

# 2023 Frequently Asked Questions about the Cookie Program

## **Why do Girl Scouts sell cookies?**

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a fun way for Girl Scouts of all ages to earn money that fuels girl-led initiatives, including community service projects and travel opportunities. This entrepreneurial spirit inspires girls everywhere to set important goals and put leadership skills into action.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led business in the country which prepares girls for their future by developing five business building skills:

- Goal setting
- Decision making
- Money management
- People skills
- Business ethics

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is, nationally, a \$780+ million business run by girls. All the proceeds from the local sale of Girl Scout Cookies remain in Texas Oklahoma Plains Council to support Girl Scouts, troops and the Council. The Council uses the proceeds to support our troops, develop new programs, maintain our camp properties, and more. It is not just a tasty cookie you buy when you purchase Girl Scout Cookies-you are also supporting local girls on projects they find important.

## **How do girls benefit from selling Girl Scout Cookies?**

- The Girl Scout Cookie program is the nation's premier entrepreneurial and educational program for girls.
- Selling Girl Scout Cookies is a unique and valuable way that girls can experience the power of goal setting, develop self-confidence and learn early business skills.
- Many successful businesswomen got their start selling Girl Scout Cookies.
- Girls and troops fund their favorite activities; earn special recognitions; earn Cookie Bucks that can be used to pay for many council-sponsored activities and camps or council merchandise.
- The council uses proceeds to provide quality Girl Scout program, activities including camping experiences, quality training for adults to ensure safe leadership and mentoring, and financial assistance so that all girls can participate in the Girl Scout program.
- The proceeds from the Girl Scout Cookie program remain in the council and support only Girl Scout activities.

## **Why is it called a program activity?**

- The real benefits for girls extend far beyond what's inside the packages.
- Girls learn skills like goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics.
- Girls earn funds to do service projects, troop activities and to support troop programs.

## **Can girls earn any badges from participating in cookie activities?**

- **Daisy Grade Level:** Cookie Goal Setter, My First Cookie Business, Toy Business Designer, Money Counts, Making Choices, Count it Up, and Talk it Up.
- **Brownie Grade Level:** Budding Entrepreneur, Cookie Decision Maker, My Cookie Customers, Money Manager, Philanthropist, Meet My Customers, and Give Back.

- **Junior Grade Level:** Business Jumpstart, Cookie Collaborator, My Cookie Team, Business Owner, Savvy Shopper, Cookie CEO, and Customer Insights.
- **Cadette Grade Level:** Business Creator, Cookie Innovator, Cookie Market Researcher, My Cookie Venture, Budgeting, Comparison, Financing My Dream, Business Plan, Marketing and Think Big.
- **Senior Grade Level:** Business Etiquette, Business Startup, Cookie Boss, My Cookie Network, Financing My Future, Buying Power, My Portfolio, and Customer Loyalty
- **Ambassador Grade Level:** Cookie Influencer, Entrepreneur Accelerator, My Cookie Business Resume, On My Own, Good Credit, Research and Development, and P & L.
- **Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pins (different by grade level)**

#### **How much is a box of cookies?**

- \$5.00 per box. There is no tax.
- \$6.00 per box for the Gluten-Free Carmel Chocolate Chip with Sea Salt

#### **What varieties of cookies do we sell?**

##### **The three required flavors are:**

- **Thin Mints:** Round dark-chocolate mint-flavored cookies.
- **Peanut Butter Sandwich:** Two oatmeal cookies with a layer of peanut butter sandwiched in between.
- **Trefoils:** Shortbread cookies shaped like the Girl Scout trefoil.

##### **Other varieties are:**

- Caramel deLites®: Caramel, coconut, and chocolate doughnut-shaped cookies.
- Peanut Butter Patties®: Round cookies with a layer of peanut butter that's covered in chocolate.
- Lemonades: Shortbread cookies with lemon icing.
- Toast-Yay: French Toast-inspired cookies dipped in delicious and full of flavor in every bite.
- Adventurefuls : Brownie inspired cookies with caramel flavored crème and a hint of sea salt.
- Gluten Free: Caramel Chocolate Chips with Sea Salt
- Raspberry Rally \*Online only cookie NEW this year

#### **What is a cookie cupboard?**

Cookie cupboards are "warehouses" run by local volunteers in the Council. Troop Cookie Chairs, with proper documentation, can go to cupboards to pick up extra cookies.

