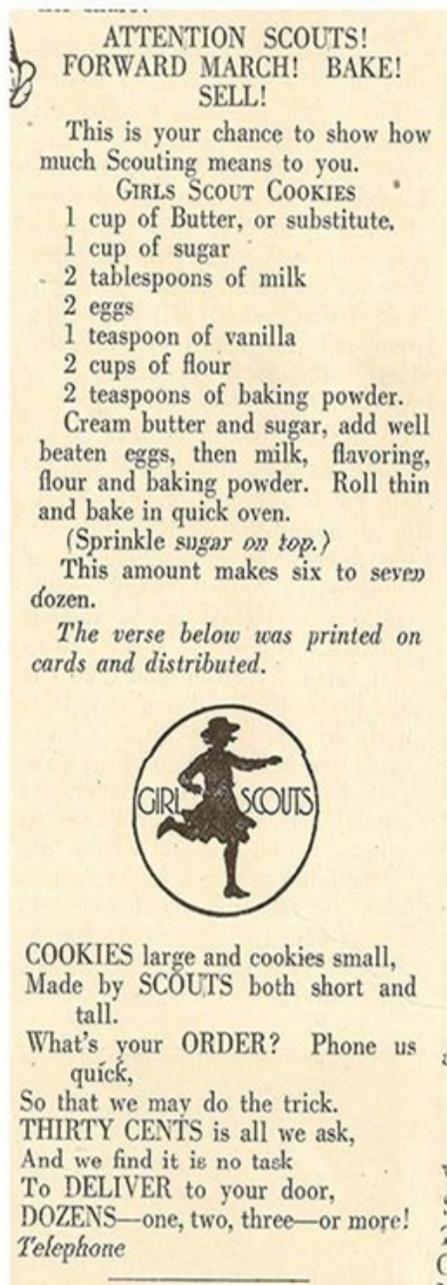
The original recipe was for sugar cookies, which probably equates to the 'Shortbreads' or 'Trefoils' that are sold by Girl Scouts today. These new cookies go by different names depending on the commercial baker, and are both a sugar cookie in the shape of the Girl Scout trefoil. ABC Bakers company make the Shortbreads, and Little Brownie Bakers make the Trefoils.

The Trefoil cookies are one of three that GSUSA requires girls to sell. The other two are Thin Mints and Peanut Butter Sandwiches/Do-si-dos. The rest of the cookies differ from council to council or region to region.



Photo credit: Girl Scout cookie-cutter box from 1932 alongside a trefoil-shaped cutter from 1949. Courtesy Ellen DeMaio/CollectorsWeekly.com

Now that you have the original recipe, try making a batch to share with friends and family!



1922 version of the recipe with a card that would be delivered to customers. American Girl, July 1922 edition, [oldschoolpastry.pastrysampler.com](http://oldschoolpastry.pastrysampler.com)



## Original Girl Scout Cookie Recipe

### Ingredients

1 cup of butter or substitute  
 1 cup of sugar  
 2 tablespoons of milk  
 2 eggs  
 1 teaspoon of vanilla  
 2 cups of flour  
 2 teaspoons of baking powder

### Directions

Cream butter and sugar, add well beaten eggs, then milk, flavoring (vanilla), flour and baking powder.

Roll thin (cut with cookie cutters) and bake in a quick oven (375-400 degrees until slightly brown on the edges, 5-8 minutes).

Sprinkle sugar on top (as soon as they come out of the oven).

This amount makes six to seven dozen.