

**HOLIDAY COOKIE WINNERS**

A three-part concoction consisting of a buttery cookie, a mound of flavorful cream-cheese filling and a chocolate drizzle won Fern Duffly the grand prize in our holiday cookie contest.



**KEVIN EISENHUT / KEISENHUT@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM**

Duffy, who lives in Lake Geneva, said she got the recipe for her Choco-Butter Sweets from a friend about 40 years ago. She didn't like the granulated-sugar cookie base — it was too sweet. So she substituted a powdered-sugar Russian-tea-cake dough and liked that better.

She noted that it can be made in stages: The base can be baked and the filling mixed, and both refrigerated, until you have time for assembly.

The judges liked the cookie for its mix of creamy and crisp textures and its rich flavors, which include pecans, coconut and chocolate. It was hard to stop at just one.

The recipe originally won the thumbprint cookie category. Other category winners appear on these pages with red recipe titles. Finalists have green titles.

Look for even more finalist recipes online at [www.jsonline.com/food](http://www.jsonline.com/food). Happy baking!

**Choco-Butter Sweets**

*Makes about 2 dozen*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup sifted powdered sugar**  
**1/2 cup vanilla extract**

**2 1/4 cups flour**  
**1/4 teaspoon salt**  
**Filling (see recipe)**  
**Chocolate drizzle (see recipe)**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In medium bowl, mix butter, powdered sugar and vanilla thoroughly. In another bowl, combine flour and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture and mix well. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Press thumb gently into center.

Bake in preheated oven 12 to 15 minutes or until done. Remove from oven and cool completely.

While cookies cool, prepare filling and chocolate drizzle. Fill indentations of cooled cookies with filling, then pipe on the chocolate drizzle.

**Filling:**

**1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, room temperature**  
**2 cups sifted powdered sugar**  
**2 tablespoons flour**

**1/2 cup vanilla extract**  
**1/2 cup chopped pecans**  
**1/2 cup flaked coconut**

In bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well.

**Chocolate drizzle:**

**1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chip**  
**2 tablespoons butter**

**2 teaspoons milk**  
**1/2 cup sifted powdered sugar**

Combine ingredients in the top of a double boiler. Cook over low heat until melted, stirring until smooth.

This winning decorated cookie charmed us with its sophisticated look and pleasing chocolate-peppermint flavor. It's from Deb Bonfiglio of River Hills.

**Chocolate Shortbread Holiday Trees**

*Makes 5 to 7 dozen*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1 cup powdered sugar**  
**2 cups unsweetened cocoa powder**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**6 ounces white chocolate chips**  
**1 teaspoon solid vegetable shortening**  
**1/2 cup finely crushed peppermint candy canes**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In bowl, combine butter and powdered sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Add flour, cocoa powder and vanilla and mix well.

On wax paper, roll out dough to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 1 1/2 to 2-inch strips, then into triangle shapes with two long sides and one short side. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake in preheated oven 8 minutes, or until firm to the touch. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

To make frosting: In small saucepan, melt white chocolate and shortening, stirring frequently. Dip short sides into melted chocolate, letting excess drip off. Place on wax paper and let harden. Place remaining melted chocolate frosting into a plastic sandwich bag with one end snipped off. Pipe frosting over 1 cookie in a side-to-side design to resemble a giraffe, then immediately sprinkle with peppermint candies. Let harden.

These rich chocolate-toffee bars from Mary Lueke of Menasha were our top pick in the bar category.

**Toffee Turtle Bars**

*Makes about 32 bars*

**2 cups flour**  
**1 cup powdered sugar**  
**1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk**  
**1 large egg, beaten**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**1/2 cup chocolate chips or walnuts**  
**3/4 cup chopped pecans**  
**1 cup toffee baking chips**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat 13-by-9-inch pan with vegetable oil spray.

In bowl, combine flour, powdered sugar and butter. Mix until crumbly, then firmly press into prepared pan to form a crust. Bake in preheated oven 12 to 14 minutes or until dough is golden.

