

How to Host a Cookie Swap



Bonus Recipe
Almond Chocolate
Chip Cookies

Cookie Swap Savvy

Gathering with relatives and friends to swap favorite confections is a welcome respite from the frenetic pace of the season—and let's face it, there's nothing better than a cookie jar that's so full you can barely close the lid! I'm a registered dietitian nutritionist, but when it comes to holiday goodies, my attitude is more elf than Scrooge. That said, I can never resist the opportunity to give recipes, especially the sweetest, most butter-laden treats, a healthy fix. So this year, why not start a new cookie-swap tradition with a few better-for-you goodies? While the recipes here and on my blog are not calorie-, fat- or sugar-free, their ingredients blend nutrition into every delectable bite.

Cookie Swap How-To:

Schedule a date, time, and location for your cookie swap, and invite your guests. Once your RSVPs are in, ask each guest to bring six dozen of their favorite holiday cookie, an extra half dozen to serve at the swap, printed copies of the recipe to share, and a few empty containers. Have a large table cleared so that you can display all the special treats. Break out your calculator and figure how many of each type of cookie everyone gets to take home (72 divided by the number of guests). Each guest still goes home with six dozen cookies, this time in many delicious varieties.

[Click Here](#) for Lightened-Up 7 Layer Bars

Healthy Baking 101: By adding some good-for-you ingredients to my recipes, I incorporate a pinch of nutrition while maintaining the indulgence factor.

- **Whole wheat flour** is a whole grain with the germ and bran intact. Compared to refined flour, it is higher in fiber as well as important nutrients like magnesium and vitamin E.
- **Nuts** such as almonds, walnuts and pecans are rich in heart-healthy fats as well as fiber, protein, vitamin E, and selenium. The trick to using them so the kids don't say, "What's that lump!?" is to chop them into tiny bits (either with a knife or by pulsing in a food processor).
- **Omega-3 eggs** come from hens that are fed a diet rich in fish oil, algae, or flaxseed. Each egg contains 100 to 200 milligrams of omega-3s, which are good for heart, brain, and eye health.
- **Dried fruit** is the next best thing to fresh fruit. Things like raisins are naturally sweet and packed with fiber and health-enhancing antioxidants.
- **Ground flaxseed** is rich in alpha linolenic acid, the vegetable form of omega-3 fat. A few tablespoons in cookie, cake, or pancake batters add a burst of health-promoting fat without altering the flavor.

[Click Here](#) for Berry Good Chocolate Cupcakes

Almond Chocolate Chip Cookies



These slightly sweet, crispy cookies get high marks from my kids. Made with mini chocolate chips and brimming with almond butter flavor, they're hard to resist. As a mom, I appreciate the nutritional value of almond butter, which is a good source of high-quality protein and rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. The addition of ground flaxseed or wheat germ ups the nutritional quotient even more.

Makes 3 dozen (2½ to 3-inch) cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup ground flaxseed or wheat germ
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup almond butter
- 1/4 cup 1% low-fat milk
- 1/4 cup organic canola oil
- 2 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil or coat two large baking sheets with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.
2. Whisk together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, chocolate chips, flaxseed, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl and set aside.
3. Place the sugar and eggs in a large bowl and whisk together until well combined. Add the almond butter, milk, oil, and vanilla and continue whisking until well blended. Gradually stir in the flour mixture until just combined.
4. Scoop the dough into slightly rounded tablespoons, roll each into a ball, and place on a baking sheet. Press gently with the palm of your hand to form circles, about 2-inches in diameter.
5. Bake, one sheet at a time, about 15 minutes, or until the cookies are golden brown on the bottom. When done, the cookies will be 2½ to 3 inches in diameter. Cool for a few minutes on the baking sheet before transferring the cookies to a wire rack. Repeat with the remaining dough.

Per Serving (1 cookie): 140 calories, 7g total fat (1g saturated), 65mg sodium, 17g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 3g protein