



## Drowning in Cookies

by Katie O'Sullivan

I've been drowning for the last few months.

It's not the cold blue waters of Nantucket Sound that are pulling me under, but the myriad waves of Girl Scout cookies that have been crashing through my living room and my life.

The title of "Cookie Mom" should never be taken lightly.

I shouldn't complain. I've been Cookie Mom for my daughter's Girl Scout troop before. For some reason, this year, I felt overwhelmed.

Hundreds of boxes of cookies have passed through my hands, my minivan, and my living room. One thousand eight hundred and eighty one boxes, to be exact. Their names and brightly colored packaging haunt my dreams.



Green boxes of Thin Mints, bright red boxes of Peanut Butter Patties, and the purple of the Caramel DeLites – these colors mark the most popular flavors, the most numerous of the boxes scattered across the back of the minivan on any given day.

Then there's the shocking yellow of the Lemonades, the old-fashioned orange of the Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookie boxes, the light blue boxes of Shortbread Trefoils, the newest flavor, Shout-Outs, in their hot pink packaging, and the new eco-friendly blue plastic on the Thanks-A-Lot cookies. Cookies, cookies, and more cookies.

Being Cookie Mom means booking the cookie booth times, placing the orders online, picking up multiple cases of cookies multiple times, schlepping them to and from booth locations, helping the girls set up table displays, making sure each girl's order forms get filled, double-checking that each girl gets credited for her individual and booth sales in the online database.... There's a 26-page Girl Scout booklet that outlines all the procedures and processes just for cookies.

Then there are the thousands of dollars to be counted and recounted. At \$4 per box, the cookie booth money adds up fast. There's money to deposit into the Girl Scout Council's account to pay our cookie bills, and money to deposit into our troop account to pay for our Spring Camping.

And then there are the "Cookies for a Cause." Each year, every troop is encouraged to choose a cause or charity to receive cookie donations.

For the last few years, my daughter and her friends have chosen to collect cookies to send overseas to our men and women in uniform. They send the cookies to soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq who rely on care packages from home to get through their long deployments.

Now that my daughter and her friends are Junior Girl Scouts, it should all be easier, and in some ways it is.

The girls are more self-motivated. They do the cookie selling on their own, setting their own goals and striving to meet them. They elected to work at as many cookie booths as I could sign us up for at the local supermarkets, and were truly eager and attentive at each sale.

Six cookie booth weekends later, the troop is finally finished with cookies. My daughter has been told countless times what a great saleswoman she's become. Cookie season has been a huge success for my troop, and the girls were able to collect 237 boxes of cookies to send to our soldiers overseas.

Every girl in the troop sold over 100 boxes of cookies. Half the troop sold over 200 boxes of cookies. My own daughter sold more than 400 boxes of cookies, because she eagerly signed herself (and me) up for almost every cookie booth shift.

It's a lot of cookies.

But Girl Scout cookies mean more than just a fattening treat. The girls learned to perfect their sales pitches, and even the shyest of them was able to speak to customers at the booth sales with confidence and poise.



They all knew their product, and knew more than one way to pitch it. They all learned to add in their heads (or on their fingers) and make correct change for their customers. They all practiced proper manners and etiquette, using pleases and thank-yous ad infinitum.

When a potential customer said no, they remained polite and told them, "Thanks anyway," often in unison, eliciting smiles. When a potential customer said they'd already purchased cookies from someone else, the girls would say, "Thanks for supporting Girl Scouts!"

They learned that when you're in sales, you're selling yourself as much as the product and a friendly smile goes a long, long way.



#### **A mountain of cookies at Camp Edwards – Treats for the Troops**

As I type this, there's still a pile of cookies in my living room, but all the boxes left are already paid for and earmarked for soldier care packages.

Half of them were already delivered on March 12th, when hundreds of Girl Scouts gathered at the Military Reserve on the Upper Cape. Girls from all over Massachusetts delivered their donations to Camp Edwards, where Cape Cod Cares for the Troops collected 1,700 boxes of cookies.

The event was well attended by soldiers stationed at the training base and Girl Scouts of all ages. Even Ruth Branscom, the CEO of Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, was on hand to thank both the girls for their hard work and the soldiers for their service.

My daughter's troop elected to bring about half of their cookie donations to this event, and will work with another local group, Harwich Helps Heroes, to send the rest of the cookies to soldiers overseas. They may even do another service project in conjunction with this group, collecting other care package items to send along with the cookies.

So, even though it felt overwhelming at times, being involved with cookie sales has been worthwhile in many respects. I'm just glad the season is over, and I don't have to lug another case of Thin Mints to the supermarket or multiply everything by \$4 ever again.

At least, not until next year.



[Katie O'Sullivan](#) is the Editor of this magazine.

When she's not chained to her computer, she enjoys working on projects with her daughter's Girl Scout troop... just don't mention "Thin Mints" to her for a while.