



The Rising Trend Of Cookie Artists Across The Country

A growing number of home bakers are turning the art of cookie making into a bustling business—and they're giving homemade cookies a whole new meaning.

By Katie Lockhart | September 01, 2020



Pin



FB



More

Goopy chocolate, warm buttery dough, and that sweet sugary smell. Is your mouth watering yet? Americans have a thing for cookies—especially chocolate chip. According to *Yankee Magazine*, around seven billion chocolate chip cookies are eaten every year in the United States.

But more and more, millions of Americans are skipping the baking aisle and opting for fresh baked cookies from a "cookie artist" or "cookie lady." If you ask around, you'll find that many of the homemade cookie gifts, office snacks, and holiday treats you've been eating come from a growing group of cookie entrepreneurs across the country.

Mitzi Toro is one of those sweet-toothed business owners. Known as The Maui Cookie Lady in Hawaii, she started her business at a local nighttime farmer's market on the island. After a cookie fundraiser to thank the ICU nurses who treated her father, customers started to line up at her farmer's market booth and ask if she was "the cookie lady." "After that, it just became my identity for the business," Toro says.



CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF MAUI COOKIE LADY

She now bakes 300 to 500 cookies per day for customers across the country.

AdChoices

Escape to Soneva Jani for the ultimate family vacation in the Maldives

Discover more

ADVERTISEMENT

She has over 150 flavor varieties—White Chocolate Mac Nut is the most popular, followed by Pineapple Lychee Passion and Kona Coffee Espresso. "We use whole macadamia nuts from a farm on Maui, they come to us shelled and raw, and then we dry roast them with some Hawaiian Sea Salt," Toro says.

Toro's not the only home baker taking on the identity of "cookie lady." Emerald S. Austin, owner and cookie creator of Royal Gourmet Cookies in Long Beach, California, bakes 200 to 300 cookies from her home per day (she she has a Cottage Food license for home cooks) while her six children are at school and delivers the cookies via curbside pickup. "We are unique because we have over 17 cookie flavors and you can customize your cookie order," Austin says. A few of her most popular flavors are PMS Oh Yes, a chocolate chip cookie made with Snickers, Twix, and Kit Kat candy bars, and Dirty Diane, a chocolate chip cookie made with toffee chunks and toasted chopped walnuts.





CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF ROYAL GOURMET COOKIES

Joanna O'Leary, owner of Cooky by Bridey, can also be found regularly whipping up dozens (upon dozens, upon dozens) of cookies from her kitchen in Houston, Texas. Her chocolate chip cookie recipe has its roots in the original

Tollhouse chocolate chip cookie: O'Leary's aunt baked alongside Ruth Wakefield at the Toll House Inn in Whitman, Massachusetts. O'Leary ships her homemade goods to a limited number of locations.

These cookie connoisseurs are introducing a new way to treat the office, celebrate the holidays, and bulk up the neighborhood potluck: high-quality treats without all the mess and effort but still with that personal, homemade touch that just makes cookies taste *better*. They're making homemade cookies even better and easier to enjoy.

Another growing group of cookie creators is brining the homemade touch to cookies in a different way: "Cookie artists" are creating gorgeous, hand-decorated cookies for holidays, special events, and more, giving people a way to celebrate special moments with an extra-special treat.



CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF BUNNYCAKES

Bunny Lyons creates highly decorated works of cookie art from Bunnycakes,

her boutique shop in Berlin, New Jersey (the state doesn't offer Cottage Food licenses). Around major holidays like Valentine's Day and Thanksgiving, she ices between 600 and 1,000 cookies for a growing fan base—she's had clients drive up to three hours one way just to pick up an order to take her decorating classes.

"I have definitely seen a surge in interest in the art of cookie decorating in the last five years," Lyons says. "People love my classes, and many have come

multiple times. They love it so much that they themselves have started to decorate cookies."

That was the case for Sade Foose, a full-time pharmacist who started BuggaRoo Creations in Holden, Massachusetts, after taking a cookie decorating class in 2018. "My kids have food allergies and often felt left out," she says. "Being a family of color, I wanted to level the playing field so there would be one less reason for them to feel like an outsider. I went back home to research and develop allergy-safe versions of royal icing and sugar cookies and have been baking since then."





CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DAINTY PLUM

Foose makes a few dozen decorated cookies a month from her kitchen and spends her time baking favorites like lemon basil shortbread cookies for [Icing Smiles](#), a charity providing sweets to [families impacted by the critical illness of a child](#).

Carla Joyner also got her start in the cookie artist world after trying her hand at cookie decorating. Now, as owner of [The Dainty Plum](#) in Loganville, Georgia, she creates highly custom cookies for her clients. "Every set of decorated cookies that I make has a unique story behind them," she says. "Every set is special to the client who orders, whether the cookies are for a business that is opening for the first time or a couple who adopted after several years of trying."



CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DAINTY PLUM

Joyner doesn't mess around when it comes to getting it right: She sends clients

a hand-drawn design sheet for approval before actually decorating their cookies, and the entire process takes two to three days. On average, she makes 100 to 200 cookies per week. Her bestsellers include sugar cookies with vanilla or lemon royal icing.

With such personal, painstaking creations, it's no surprise handmade, homemade cookie sales are on the rise—as are the number of people looking to enter the field. Toro often gets asked for advice on how to get started as a cookie artist. Her response: "There is no better time to start than now. The biggest advice I can share is to start small and get feedback with samples. We have had recipes that worked, and some that didn't, but figuring it out along the way is all the fun."

Popular in Radar



Sing a New Tune

= Article



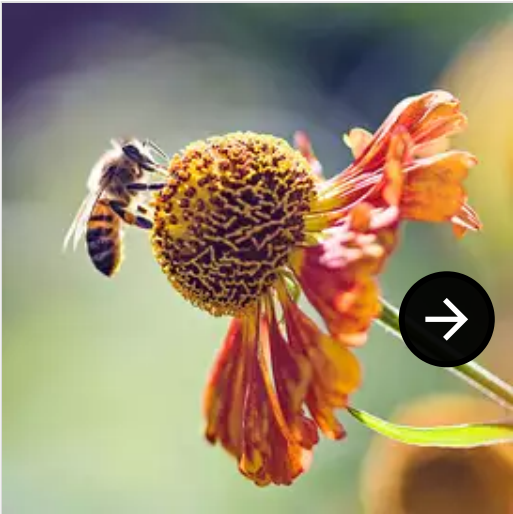
Meet "Soul Food Scholar" Adrian Miller

= Article



Turn A New Leaf

= Article



The Buzz on Bees

= Article

All Topics in Radar

- FOOD NEWS
- LETTER FROM RACH
- RADAR
- WOMEN'S WEEK
- FEATURES
- TRAVEL
- ➔