In medium bowl, combine condensed milk, egg and vanilla and pour over baked crust. Sprinkle evenly with nuts, then chips and toffee pieces. Return to oven and bake until set and edges are golden brown, about 25 minutes. Cool completely at room temperature, then cool completely in refrigerator.

The pleasing almond flavor and nice crunch of these simple little cookies, from Paula Tuchscherer-Jones of Milwaukee, earned them a win in the ethnic cookie category.

**Amaretti**

*Makes 3 to 4 dozen*

**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**7 ounces amaretto liqueur**

**2 large egg whites**  
**2 to 4 tablespoons turbinado sugar**



In large bowl, beat granulated sugar and almond paste with electric mixer at medium speed until almond paste is broken into small pieces. Add amaretto and egg whites. Beat on high speed 4 minutes or until smooth. Chill batter 20 minutes.

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Drop batter by teaspoonfuls 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Sprinkle evenly with turbinado sugar. Bake 6 to 8 minutes or until edges of cookies just begin to brown. Cool completely on pans; carefully remove cookies from parchment.

Cranberry and lemon star in this winning drop cookie with fluffy frosting from Liz Bannon of Port Washington, which was adapted from a recipe in a Taste of Home cookbook.

**Zesty Cranberry Lemon Cookies**

*Makes about 30 cookies*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup granulated sugar**  
**1/2 cup powdered sugar**  
**1 large egg**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**2 teaspoons lemon juice**  
**2 cups flour**  
**1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar**

**3/4 teaspoon grated lemon peel**  
**1/4 teaspoon salt**  
**1/4 cup fresh cranberries, chopped into small pieces**  
**Frosting (see recipe)**  
**Lemon peel slivers and whole cranberries for garnish (optional)**



In large bowl, beat butter and vanilla until fluffy. Add egg, then vanilla and lemon juice. In separate bowl, combine flour, cream of tartar, lemon peel and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture slowly. Stir in cranberries and chill 2 hours.

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Roll dough into 1-inch balls and set 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheets. Flatten cookies with a glass dipped in sugar.

Bake in preheated oven 12 to 14 minutes or until cookie edges begin to brown.

While cookies are done, make frosting.

When cookies are baked, remove from oven and cool on cookie sheets, then transfer to wire racks and cool completely. When cool, top with frosting. If desired, decorate tops of cookies with a sliver of lemon peel and half a cranberry. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

**Frosting:**

**1/2 cup (1/2 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup powdered sugar**

**3 to 4 tablespoons milk**  
**1/2 teaspoon grated lemon peel**

In medium bowl, combine butter and milk and beat until well combined. Add milk slowly until mixture reaches light, creamy consistency.

Apply lemon peel and mix well.

This co-winner in the filled-cookie category from Dorothy O'Neill of Whitefish Bay makes a delicate, crispy cookie. Dipping in chocolate and nuts adds flavor and texture.

**Viennese Sand Cookies**

*Makes 3 dozen*

**1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature, plus 1 tablespoon butter (divided)**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 egg yolk**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**2 cups flour**  
**Additional granulated sugar**

**2 cups powdered sugar**  
**2 to 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**  
**Red or green food coloring, if desired**  
**2 ounces semi-sweet chocolate**  
**Finely chopped nuts**

In large mixer bowl, cream together 1 cup of the butter, the 1 cup granulated sugar, egg yolk, vanilla and flour. Cover dough and chill at least 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Make 72 balls of the size of small walnuts. Place two inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Dip bottom of small glass into sugar and use to flatten each ball to 1/8-inch thickness.

Bake in preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes, or until cookies are lightly colored with slightly browned edges. Place on cooling rack.

Prepare filling: Combine powdered sugar, another 1/2 cup butter and lemon juice. Filling may be colored red or green with a couple drops of food coloring, if desired. Place filling on one cookie and cover with another, repeating until you have 36 filled sandwiches.

