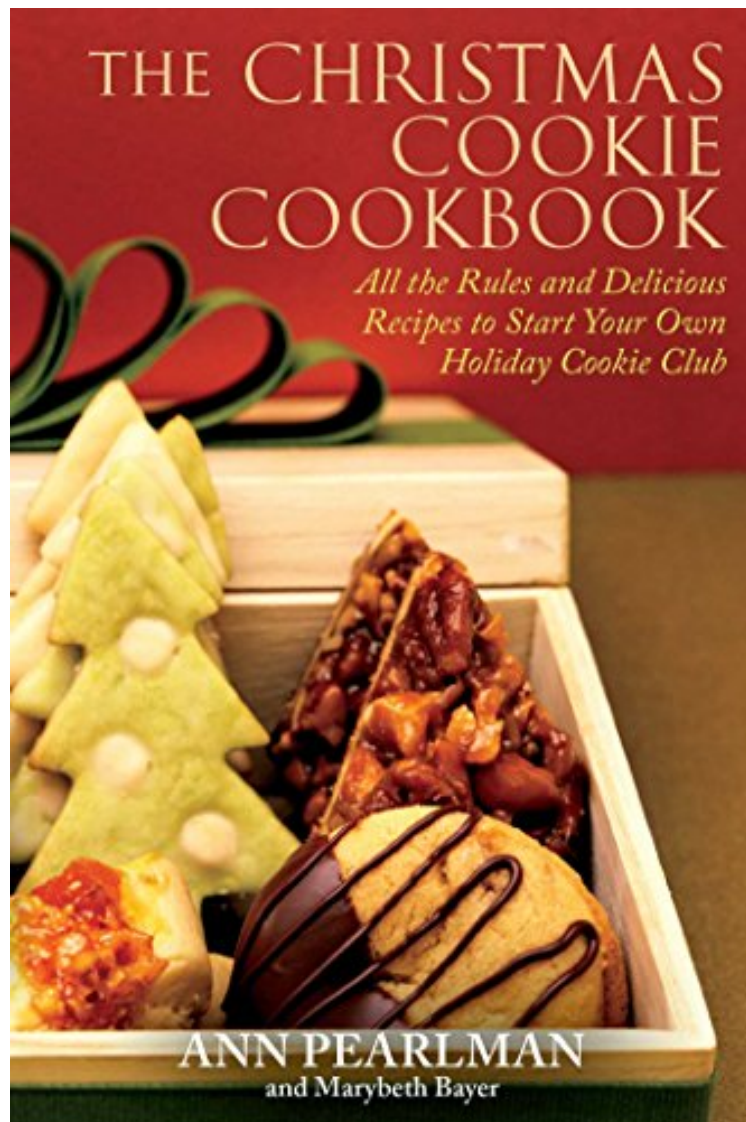


(Read free) The Christmas Cookie Cookbook: All the Rules and Delicious Recipes to Start Your Own Holiday Cookie Club

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Ann Pearlman, Mary Beth Bayer
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Ann Pearlman, Mary Beth Bayer : The Christmas Cookie Cookbook: All the Rules and Delicious Recipes to Start Your Own Holiday Cookie Club before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Christmas Cookie Cookbook: All the Rules and Delicious Recipes to Start Your Own Holiday Cookie Club:

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The Christmas Cookie Cookbook is the perfect holiday present or year-round companion for new and seasoned bakers alike. Packed with tips, anecdotes, and tons of recipes, this cookbook is a must-have for anyone looking for a new holiday tradition or simply a fresh way to spread holiday cheer throughout the year. For almost twenty years, Ann Pearlman and a dozen of her friends have been in a Christmas Cookie Club founded by Marybeth Bayer. Every year at the same time, they gather at her house to exchange cookies, wine, and laughs. Now, with The Christmas Cookie Cookbook, Ann shows readers how to start a club of their own. The recipes and the inspiration are all here in one complete guide for cookie club hopefuls. With a diverse selection of not only Christmas cookies, but Chanukah and Ramadan cookies too, there's a treat in here for everyone!

