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The Gourmet Cookie Book: The Single Best Recipe From Each Year 1941-2009



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Customer Reviews

As a longtime subscriber to both Gourmet and Bon Appetit, I used to tell people that I liked Gourmet for its savory recipes and Bon Appetit for its sweets. This new compilation of the best cookie recipes, decade by decade, from Gourmet confronted me with the fallacy of that statement. Some of my long-time favorite cookie recipes, including strawberry tart cookies and cranberry pistachio biscotti, can be found here. The best part of this book, however, is not the recipes, as good as they are, but the history behind them. The division of the recipes by decades offers glimpses into trends, subscribers, changing culinary tastes and abilities, and, of course, the focus of the magazine itself. Interestingly, when the magazine was first published in 1940s and people baked more than they do today, the cookie recipes were much more simple, with tastes that highlighted a few ingredients: butter, nuts, spices. Even in the 1950s, when baking ingredients were more available, the cookies remained somewhat homey and classic, with gingerbread men, lace cookies, and sesame-seed-coated queen's biscuits taking center stage. In the 1960s, however, Gourmet's cookies started taking on a more international note; as the editors note, commercialized air travel and growing national unrest led to more daring recipes. As the book states, "not a single one of the four cookie recipes that appeared in Gourmet in 1963 was of American origin." With this new internationalism came other recipes with more sophisticated lists of ingredients and flavors. By jumping ahead to the 2000s, Gourmet's final decade, one can see how much American tastes have changed: many of the cookies are classics with gourmet twists that make them look more like

professionally baked treats than homemade lunch box snacks. Because the book contains a full page photograph of each recipe, it is obvious that later recipes focused as much on aesthetics as taste, while most earlier ones were content with a plain appearance. Because this book contains recipes exactly as they appeared in the magazine (with some recipe notes for clarification), contemporary bakers may be somewhat taken aback by the format in the earlier decades, as their directions are "remarkably casual, a kind of mysterious shorthand that assumes that each reader is an accomplished cook." While I dispute that these early recipes require any sort of advanced experience, they are definitely written out as though one person is describing the process to another, with ingredients not listed separately but as part of the instructions. (Separate lists of ingredients don't appear until 1982, when recipes were "no longer able to count on the readers' experience.") In some ways, I found the earlier recipes easier to follow because I didn't have to worry about going back and forth between adding sugar and reading how much sugar was called for. The amount was right there in the text. But how are the recipes themselves? Absolutely wonderful. Not a single one of the recipes I tried missed, although, obviously, some recipes, such as the sparkling lemon sandwich cookies, took more time and effort. From the humble honey refrigerator cookies to the sophisticated coconut macadamia shortbread, these recipes will please contemporary palates.-- Debbie Lee Wesselmann

I love the recipes and cookie photographs in this retrospective of the best cookies published in Gourmet Magazine. The bold graphic design of the photographs is stylish and quite attractive although I see some other reviewers disagree. To have a photograph of each cookie is helpful whether the design choice appeals to everyone or not. Like most pastry cookbooks there is no nutritional information provided, but I don't think any of us want to know that when we are baking cookies. But if looking for a book that caters to a particular dietary restriction, like vegan or gluten free, etc., this is not the book to buy. The pages are high quality paper and I found spills wiped up well. This hardback book stayed open, laying flat on my countertop no matter what page I turned to, so a cookbook holder was unnecessary. Included are seventy heavenly recipes from Gourmet Magazine's 68 year history. I have many cookie cookbooks so deciding whether to add another one to the group is dependent upon the recipes, so I am listing all of them here in case others use that method when selecting a cookbook. Cookie recipes in the book include: Cajun Macaroons, Honey Refrigerator Cookies, Scotch Oat Crunchies, Cinnamon Sugar Crisps, Date Bars, Moravian White Christmas Cookies, Old Fashioned Christmas Butter Cookies, Jelly Centers, Brandy Snaps, Chocolate Wafers, Navettes Sucrees (Sugar Shuttles,) Palets De Dames, Coconut Bars, Benne

Wafers, Biscotti Di Regina (Queen's Biscuits,) Oatmeal Molasses Cookies, Lace Cookies, Brazil Nut Crescents, Gingerbread Men, Pine Nut Macaroons, Brown Butter Cookies, Cottage Cheese Cookies, Curled Wafers, Fig Cookies, Ginger Sugar Cookies, Apricot Chews, Mandelbrot (Chocolate Almond Slices,) Florentines, Galettes De Noel (Deep-Fried Wafers,) Shoe Sole Cookies, Speculaas (Saint Nicholas Cookies,) Dutch Caramel Cashew Cookies, Crescent Cheese Cookies, Kourambiedes (Greek Butter Cookies,) Almond Bolas (Portuguese Almond Cookies,) Lemon Thins, Irish Coffee Crunchies, Bizcochitos (Anise Cookies,) Linzer Bars, Bourbon Balls, Cloudt's Pecan Treats, Chocolate Meringue Biscuits, Spritz (Norwegian Butter Cookies,) Souvaroffs (Butter Cookies with Jam,) Pecan Tassies, Pastelitos De Boda (Bride's Cookies,) Mocha Toffee Bars, Pistachio Tuiles, Cornetti (Almond Cookies,) Mocha Cookies, Jan Hagels (Cinnamon Almond Wafers,) Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti, Aunt Sis's Strawberry Tart Cookies, Basler Brunslis (Heart-Shaped Chocolate Almond Spice Cookies,) Coconut Macadamia Shortbread, Anise-Scented Fig and Date Swirls, Chocolate Coconut Squares, Gianduja Brownies, Skibo Castle Ginger Crunch, Walnut Acorn Cookies, Cranberry Turtle Bars, Scandinavian Rosettes, Biscotti Quadrati Al Miele E Alle Noci (Honey Nut Squares,) Polish Apricot-Filled Cookies, Mini Black and White Cookies, Chocolate Peppermint Bar Cookies, Trios, Glittering Lemon Sandwich Cookies and Grand Marnier Glazed Pain D'Epice Cookies. The recipes I prepared are Brown Butter Cookies (amazing,) Mandelbrot (visually beautiful and equally delicious) and Gianduja Brownies (I was intrigued by the addition of Nutella in the batter -- fabulous result.) One of the other reviewers mentioned the Strawberry Tart Cookies so I tried those too. They are perfection and as with the other recipes I tested, a keeper. I will make these recipes again and again and plan to continue working my way through the rest of the book. A variety of flavors and cookie styles grace the pages which should appeal to cookie lovers of all types. This book would make a great addition to any cookbook library and a welcome gift for both novice and experienced bakers.

I was really disappointed with this book, being a lifelong gourmet devotee. The recipes and history of each are good, and up to gourmet standards. But the pictures feel like they were just tossed together in a hurry and are not all that appetizing. The reason for the low star level though, is the layout of the book. It is, to be blunt, horrid. The photos are on the right hand pages and at the top of the left hand page is the title of the recipe and a blurb about its history. Aside from a very unwelcoming font, all fine. But after the introductory paragraph is a huge chunk of white space, and then the recipe and directions are crammed together in a small and undifferentiated font in the bottom quarter of the page. It is hard to read and even more difficult to follow when trying to actually

cook anything. The result is an altogether cold, difficult to use book. I'll probably copy out my favorite recipes onto recipe cards and resell the book.

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