

# Food Guide

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## Carol's in the chips with her cookie recipe

By Sabina Aurelia

NOT EVERYONE can ride to fame and fortune on the back of a chocolate chip cookie, but Carol Goldman of Highland Park may be doing just that.

Last month she received national recognition in a *People* magazine competition to find the best chocolate chip cookies in the United States. Carol's Cookies, unheralded and virtually unknown, placed fourth after such heavyweights as Famous Amos and Mrs. Field's.

But a quick survey of *People's* Chicago bureau found most staff members here believed Goldman's cookies were the best tasting. They also were voted "best looking" in the national competition.

When she was 12 years old and growing up in Saginaw, Mich., Carol was encouraged by her mother, herself a baker of incomparable cakes and pies but an admitted failure at cookies, to become the family cookiemaker. Over the years, much to the delight of family and friends, Carol worked at perfecting her chocolate chip and oatmeal-raisin cookies. After marrying, she spent much of her free time painting and appearing in art fairs.

But she never stopped baking, and nine months ago she approached Walter Ori, delicatessen manager at one of the elite Sunset Foods stores on the North Shore, about selling her cookies. Skeptical at first, he quickly became a true believer upon tasting her product. He suggested she return the next day with a few dozen cookies to see if they would sell. Instead, she brought 50 pounds, and a veritable stampede ensued. By noon, all 50 pounds had been sold, and Ori declared: "Start baking. You're in business."

Carol now bakes 84 dozen of her thick, chewy cookies every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to supply her regular customers: the Sunset stores, several North Shore restaurants and independent supermarkets and private parties—even the snack bar of a posh exercise studio.

**BUBBLY AND gregarious**, she enjoys meeting people in her efforts to create an expanding market for her cookies. In early December she approached the department manager for the Epicure Shop in the glitzy new Neiman-Marcus store on Michigan Avenue with samples. The woman suggested Carol call her in a few days for the verdict. Instead, in only a few hours, the manager called Carol to tell her she and other employees loved the cookies, and she placed the first order. Within the week, Neiman-Marcus re-ordered four times. Carol says that on a recent Saturday they called in a panic: "We've only two left. You've



Tribune photo by Ron Bailey

Highland Park cookie master Carol Goldman: Her recipe for success is no secret.

got to get more in here. They're going crazy over your cookies!"

She never tires of baking. "I absolutely love my cookies!" So does her family, and her kids (Karen, 9; Jeff, 7) advertise avidly with such arbitrary statements as, "My mommy makes the best chocolate chip cookies in the world." She pays her baby-sitters in cookies and swears things have reached such a pass that kids call pleading to baby-sit in hopes of getting cookies.

As for the unique taste of her cookie dough, Carol says it results from a secret method of measuring and putting together the all-natural, no-preservative ingredients and also from heeding her mother's early admonition to use only the best ingredients. She says she pays extra for top-quality everything, emphasizing, "I really don't skimp on the old family recipe." Her slogan, soon to adorn Carol's Cookie bags, is, "It's More Than Just a Cookie."

Not only does she refuse to divulge her recipe or methods to people who ask, no one else knows them, either: not husband or kids, not her mother when alive, not even Donna Robinson, her baking assistant. Her best friends will say, "Carol tells me everything—except her recipe!" Little daughter Karen (who specializes in brownies) coyly tells those so impertinent as to inquire, "It's a little bit of this and a little bit of that." Just so it won't die with her, Carol is considering leaving the recipe to Karen in her will.

At 5 feet 3 inches and 100 pounds, Carol, 39, shows no signs of overindulgence in her own cookies. She runs it off with a daily regimen of 5 miles.

**WITH ALL THAT**, she still finds time for teaching. Officials at Fran-

cis Parker, one of the city's most prestigious private schools, were so impressed with her cookies they asked her to conduct an adult education course in cookiemaking, called "In and Out of the Cookie Jar." The course has been so successful that she will teach it again this spring.

Cookies have not always been the focus of Carol's professional life. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 1966 with a degree in social work and hopes of changing the world. She became a case worker in Chicago's slums and when she left 10 years later, was disappointed to find that the world was still very much the same.

It is with cookies that Carol has found her niche in life.

"Cookies are like apple pie and ice cream—they're the three most American foods." Husband Peter (a distributor of car polishes) has always been excited about her cookie business and supports her endeavors. In fact, after he bought a sailboat, so many friends told him, "I'll go sailing with you only if Carol brings her cookies," that he christened the craft the CookieMonster.

### Carol's cookie tips

- Don't use melted butter as shortening in cookies. It will alter their texture.
- Use real butter, not margarine.
- Never overbake cookies. They will be too dry and hard. Check the cookies for doneness halfway through the baking time.
- Also, halfway through the baking time, turn cookie sheets around so one side doesn't get browner than the other.
- Use all top-quality ingredients.
- Eggs should be large, not medium or extra-large.