In double boiler, melt chocolate and remaining 1 tablespoon butter until just heated. Dip an edge of each cookie into chocolate, then in nuts.

Chocolate and cherries — always a great combo — are enhanced in this winning shaped-cookie recipe by a coating of cocoa and powdered sugar. It was submitted by Lois A. Hernandez of West Allis.

**Cheery Chocolate Truffle Cookies**

*Makes 1 dozen*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**3/4 cup powdered sugar (divided)**  
**1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract**  
**1 square (1 ounce) unsweetened chocolate, melted**

**2 1/4 cups flour**  
**1/4 teaspoon salt**  
**1 cup mini-chocolate chips**  
**48 red or green candied cherries (see note)**  
**2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder**

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease cookie sheets.

In large bowl, cream butter and 1/2 cup powdered sugar with electric mixer. Blend in vanilla and melted chocolate. Combine flour and salt and add to butter mixture on low speed. Stir in chips by hand.

Shape dough around cherries to create 1-inch balls. Set 1 inch apart on cookie sheets and bake in preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes or until set.

When done, remove from oven and cool completely. Mix remaining 1/4 cup powdered sugar with cocoa powder. When cookies are cool, gently roll them in the powdered sugar mixture.

**Note:** Maraschino cherries that are well drained and blotted dry worked well in this recipe.

**And to all a good bite!**



*believe*

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Wendy Lindsey of Wauwatosa sent this winning no-bake cookie, which any date and coconut lover will find irresistible.

**Date Nut Balls**

*Makes about 6 to 7 dozen*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter**  
**1 1/2 cups sugar**  
**2 cups finely chopped dates**  
**2 tablespoons milk**  
**1 teaspoon salt**

**2 eggs, well beaten**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**1 cup chopped nuts**  
**4 cups crispy rice cereal**  
**1 cup (6-ounce package) Sweetened shredded coconut (about 3 cups)**

In medium pan, melt butter and add dates and cook until mixture boils.

Remove from heat. Mix eggs into milk and stir into hot mixture with salt. Return to heat and boil 2 minutes.

Remove from heat, add vanilla and nuts (tester used pecans). Cool completely, then stir in cereal, mixing until well coated. Shape into 1-inch balls, then roll in coconut.



This co-winner in the filled-cookie category from Gerry Cofta of Milwaukee is a cranberry, nut filling.

**Cranberry Nut Cups**

*Makes 24*

**1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, room temperature**  
**1 cup flour**  
**1 egg**

**3/4 cup packed brown sugar**  
**1 tablespoon butter, melted**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**3 tablespoons chopped fresh cranberries**  
**3 tablespoons chopped walnuts**

In medium bowl, stir together butter and cream cheese. Mix in flour until well blended. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

In medium bowl, make filling: Whisk together egg, brown sugar, melted butter and vanilla. Stir in cranberries and walnuts.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Roll dough into 1-inch balls. Press balls into ungreased mini-muffin pans, so dough covers bottom and sides. Fill each cup with a generous teaspoon of cranberry filling. Bake in preheated oven 25 to 30 minutes, or until edges of cups are light brown.

This unique sandwich cookie from Gerry Cofta of Milwaukee offers a classic flavor pairing of chocolate and raspberry.

**Raspberry-Filled Chocolate Ravioli Cookies**

*Makes about 6 dozen*

**2 ounces bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate**  
**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 egg**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**1/2 teaspoon chocolate extract**  
**1/4 teaspoon baking soda**  
**Dash of salt**  
**2 1/2 cups flour**  
**1 1/4 cup seedless raspberry jam (about)**  
**1/4 cup powdered sugar**

Melt chocolate in top of double boiler over hot, not boiling water. Remove from heat; cool. In large bowl, cream butter and granulated sugar until blended. Add egg, vanilla and chocolate extracts, baking soda, salt and melted chocolate. Beat until light.

Blend in flour to make stiff dough. Divide dough in half. Cover and refrigerate until firm.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.

