

Baking Up a Storm

The First Girl Guide Cookies

BY ANNA HUMPHREY

In 1927, when the Newlands Own Girl Guide Company #4, in Regina, Saskatchewan, wanted to raise money for a camping trip, Guide leader Christina Riespman had a bright idea. She decided to bake up a storm to make it happen.

Born in The Netherlands, Chris had brought her favourite family recipes to Canada with her in 1912, and often baked Dutch cookies for special occasions. However, little did she know how her new cookie venture would take hold or how much baking she would be doing that summer! She could hardly keep up with the demand, as she packaged cookies by the dozens for girls to sell for 10 cents a bag. Before long, the Newlands own Girl Guides had raised enough money to cover all their travel expenses and camp fees.

Always a Guide at heart, Chris was deeply committed to helping others. During the turbulent years of World War II, she opened her home in Regina to visiting Dutch airmen, and to the many Dutch war brides who arrived after the war. She was also a great lover of the outdoors. Indeed, one reason she and her daughter became involved in Guiding was because Chris wanted her little girl to learn to "see and recognize beauty everywhere." Camping remained an important part of their lives.

As word of its success spread, Chris' simple fundraising project baked up an

even bigger storm, which would ultimately lead to an enormously successful Guiding tradition. By 1936, her idea had spread, and the Regina Girl Guide Office asked National for permission to allow cookie sales throughout the city. Over the next years, sales spread nationwide, and a succession of commercial bakers were hired and many flavour variations were tried, from plain to maple to peanut butter. In 1953, Girl Guides of Canada introduced the first chocolate and vanilla sandwich cookies, which sold for 35 cents a box. Forty years later, in 1993, we launched our newest variation, the chocolatey mint cookie.

Today, Girl Guides of Canada sells approximately seven million boxes of cookies annually, making cookie sales our most important source of funding. The money raised is used to fund program activities, maintain Girl Guide properties and subsidize travel to Guiding events locally, nationally and internationally.

From its beginnings in a Guider's kitchen, the Girl Guide cookie has grown into a full-scale operation. And, thanks to the revenue generated each year, girls

Christina Riespman's 1927 Girl Guide Cookies

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
2 tablespoons cream
pinch of salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
3 or more cups flour to make a soft dough

- Cream butter and sugar.
- Beat in eggs and cream.
- Combine salt, baking soda, baking powder, cardamom and flour.
- Sift dry into wet ingredients and mix into dough.
- Roll and cut, using a small floured glass or cookie cutter.
- Sprinkle with sugar then bake at moderate heat, until done.

across Canada get the chance to camp, travel and learn to "see and recognize beauty everywhere," just as Chris Riespman wanted her own daughter to when she baked those first Girl Guide cookies in 1927.

Chris died in 1963 and, in addition to the important role she played in the development of Girl Guide cookies, she left behind her legacy of love for the outdoors and service to others. She had been a Guider for decades at the time of her death and, since then, her daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughters have all embraced the Guiding Movement. ♣

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