#### **What is a direct sale?**

Girls have cookies in hand to sell to customers.

#### **What are the dates of the cookie program?**

January 13 through March 5, 2023. Clean Up Sales are the following 3 weekends. Do you have any leftover inventory? Check with council to see what additional booths are available so you can sell through your inventory!

#### **Does a Girl Scout troop/girl have to participate if they/she doesn't want to?**

- No. Participation in this activity is voluntary; written permission from a parent/guardian is required.
- All age levels of Girl Scouts-Daisy through Ambassador may participate in the product program.

#### **Does a girl need to be registered as a Girl Scout by December 31, in order to participate in the program?**

- No, in order to sell cookies a troop or girl needs to be a registered member of Girl Scouts; however, they can join any time during the cookie program and start to sell cookies.
- Troops need to have already been meeting and held a parent meeting prior to selling.

#### **Can troops return extra cookies at the end of the sale?**

- **No**, so please order carefully.
- GSTOP pays for every case of cookies we put in our cookie cupboards. If 1,500 troops returned just five (5) cases that would be 90,000 packages for the council to absorb at the end of the sale. The money that could be used for great programs or providing more adult support would be diverted to pay for unsold cookies.

#### **The council has set two different safeguards for troops:**

- On the day of the troop initial pick up, troops can reduce their amount of what they pick up due to girls picking up cookies at their Cookie Now! event in their area. **(Not available in all areas)**
- Troop Cookie Chairs may pick up additional cookies at their service unit cookie cupboard and check them out for a three-day period.
- **Return policy**

| <b>Weeks</b>                            | <b>Returns</b>                       | <b>Exchanges</b>            |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Cookies Now! (AB, FTW, LB Areas)</b> | <b>No Returns</b>                    | <b>Yes, by January 24th</b> |
| <b>Weeks 1 to 4</b>                     | <b>No Returns</b>                    | <b>Yes</b>                  |
| <b>Week 5</b>                           | <b>3 Day return on booth Cookies</b> | <b>Yes</b>                  |
| <b>Week 6</b>                           | <b>3 Day return on booth Cookies</b> | <b>Yes</b>                  |
| <b>Week 7</b>                           | <b>3 Day return on booth Cookies</b> | <b>Yes, if in stock</b>     |

#### **What is Booth Scheduler, Council Sponsored Booths and Troop Secured Booths?**

- The Booth Scheduler is in Smart Cookies. It is where booth locations are stored so customers can find cookies in their area by zip code and date.
- Council Sponsored Booths are at businesses that require a contract signed by the council and all the locations, dates, and times are agreed upon by both the business and council.
  - Troops are NOT to contact the council sponsored booth locations. Please contact the council office in your area for specific local locations.
  - These locations require only one contact person from council. This ensures that businesses don't receive excessive phone calls.
  - If troops or individuals contact these locations, then we could lose that location for booth sale opportunities!
  - It is imperative that troops and their members:
    - Follow the Girl Scout Law and Promise.
    - Attendees must follow the ratio of 2 adults and 2-4 girls.
    - The girls should be engaged and participating; adults should be guiding the girls on how to communicate with customers, present items for sale, and provide safety.
  - Council uploads locations, dates, and times into Smart Cookies. Troops can select these locations and times as shown below:
    - **December 13-15, 2022** – Four (4) locations, for a total of four (4) booths; must not be back-to-back times or same location.
    - **January 3-5, 2023** - Two (2) additional locations, for a total of six (6) booths; must not be back-to-back times or same location.
    - **January 10, 2023**– Open booths based on availability at council sponsored booth locations.