Roll out dough, half at a time, to 1/8-inch thickness between 2 sheets of plastic wrap. Remove top sheet of plastic (if dough gets too soft and sticks to plastic, refrigerate until firm). Cut dough into 1 1/2-inch squares. Place half the squares 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. Place about 1/2 teaspoon jam in center of each square; top with another square. Using fork, press edges of squares together to seal, then pierce center of each square. Bake in preheated oven 10 minutes or just until edges are browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Dust lightly with powdered sugar.

Macaroon meets chocolate chip cookie in this co-winner in the drop cookie category, with a twist of cinnamon, nutmeg and mint; it's from Jessica Wall-Valadez of Milwaukee.

**Mint Coconut Drops**

*Makes about 5 dozen*

**1 cup sugar**  
**1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 1/2 cups flour**  
**3 teaspoons baking powder**

**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**3/4 teaspoon salt**  
**1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg**  
**2 cups flaked coconut**  
**1 cup (6-ounce package) semi-sweet, mint-flavored chocolate morsels**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In bowl, combine sugar and butter; blend well. Beat in 2 eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Sift together and blend in gradually the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt and nutmeg. Add coconut and mint chocolate morsels. Mix well.

Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls on greased cookie sheets. Bake in preheated oven 8 to 10 minutes. Cool on racks.

**Note:** Mint chocolate chips may be available in grocery stores only during the holidays.



Jalapeño, raspberry and pecans blend beautifully in this thumbprint cookie from Anna Marie Bleich of California, Mo.

**Frosty's Christmas Buttons**

*Makes about 8 dozen*

**2 cups (4 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature**  
**1 1/2 cups sugar**  
**3 large eggs, separated**

**2 teaspoons vanilla extract**  
**4 1/2 cups flour**  
**3 cups finely chopped pecans**  
**1/2 cup raspberry preserves**  
**1/2 cup jalapeño jelly**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

In large bowl of standing electric mixer, beat together the butter, sugar and salt until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolks, one at a time, and vanilla; beat until smooth. Mix in flour gradually, stirring until just combined well.

Roll dough in to 1/4-inch balls. Dip balls in lightly beaten egg white, then in pecans. Place about 1 inch apart on parchment-lined cookie sheets. Using small end of a wooden spoon, depress tops of cookies to make a small thumbprint or well.

Bake in preheated oven 12 to 15 minutes, or until pale golden. Combine preserves and jelly. While cookies are still hot, fill the depressions with preserves-jelly mixture. Do not overfill.



Mary Wilhelm of Sparta sent her signature cookie, which she said she has prepared for the Food Network, Warrens Cranfest and Taste of Home magazine. Two classic flavor pairings — brown sugar and cashews, and orange and cranberry — come together.

**Cranberry-Cashew Jumbles**

*Makes 4 dozen*

**1 cup firmly packed brown sugar**  
**1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup sour cream**  
**1 large egg**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**2 cups flour**

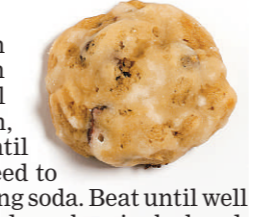
**3/4 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1/4 teaspoon baking soda**  
**1 cup salted cashews, coarsely chopped**  
**6 ounces dried cranberries**  
**1/2 cup powdered sugar**  
**3 tablespoons orange juice**

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In large mixer bowl, combine brown sugar and butter. Beat at medium speed, scraping bowl often, until creamy; 2 to 3 minutes. Add sour cream, egg and vanilla; continue beating until well mixed; 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce speed to low; add flour, baking powder and baking soda. Beat until well mixed; 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in cashews and cranberries by hand.

Drop dough by rounded teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart on parchment-lined cookie sheets. Bake in preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool completely on wire racks, spaced close together for drying on frosting.

In small bowl, stir together powdered sugar and orange juice. Place wire racks over sheets of wax paper. Drizzle icing over cookies and let excess drip down onto wax paper. Let set before storing.



Pat Korth of Muskego offered a coconut variation on the peanut butter kiss cookie.

