

# A Highland Park cookie empire

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Roughly three million times last year, Highland Park's Carol Goldman and her band of merry bakers transformed handmade balls of butter, eggs, sugar, flour and various goodies into 13 varieties of magical half-pound cookies.

Carol's Cookies, as they are famously known, were shipped nationwide from the Highland Park factory to homes, offices and hundreds of food stores around the country. The plan is to do the same in 2014.

As is so often the case, a part of the credit (or blame) goes to mom.

"I come from the small town of Saginaw, Michigan," Goldman said. "There wasn't much to do. My mother was a great baker and she taught us how to bake. I baked cookies because she didn't like to bake cookies. She made pies and cakes."

Fast forward a few decades. Goldman and her husband, Peter, are living in Highland Park, their two young children are now in school and she's making her trademark half-pound cookies at home "as a way to keep busy."

She sold some at her exercise club in Highwood, got rave reviews, and decided to try to place her cookies at Sunset Foods, where she met with deli manager Walker Ori.

"He said, 'I really like these. I am going to take them home. If my wife likes them, you're in.' His wife loved them," Goldman recalled. He then ordered her to "go home and start baking."

She brought eight dozen cookies in the next day. They sold out "in record time." Carol's Cookies was born, and 35 years later, they're still a popular item at Sun-

set, as well as at Anton's Fruit Ranch and other nearby outlets.

In 1983, she was still baking the cookies at home when People Magazine named her cookie the fourth-best cookie in the United States, ahead of household names like Mrs. Field's and Famous Amos.

"That's when it turned from a hobby into a business," Goldman said. Her son Jeff joined the business 16 years ago, and has been instrumental in growing sales.

They're now in upscale gift shops and epicure departments all over the country, including every Whole Foods and Ghirardelli Chocolate Store. Cookies are also sold online and delivered to homes and offices in 48 hours to guarantee freshness.

Behind the impressive sales numbers, the success of Carol's Cookies is really all about quality and consistency, Goldman said.

"I believe in making the cookies just like my mother did," she said. "We don't cut back, ever, on quality." And while they occasionally add recipes, they never change the ones they already have.

That means they only use butter, not the oils or margarine some other brands use. They use premium ingredients and crack open their own farm fresh eggs every day, not liquid eggs. There's no watered down batter, either. And every cookie is literally made by hand.

When the health food craze hit, Carol's Cookies adapted.

"We have the mini-cookies now, which are selling really well," Goldman said. For anyone who has a half-pounder in front of them and starts feeling guilty, she has a simple solution: "share it."

At Carol's Cookies, it's not always about the cookies.

"Giving back to the com-



Carol Goldman shows off a batch of fresh-from-the-oven chocolate chip cookies at her Highland Park factory. PHOTOS BY ALAN HENRY/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

munity is important to us," said Goldman, who after graduating from the University of Michigan, was a social worker for Chicago's Department of Public Aid for 10 years before starting a family. She is a board member of Scleroderma Foundation of Greater Chicago, which is having its 12th annual fundraising walk-a-thon in Highland Park on June 22. She is active in the Gastro-Intestinal Research Foundation and Judd Goldman Adaptive Sailing Foundation. She also makes regular contributions to Children's Memorial Foundation, Susan G. Komen Foundation, Harold E. Eisenberg Foundation and many schools and local charities.

Carol's Cookies is also about togetherness, she said.

"I have loyal, wonder-

ful people that work for me. We are like a family. We all celebrate each other's birthdays and we share everything good and everything bad."

Looking forward, even at age 70, Goldman sees nothing but more cookies.

"I love what I do. I am not retiring," she said. "I don't like to play cards. I like to go out to lunch only once a week. I'm involved in a lot of charities. I'm busy and I don't want to be not busy."

And besides, if she left the business, what would she eat? Her own chocolate chip cookies with walnuts are still her favorite treat.

"I've always loved sweets," Goldman confessed. "I'd rather eat dessert than dinner."

For more information, go to [www.carolscookies.com](http://www.carolscookies.com)



ABOVE: An order of cookies is prepared for shipment by one of Carol's employees.



LEFT: Carol Goldman holds a tin of her famous cookies.