- Troop Secured Booths are locations that individual troops contact: businesses or locations that are not part of the council sponsored locations. Example: Walgreens, CVS, individually owned business in the troops area, and restaurants. As a rule: If girls cannot enter an establishment alone, then cookies should not be sold in front of that business.
  - Troops approach business owner and/or managers to get permission for a booth sale. **(Not until after December 1)**
  - Troops secure date and time of booth sale
  - Troops add their troop secured booth information to Smart Cookies; including the:
    - Business name and address name.
    - Contact information of the person they received the permission. (first & last name, title, and contact phone or email)
    - Date and time of the booth
  - The booth is routed to council staff to approve their location.
  - Troops are notified via email if a location is approved or declined.

### **Where can I see a color picture of the cookie recognitions?**

- The recognitions can be viewed on our website and on the recognition insert that shows the Family Cookie Entrepreneurial Pin.

### **How do you come up with the cookie recognition program?**

- Very carefully! All the cookie recognitions offered by our bakery must be approved by GSUSA.
- Recognitions are program-related and selected to motivate girls to set and achieve goals for their troop as well as for themselves.
- Pictures of sample recognitions are taken to camps over the summer and the girls are surveyed. There is also an online survey conducted to reach a wider Girl Scouting audience.
- The information gathered is compiled and the council volunteer Product Program Committee chooses recognition level and items based on girl input.

### **How do you ensure the safety of Girl Scouts who sell cookies?**

- The safety and security of our members is always our chief concern. Following are the guidelines for safety that are shared with adults at cookie training and taught to the girls in the troop.
  - Adults must always accompany Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies and Juniors on all cookie activities. Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors must always be supervised by adults when engaged in any cookie activity.
  - Girls should always wear their uniform or Girl Scout pin.
  - Girl Scouts should never enter any customer's home or approach a car when selling or delivering, even if they know the person.
  - Money should be turned in to adults as soon as possible; girls should never have large sums of money on their person.
  - Do use safe pedestrian practices.
  - Guidelines for online marketing should be followed and family adults should monitor girls' use of the internet.

### **If someone returns a box of cookies to us and says it is damaged, what do we do with them?**

- Replace the cookies immediately with those you already have. Then return the damaged box to the closest cookie cupboard. They will do a one-for-one exchange for you.
- If you do not have an extra box, take the box from the customer directly to the cookie cupboard, exchange it, and then return it to the customer.

### **Why should checks be limited to a total of \$ 80.00 per troop member family?**

- Basically, it is to limit losses. It is unfortunate, but the council does receive insufficient checks every year. By limiting the amount, a check can be written for, we reduce our liability for loss through bad checks.

**Can families pay the troop using a credit card?**

- **No. Council pays** the fees for troops utilizing credit cards during product sales; it takes away valuable council resources to support our troops, develop new programs, maintain our camp properties, and much more.
- Families should turn in payment to the troop as collected from the customer.
- Families should not deposit checks or cash in their personal accounts!

**How to avoid collecting Counterfeit Bills during the Cookie Program**

- Troops should familiarize themselves, and the girls, on how to identify Counterfeit Bills. Information can be found at: <https://www.itestcash.com/blogs/news/how-to-identify-counterfeit-bills>
- There are also pens at office supply locations, or banks, that can verify if bills are counterfeit instantly.
- Troops should not break large bills for a small sale without first verifying the bill is valid.

**Are Girl Scout cookies tax deductible? *According to the IRS and GSUSA:***

- Girl Scout Cookies that are purchased for personal or group enjoyment are **NOT tax deductible** because you receive a product at a fair market value.
- Girl Scout Cookies purchased and left with a troop for donation for **Cookies for Heroes** may qualify as a charitable donation. Please consult your tax accountant for advice.

**What are Cookie Bucks?**

- Cookie Bucks are earned based on the number of packages sold (See: *The Cookie Jar for more details*).
- Cookie Bucks can be applied to summer overnight or day camp, many GSTOP-sponsored activities and can be used toward the purchase of merchandise at the GSTOP shops. They can also be used for older girls going on a Destination.