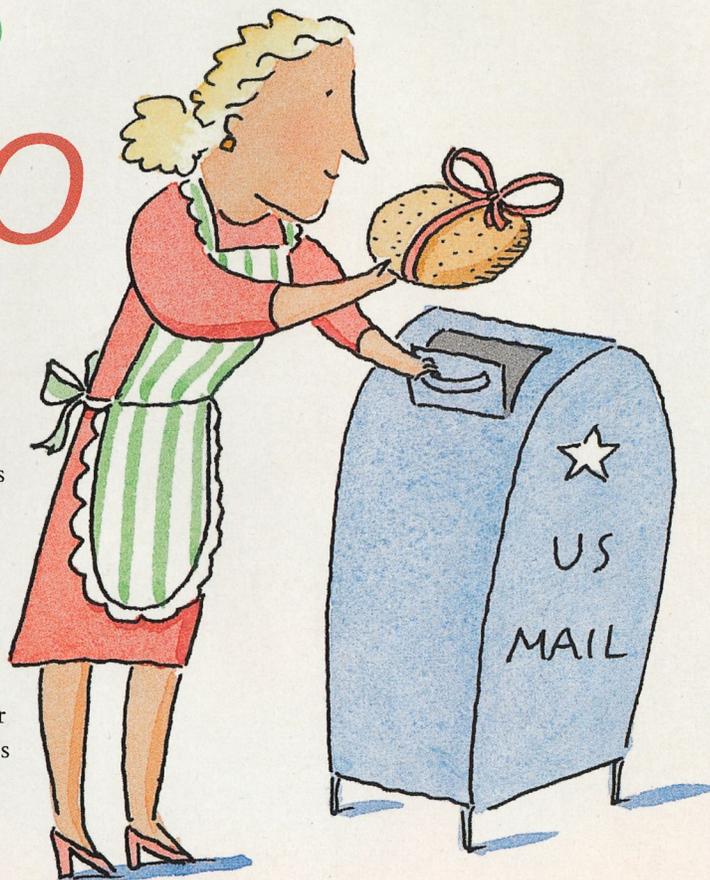


Bake it. Wrap it up. Drop it in the mail. Here's how to make sure your yummy gift arrives in perfect condition.

# Cookies To Go

**A**ny number of packaged goodies show up on the doorstep or in the mail room during the holidays, but none are more welcome than those with edibles inside. Homemade gifts like cookies are always treasured as true gifts from the heart.

After you've baked up a batch or three, you need to find the best way to transport your cookie creations to friends and family in far-flung places. We've asked some cookie-baking experts to give us some hints and tips on packing and shipping your precious cargo. Keep their advice in mind to ensure that your sweet presents arrive looking exactly the way you sent them: impressive and totally irresistible.



## The very best cookies to ship

- Think “sturdy”: drop cookies and bar cookies. The ones that keep well and have some substance are the best choices for mailing. Classic drop favorites like molasses crinkles, snickerdoodles, oatmeal or chocolate chip and different kinds of firm bar cookies like toffee bars, brownies and blondies are good candidates for mailed gifts. Stay away from perishable bar cookies like cheesecake bars.
- Don't ship extremely thin, fragile cookies like butter or sugar cutout cookies. These, plus other types that are crumbly, will not take kindly to the bumps of air or ground transport.
- Don't send any jam-filled or iced varieties; gooey contents are a likely result.

## Packing tips

- Pack only one kind or flavor of cookie per box. Cookies easily pick up the flavors around them and mixed cook-

ies will eventually taste odd. If you want variety in your gift box, decorate the cookies in different styles or use cookie stamps with different designs.

- Choose a durable, rigid attractive gift box that will hold the cookies snugly in layers. Cut two pieces of small bubble wrap sized to fit the bottom of the box. Place one piece in the bottom of the box and reserve the second piece for the top. Then use parchment paper, waxed paper, foil or plastic wrap to line the bottom of the box, overlapping each side with lengths long enough to fold back over the contents when the box is full. Place a single layer of cookies on the bottom of the box, edge to edge without crowding, and cover with a sheet of parchment paper, foil or plastic wrap cut to fit. Repeat with another layer of cookies and cover with another sheet. Continue layering until the box is full, ending with a sheet of waxed paper. Place the sheet of bubble wrap on top and then bring the lengths of wax paper or plastic wrap around the outside edges of the box up and

fold over the top to enclose the contents.

