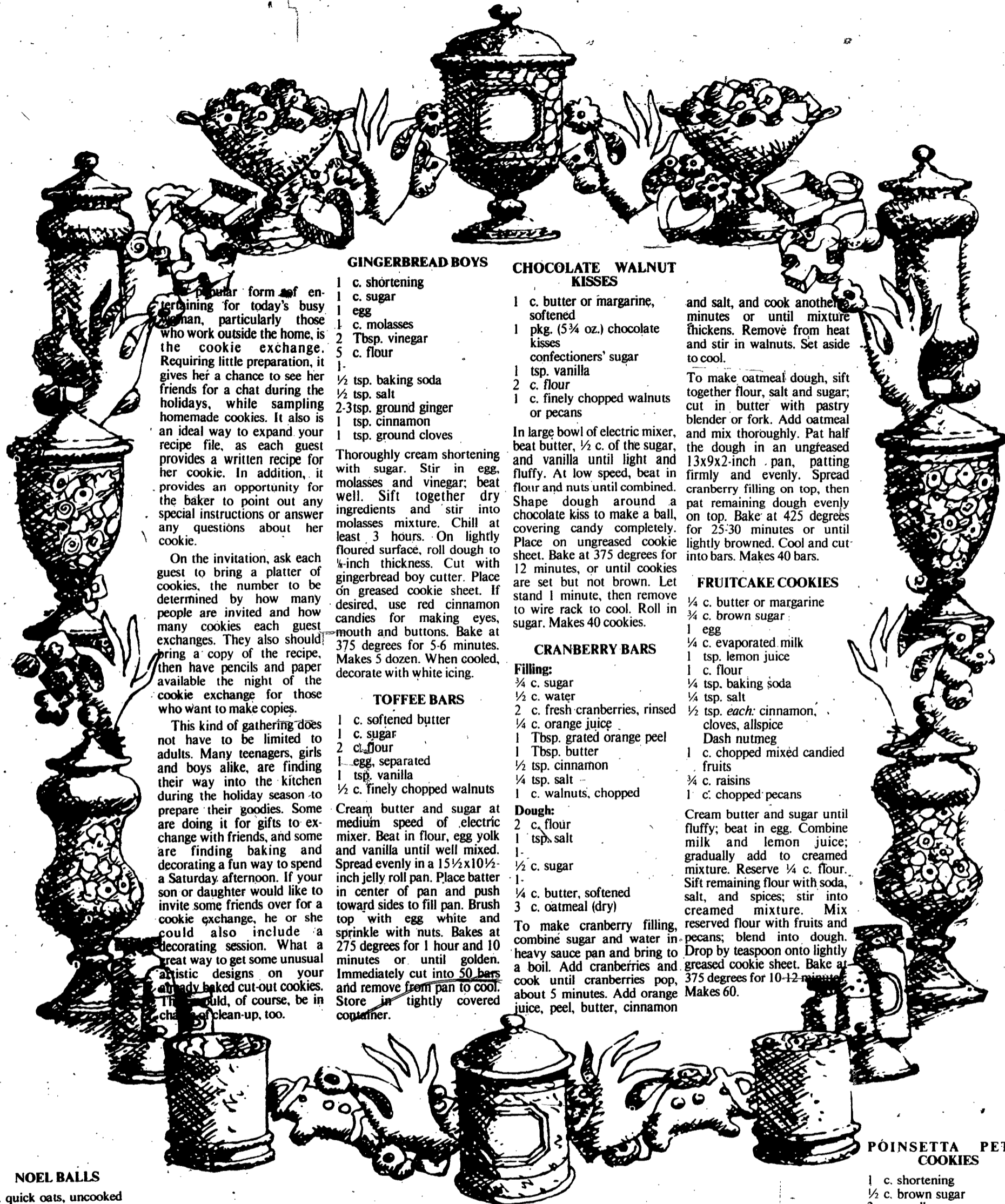


The Cookie Exchange

By Elaine K. Stevens



A popular form of entertaining for today's busy woman, particularly those who work outside the home, is the cookie exchange. Requiring little preparation, it gives her a chance to see her friends for a chat during the holidays, while sampling homemade cookies. It also is an ideal way to expand your recipe file, as each guest provides a written recipe for her cookie. In addition, it provides an opportunity for the baker to point out any special instructions or answer any questions about her cookie.

On the invitation, ask each guest to bring a platter of cookies, the number to be determined by how many people are invited and how many cookies each guest exchanges. They also should bring a copy of the recipe, then have pencils and paper available the night of the cookie exchange for those who want to make copies.

This kind of gathering does not have to be limited to adults. Many teenagers, girls and boys alike, are finding their way into the kitchen during the holiday season to prepare their goodies. Some are doing it for gifts to exchange with friends, and some are finding baking and decorating a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. If your son or daughter would like to invite some friends over for a cookie exchange, he or she could also include a decorating session. What a great way to get some unusual artistic designs on your already baked cut-out cookies. This could, of course, be in charge of clean-up, too.

GINGERBREAD BOYS

- 1 c. shortening
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 c. molasses
- 2 Tbsp. vinegar
- 5 c. flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2-3 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground cloves

Thoroughly cream shortening with sugar. Stir in egg, molasses and vinegar; beat well. Sift together dry ingredients and stir into molasses mixture. Chill at least 3 hours. On lightly floured surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut with gingerbread boy cutter. Place on greased cookie sheet. If desired, use red cinnamon candies for making eyes, mouth and buttons. Bake at 375 degrees for 5-6 minutes. Makes 5 dozen. When cooled, decorate with white icing.

