



The Café Sam Cookie Story (and Recipe)

We've offered a complimentary Chocolate Chip Cookie, as a thank-you for dining with us, to every customer who has eaten at Café Sam over the last twenty-five years. Conservatively speaking, the number of cookies that we have hand baked from scratch and given away is well over a million. Our Chocolate Chip Cookies are the first thing, someday after we are gone, that people will remember about the restaurant.

There are two things about the cookies that we have never given away - an extra upon request and the recipe.

It has been hard not to give an extra cookie at times (some of the regulars think they should get a second even if everyone else only gets one), but we have always tried to stay consistent by treating customers the same way. It has also been hard not to give away the recipe, but we promised not to when it was sent to us as an opening gift back in 1987.

Every now and then, after telling people we don't give out the cookie recipe, some start a guessing game. The object of the guessing game is to ask questions aimed at figuring out (on their own) what makes the cookies lacey. The questions have usually centered on three ingredients. Is it the butter, or the eggs, or the baking soda that does it?

Now, on the eve of our twenty-fifth anniversary at Café Sam, we are free to give away the recipe. And we can say this – it's the flour.

Here's the story behind the Café Sam Chocolate Chip Cookie (and the recipe).

Just before Christmas, in 1982, Jimmy Libman was visiting home in West Orange, New Jersey, on a break from a School for the Deaf in upstate New York. He was baking cookies with his mother, Dodi, when something went "wrong" with the recipe. The cookies came out of the oven flat –or lacey as later known.

They allowed the cookies to cool, and carefully scraped each one off the pan, instead of throwing the batch away. Then they gave the fragile looking cookies a try, and instantly realized what had gone wrong with the recipe turned out to be something right.

The cookies were great!

Jimmy and Dodi gave away a lot of those cookies to friends and neighbors during Christmas 1982, and everyone was talking about the remarkable texture. The feedback included comments ranging between "these are the best cookies I've ever eaten" to "you should go into business and sell these cookies."

They did go into business and sell the cookies. Gimmee Jimmy's Cookies was established in West Orange, New Jersey, in 1983 by Jimmy, with the help of his mother, Dodi. Jimmy was born deaf, and hired other deaf employees, and the company was successful throughout New Jersey and New York for many years.

What had gone wrong during the baking of the first Gimmee Jimmy's Cookies tray? It was the measurement of the amount of flour. A miscommunication between Jimmy and Dodi had resulted in the use of about one third less flour than the recipe called for. And what was the rest of the recipe?

Well, it's the Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe on the back of the bag of Nestle Chocolate Chips! That's right! The Café Sam Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe is the recipe on the back of the bag of Nestle Chocolate Chips with a little less flour in it.

Over the first few years, we played with the exact amount of flour a bit, and eliminated the nuts. Take a little flour out, and the cookies get a little more lacey. Put a little flour in, and the cookies get a little more country-style. You get the idea.

Without further delay, here's "The Café Sam Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe" – thank-you for supporting us for twenty-five years...

Café Sam Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

1 ½ Cups Flour
1 Teaspoon Baking Soda
1 Teaspoon Salt
1 Cup (2 Sticks) Butter, Softened
¾ Cup Granulated Sugar
¾ Cup Packed Brown Sugar
1 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract
2 Large Eggs
2 Cups (12-oz.) Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips

Method

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Combine flour, baking soda and salt in small bowl. Beat butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar and vanilla extract in large mixer bowl until creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in the chocolate chips. Place small balls of the batter onto greased baking sheets. Bake until brown, cool for a couple of minutes, and finally scrape the cookies off the baking sheets with a cookie scraper.