- If you must send more than one variety of cookies in a box, wrap four to six of the same cookies together in aluminum foil or colorful plastic wrap. Tightly seal ends by tying with ribbon and curling ends with a scissor. Repeat with other kinds of cookies to make several more packages to fill the box or container. Placing the heaviest cookies on the bottom; use small bubble wrap, crumpled tissue paper or paper towels to cushion successive layers of cookie packages. Do not stack too many layers.
- Seal the cookie box or container with tape, or wrap it in plastic or freezer wrap.

### Choosing a shipping box

Once the cookies are packed, select a second, larger, durable shipping box big enough to hold the cookie gift box. Allow enough room around the box so it can be surrounded on all sides by at least 3 inches of "popcorn," Styrofoam bits, crumpled bubble wrap or crumpled newspaper. These will cushion the cookie box and protect it against jolts and bumps. Fill the bottom with cushioning material, then nestle the cookie box into the larger box. Fill around and on top of it with more filling

material. Close the box and seal.

### Mailing tips

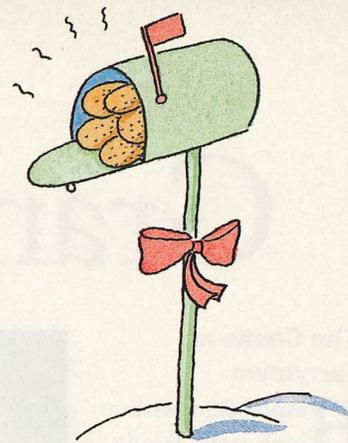
Use a black marker to address packages and remember your return address. If using stick-on address labels, secure with clear packing tape.

- Mark the package "Perishable Food" and/or use "Fragile" stickers.

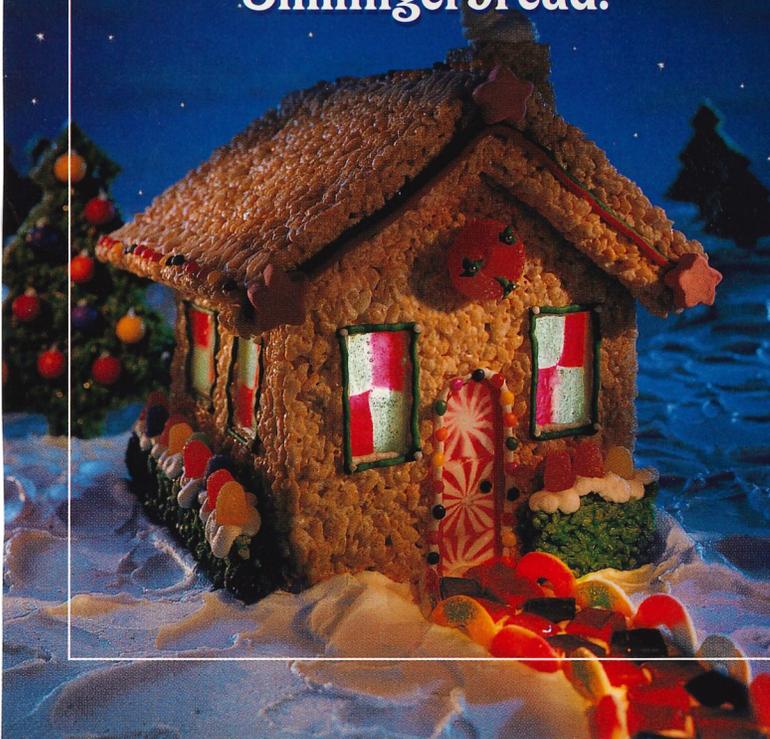
- Mail the package in enough time so it won't be left sitting in a post office or mail room over a weekend. Use an express mail service if time is tight or you wish more assurance your cookies will arrive unbroken.

- Check the weather at your package's destination. Temperatures can affect food quality, although cold is less of a threat than heat. If mailing to or from a warm climate, remember that nut brittles and foods containing chocolate may melt before delivery. Overnight delivery may be your best choice.

—Judith Dern



## Gingerbread, Shmingerbread.



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