

LONG LIVE THESE CHOCOLATE CHIPS

What are the tastiest chocolate chip cookies in the land? Our panel of experts munched its way to a sweet decision

by Louise Lague

Gourmets and gourmands gave the taste test to no-frills chocolate chip cookies

1. Famous Amos, Los Angeles. 77 points. In a factory on each coast, Famous Amos makes nearly five tons of cookies a day, using Blue Bonnet margarine and Ghirardelli chocolate, the same brand that won PEOPLE's chocolate tasting last year. "I love the crunch," enthused Willard Scott. Franey pointed out that margarine holds up better than butter in a cookie.

2. Mrs. Fields, Park City, Utah. 75 points. By the end of this month Debbi Fields, 27, will have 150 cookie outlets—and a third baby. Her big, chewy cookies are made with butter and baked in a convection oven.

3. Tom's Mom's, Charlevoix, Mich. 87 points. This cookie uses chunks, not chips, of Van Leer chocolate (which also supplies chocolate to Godiva), and Primex shortening. Entrepreneur Tom Kneeland turns out 3,000 cookies a day in his one-kitchen restaurant. Scott called it "a great moist cookie," but (sorry) he prefers crunchy.

4. Carol's, Chicago. 64 points. Carol Goldman, 39, a marathon runner who weighs 103 pounds, distributes her cookies to local grocery stores. Preservative-free, the cookies were voted best-looking.

4. Cookie Cafe, Washington, D.C. 64 points. The cookie was applauded for its chocolate distribution, but owner Danny Koch, an M.B.A., refuses to divulge the recipe.

4. Neal's, Houston. 64 points. The Zismans liked the quality Lindt chocolate but wished for more than one central square of it. "Too gummy," grumped Franey.

5. Toll House, Whitman, Mass. 56 points. The original has been surpassed by the spin-offs; it got points for a "homemade appearance," but that's all.

6. Original Great American, Atlanta. 54 points. Partners Michael Coles and Arthur Karp went from the rag trade (they made jeans) to the cookie game and now claim the world's largest gourmet cookie company, which grosses \$50 million a year. Theirs was the biggest (4½-inch diameter) cookie in the tasting. "Too few chocolates," complained the Zismans. "One of the

worst," declared Mary Beth Clark.

7. David's, New York. 50 points. David Liederman, has a law degree and once baked cookies for the famed Trois-gros brothers' restaurant in France. But his all-butter, Lindt chocolate computer-mixed cookies flopped with our judges. "Very good butter flavor, but little else," said Clark.

7. Unknown Jerome's, San Francisco. 50 points. Made with half margarine and half butter, plus a secret blend of spices, U.J.'s are available in 30 states. Franey rated it "very poor." Said Willard: "a store-bought taste."

The judges, before the cookies crumbled: Pierre Franey, Willard Scott and Billy Mack in front; Honey and Larry Zisman, Mary Beth Clark (right) at rear.