**Macaroon Kiss Cookies**

*Makes 4 to 5 dozen*

**1/2 cup (1/2 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, room temperature**  
**3/4 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 egg yolk**  
**2 teaspoons almond extract, or more to taste**

**1 1/2 cups flour**  
**2 teaspoons baking powder**  
**1/2 cup flaked unsweetened coconut (divided)**  
**4 to 5 dozen chocolate kisses, unwrapped**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In large mixer bowl, cream butter, cream cheese and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg yolk and almond extract; beat well. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture. Stir in 3 cups of the coconut. Cover tightly and chill 1 hour. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll in remaining 2 cups coconut. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake in preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Firmly press chocolate kiss into warm, not hot, cookie. (They have a tendency to melt flat if placed on cookie too soon.) Let cool 1 minute. Carefully remove from cookie sheet and cool on wire rack.



Cranberries and pistachios are the complementary flavors of this cookie recipe submitted by Jane Bortz of Beaver Dam.

**Pistachio Cranberry Cookies**

*Makes about 5 dozen*

**1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup vegetable oil**  
**1/2 cup granulated sugar**  
**1/2 cup packed brown sugar**  
**1 egg**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**1 3/4 cups flour**

**1/2 teaspoon salt**  
**1/2 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1/2 teaspoon baking soda**  
**1/2 cup dried cranberries**  
**1 cup crispy rice cereal**  
**1/2 cup rolled oats**  
**1/2 cup chopped pistachios**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In large bowl, cream butter, oil and sugars until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla.

Combine flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda; add to bowl and mix on low speed of electric mixer until well mixed. Stir in cranberries, cereal, oats and pistachios. Drop by teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.

Bake in preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove to wire racks and cool.

Cindy Schweitzer of Muskego offered this cherry twist on melt-in-your-mouth finger cookies.

**Cherry Almond Crescents**

*Makes 3 to 4 dozen*

**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1/2 cup powdered sugar plus sugar to coat cookies**  
**1 teaspoon almond extract**  
**1 1/2 cups sifted flour**

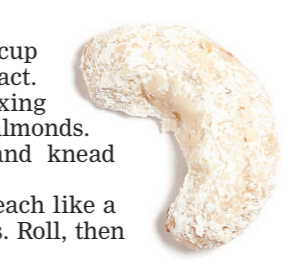
**1/4 teaspoon salt**  
**1/4 cup cornstarch**  
**1/4 cup finely chopped candied red cherries**  
**1/2 cup finely chopped blanched almonds**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In large bowl, cream butter, 1/2 cup powdered sugar and almond extract. Add flour, salt and cornstarch, mixing well. Add chopped cherries and almonds. Turn out onto floured surface and knead slightly.

Divide dough into 8 pieces; roll each like a pencil then cut into 2 1/2-inch pieces. Roll, then shape into crescents.

Bake on parchment-lined cookie sheets in preheated oven until lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from oven and cool slightly, then roll into the remaining powdered sugar while still warm.



Virginia Lane of Cudahy secured this recipe, with its nice complexity of flavors, in the late '50s or '60s when she lived in Iran.

**Nane Shirini**

*Makes about 3 dozen*

**2 1/2 cups flour**  
**1 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1 cup (2 sticks) butter, room temperature**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**2 egg yolks**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**1 teaspoon almond extract**  
**1 teaspoon lemon extract**  
**1 cup chopped walnuts (optional)**

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

In large bowl, sift together flour and baking powder. In separate bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add egg yolks and extracts. Gradually add flour mixture and mix until blended. Add nuts if using.

With hands, roll dough into balls about the size of large walnuts. Coat cookie sheets with vegetable oil spray and set on cookie sheets 1 inch apart. Bake in preheated oven 20 minutes or until just beginning to brown. Remove from oven and cool on wire rack.

**Variations:** Push your thumb into the cookie before baking and add an almond, 1/4 teaspoon jam or marmalade, M & M candies,