TOFFEE BARS

- 1 c. softened butter
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 c. flour
- 1 egg, separated
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 c. finely chopped walnuts

Cream butter and sugar at medium speed of electric mixer. Beat in flour, egg yolk and vanilla until well mixed. Spread evenly in a 15 1/2 x 10 1/2-inch jelly roll pan. Place batter in center of pan and push toward sides to fill pan. Brush top with egg white and sprinkle with nuts. Bakes at 275 degrees for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until golden. Immediately cut into 50 bars and remove from pan to cool. Store in tightly covered container.

CHOCOLATE WALNUT KISSES

- 1 c. butter or margarine, softened
- 1 pkg. (5 3/4 oz.) chocolate kisses
- confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 c. flour
- 1 c. finely chopped walnuts or pecans

In large bowl of electric mixer, beat butter, 1/2 c. of the sugar, and vanilla until light and fluffy. At low speed, beat in flour and nuts until combined. Shape dough around a chocolate kiss to make a ball, covering candy completely. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes, or until cookies are set but not brown. Let stand 1 minute, then remove to wire rack to cool. Roll in sugar. Makes 40 cookies.

CRANBERRY BARS

- Filling:**
- 1/2 c. sugar
 - 1/2 c. water
 - 2 c. fresh cranberries, rinsed
 - 1/4 c. orange juice
 - 1 Tbsp. grated orange peel
 - 1 Tbsp. butter
 - 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
 - 1/4 tsp. salt
 - 1 c. walnuts, chopped

Dough:

- 2 c. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 c. butter, softened
- 3 c. oatmeal (dry)

To make cranberry filling, combine sugar and water in heavy sauce pan and bring to a boil. Add cranberries and cook until cranberries pop, about 5 minutes. Add orange juice, peel, butter, cinnamon

and salt, and cook another 2 minutes or until mixture thickens. Remove from heat and stir in walnuts. Set aside to cool.

To make oatmeal dough, sift together flour, salt and sugar; cut in butter with pastry blender or fork. Add oatmeal and mix thoroughly. Pat half the dough in an ungreased 13x9x2-inch pan, patting firmly and evenly. Spread cranberry filling on top, then pat remaining dough evenly on top. Bake at 425 degrees for 25-30 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool and cut into bars. Makes 40 bars.

FRUITCAKE COOKIES

- 1/4 c. butter or margarine
- 3/4 c. brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/4 c. evaporated milk
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 c. flour
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. each: cinnamon, cloves, allspice
- Dash nutmeg
- 1 c. chopped mixed candied fruits
- 3/4 c. raisins
- 1 c. chopped pecans

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy; beat in egg. Combine milk and lemon juice; gradually add to creamed mixture. Reserve 1/4 c. flour. Sift remaining flour with soda, salt, and spices; stir into creamed mixture. Mix reserved flour with fruits and pecans; blend into dough. Drop by teaspoon onto lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Makes 60.

NOEL BALLS

- 2 c. quick oats, uncooked
- 1 1/2 c. confectioners' sugar
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- 3 Tbsp. cocoa
- 1 tsp. grated orange peel
- 1/4 c. orange juice
- 1/4 c. pancake syrup

In medium bowl, combine oats, 3/4 c. confectioners' sugar, nuts, cocoa and orange peel. Add orange juice and syrup, mixing until dry ingredients are thoroughly moistened. Chill 1 hour. Shape into 1-inch balls. Roll in 1/2 c. confectioners' sugar; place in wax paper-lined container. Store tightly covered at least 8 hours at room temperature. Roll each ball in remaining 1/2 c. confectioners' sugar again. Store tightly covered.

BUTTERFINGERS

- 1 c. butter
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 c. flour
- 3/4 tsp. nutmeg

Cream butter, thoroughly. Add sugar gradually and continue beating until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla and mix well. Sift together flour and nutmeg. Add gradually to creamed mixture, blending well after each addition. Shape dough into fingers (1/2-inch diameter and 3 inches long). Bake on buttered cookie sheets at 350 degrees for 13-15 minutes.

Cool. Spread tops with frosting and sprinkle lightly with nutmeg.

Butter Cream Frosting:

- 1/2 c. butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tsp. rum flavoring, if desired
- 2 c. sifted confectioners' sugar
- 2 Tbsp. light cream
- nutmeg

Cream butter well; add vanilla and rum flavoring and blend. Gradually add confectioners' sugar and cream. Beat until smooth and creamy. Spread over tops of Butterfingers and sprinkle lightly with nutmeg. Makes 6 dozen.

POINSETTA PETAL COOKIES

- 1 c. shortening
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 c. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 slightly beaten egg whites
- 1 c. finely chopped walnuts
- Candied cherries, cut in eighths

Cream shortening and sugar. Beat in egg yolk, lemon juice, and vanilla. Sift flour and salt together; stir into mixture. Chill 1 hour. Form into 1-inch balls; dip in egg white and roll in nuts. Place on cookie sheet and top each with 3 cherry pieces arranged at petals. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 minutes. Let stand a few minutes before removing from pan. These freeze well. Makes 40 cookies.