

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

December 2, 2010

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

Ph: (813)744-5519 x 136, FAX: 744-5776  
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**It's Cookie Season!**

If turkey is the food symbol for Thanksgiving, cookies are the symbol of Christmas. From a plate of cookies left out for Santa to boxes of cookies mailed to far-off family and friends, they're a visible sign of our love. A box full of a variety of colorful cookies is a wonderful gift of recognition for so many people – the trash men, the mail carrier, the folks who service your car, your hairdresser or manicure specialist. A small gift like that goes a long way to making people feel appreciated in an increasingly impersonal world.

Cookies are also a great connection to our pasts. Whether it's Gramma's special recipe that only came out for the holidays, or flavors that tie us to our heritage, cookies can bring memories. Lebkuchen, the thick cakey cookie from Germany is seasoned with molasses and spices. Alsatian Plum cookies from France have no plums, but dates, raisins and pecans add flavor and texture. Mexican bizcochos show the influence of Spain with their sweet white wine and anise. Poland's kolaches have a tender dough made with cream cheese and are filled with colorful jam. 'Langues de Chat' means cat's tongues, which is what these long slender cookies from southern France remind us of. They can be plain vanilla, perky with citrus rind or even chocolate. Pfeffernüsse and Speculaas both have what many of us consider an unusual spice ingredient – black pepper. Of course the name should give it away, Pfeffernüsse means pepper nuts. Springerle are an anise-scented German cookie. Instead of being

frosted, these traditional cookies have their designs imprinted onto the dough. If you're lucky enough to have a carved rolling pin you just roll the dough then cut the cookies around the designs.

Of course for many people they're a major temptation – just a nibble here, a nibble there, and before we know it the calories can really add up. On the other hand, calories and cookies can be managed. They can be as tiny or as large as we choose. So making tiny ones not only limits the calories per bite, they can be easier to hide. “Out of sight, out of mind” as they say is great. So bake your cookies and freeze them immediately. Rock hard frozen cookies don't taste nearly as good as soft warm ones do.

Another way to manage the cookie monster is to bake only as many as you need to give away. So add up your gifts – a dozen to the mail carrier, 3 dozen for the guys at the car shop – however many are on your gift list. Get the containers ready. You can use gift boxes, clean plastic clamshell containers or colorful paper plates. Round up the holiday-colored plastic wrap. Then start baking.

As soon as the cookies cool, portion them out among the containers. If you know that someone is a chocoholic, put double the chocolate ones in their dish. A diabetic needs cookies made with sweetener, and a note on the package telling them how many carbs or what sweetener was used. They will really appreciate your thoughtfulness even if they decide that their diets won't allow more than one taste. When the boxes are full, stop baking! Wrap and freeze or deliver, immediately!

If you're mailing cookies to distant friends and family, pack similar cookies together. The only way to mix moist brownies with crisp sand dollars is to package

each in zipper-seal plastic bags. Tucking each kind in its own cup of a foil muffin tray is a pretty way to protect them. Use plenty of packing peanuts or popcorn to as cushions.

Here's a super simple, super American way to make cookies in a flash. There's no heritage involved, only a box of your favorite flavor of cake mix! You can add nuts, oatmeal, chocolate chips or raisins, you decide. Parchment paper on the cookie sheets saves a lot of time.

#### Mix Them Up Cookies

1 package cake mix – your flavor	1 egg
¼ cup oil	¼ cup water
1 cup of add-ins – nuts, oatmeal, chips, dried fruit, etc.	

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat mix with egg, water and oil. Stir in the extras. Drop by spoonfuls, 1 inch apart, on cookie sheets. Bake 15 min or until done. Allow to cool 1 minute on sheet, then move to a rack to cool completely. Makes 2 dozen small.