About the Author Ann Pearlman, Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award Nominee, is the author of *Infidelity: A Memoir*, *The Christmas Cookie Club*, and *The Christmas Cookie Cookbook*. She lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. PROLOGUE Confessions of a Cookie Virgin I HAD NEVER HEARD OF cookie exchanges until I met Marybeth. We joined the same woman's investment club back in the late nineties and discovered we had lots of interests in common. We both loved to dance, read books, go to concerts, socialize, dine out, and cook. When she moved around the corner from me, we spent even more time together! As soon as I heard about her cookie party, I wanted to join. I listened as our friends laughed about funny events, discussed what cookies they might bake, and joked about the rules. "I want to come," I said, but they shook their heads. "Nope. We have rules. Only twelve people. So someone will have to drop out." "Twelve? Why only twelve?" I pushed. "Cause we don't want to bake more than 13 dozen cookies." "Thirteen dozen? If there are only twelve women?" "We each donate one dozen to charity, Safe House." That completely sold me. The fact that I would be making something for families going through hard times and partying with my girlfriends increased my desire to attend. Well, maybe some year I'd be able to come. Maybe I could even start my own group. Finally, someone dropped out. There was room for me. I was thrilled. But I was nervous! I love to bake, but I heard about the standards of delicious cookies in fabulous packages and wondered if mine would taste sufficiently yummy, be sufficiently attractive. And the cookies had to come with a story! What kind of story? I immediately thought of baking my grandmother's pecan balls, the favorite cookie of my entire family and one that held memories of me and my grandmother in her kitchen. But there was no story: no hero, no conflict, no quest, no crisis. Only happy memories and always the happy ending of delicious cookies. "That's enough," Marybeth assured. "Family recipes with memories are the best cookie stories." Then I shopped to buy packaging that might be acceptable. I went to party supply stores, craft stores, department stores. I looked at tins and baker's boxes. Finally I chose small brown paper bags and decorated the handles with raffia and bronze wired ribbon. I relinquished the idea of baking watermelon rind fruitcakes loaded with amaretto, which I love, but which my children do not. The weekend after Thanksgiving, I baked cookies instead of fruitcakes. And as I was rolling the warm cookies with their nutty and buttery aroma in feathery confectioner's sugar, I was brought back to my grandmother's kitchen with the laughing lady cookie canister and remembered how she taught me to sift the sugar over the mounds of cookies to let it soak in. The party was full of great cheer, fun, fabulous food, joking, and good-natured teasing. I didn't know all the women at the first party and thus was introduced to women who eventually became new friends. When it was my turn to pass out my cookies and tell my story, I was nervous. But my new friends were welcoming and wanted to hear more about my grandmother Lala. They liked my packaging and loved the cookies. I was no longer a cookie virgin! And I was accepted into the fold of fun-loving cookie bakers. Through the party I developed a group of friends I socialize with all year. I returned home with 12 dozen cookies, which I shared with friends and family alike. My kids and grandkids tasted them, each immediately developing a favorite. At the yearly yoga party I attend, the guests marveled at the homemade delicious cookies. I got a call from the hostess of the Chanukah party wanting recipes. Of course I saved a few dozen for Christmas Day to be nibbled on in between present opening. Now everyone always knows when the cookie party is and they all come over to taste the goodies. The Christmas cookie night became the highlight of my winter holiday season, a party that I looked forward to throughout the year. I also knew, from the first time I attended, that it would make a terrific setting for a book about women's friendships. The seed of my novel, *The Christmas Cookie Club*, was planted. Once the

draft was written, Marybeth and I started dreaming about writing a book on how to throw your own cookie party, which became the book you are now reading. BUT I HAD NO IDEA the phenomenon that would surround me. Since The Christmas Cookie Club hit the stands, I have felt like I've been at the forefront of a movement I did not even know existed. Across the country I've been swarmed with people excited to tell me about their cookie exchanges. And I've been amazed by the number, the variety, and, of course, the importance of them to the participants. In Greenville, South Carolina, I met an independent bookstore owner whose cookie party has been meeting for thirty years. Now, there are three generations in that club! In St. Joseph, Michigan, I met a group of women who had read my book for their book club and happened to be away on a girlfriends' weekend. They had no idea I'd be at a bookstore in the area. I signed books for them, and then all of us signed one for the hostess of their cookie exchange. At another reading, a woman sent her daughter to get a book signed for her. Her mom had been in an exchange, the highlight of her winter season, for decades. Unfortunately, she was now in a walker, but her daughter retrieved a book for her. There are cookie parties where all the cookies are eaten by the end of the party. (Of course the attendees don't each bring 13 dozen cookies!) Some are co-ed, some are all men, some are extended family parties. In several, a group gets together to bake or exchange kitchen gadgets in drawings and white elephant games. And cookie clubs spring up from social groups, work groups, church groups, neighborhoods, and families. I'VE HEARD FROM A LOT of people how a Christmas cookie club has helped them through hard times. Peggy, a teacher, e-mailed me that the holiday season was difficult because her husband had died right after Thanksgiving the year before. Joannie, a new teacher from China, joined her school's staff and mentioned that there was a muffin tin left in the apartment she rented. She had no idea what to do with it and didn't understand American baking. Peggy offered to help, and taught her how to make orange-ginger muffins and peanut butter cookies. The next time they got together, they made pumpkin banana muffins and gingerbread boys. And then right before Christmas, Joannie brought two friends recently arrived from China and Peggy taught them how to make and decorate Christmas cutout cookies for the first time. Most unusual cross-cultural cookie virgins! It was just the experience Peggy needed to put her in the holiday mood! And then right after Christmas of last year a special connection was made that was close to home. It's about Daphne, one of my friends and one of the original cookie sisters. I had folded parts of her life—the circumstances regarding the tragedy of her son's death—in the chapter about Charlene. Unfortunately, at this year's cookie club, Daphne announced that she was moving to Texas to be closer to two of her children, both quarterhorse trainers, and to accept a huge promotion. Car loaded, she was driving when she got a call from her sister-in-law. "Do you know a Melody Mead Parker?" Before Daphne could answer, her sister-in-law said, "She says she's your sister and has been looking for you for years. Here's her telephone number." Daphne immediately dialed it. Melody and her two brothers were from Daphne's father's second marriage. She remembers Melody as her cute little shadow, following her around. Every morning she and her two brothers jumped on Daphne's bed and snuggled up with her. But her father's new wife never liked Daphne; after all, she was the off-spring of a previous marriage, the proof of a previous love. So when visitation stopped, they drifted apart. The last time Daphne saw Melody was twenty-five years earlier, when Melody was a young teen. Years passed and Daphne tried to find her siblings, but she finally gave up. Hers was a military family and they moved often. She went through life as if an only child, but aware she had siblings somewhere, siblings she had lost. Meanwhile, Melody and her brothers struggled to find Daphne, but Daphne had married and divorced and remarried, changing her name and moving so that she was impossible to find. Melody did an online search in 1995 to find Daphne, but came up with 30 people with the same name. Daphne did the same, but she also hit a wall of too many names, too many places, and changed names. So the two separated sisters attempted to find each other, and gave up. The years marched on. A quarter of a century passed. And then Melody ran Daphne's name through the Internet one more time, and there was an article on The Christmas Cookie Club mentioning Daphne, her son's death, and her location. Melody was also driving when her cell phone rang. She immediately recognized Daphne's voice. Within minutes the two pulled over to the side of their respective highways, stretched across half the United States, and started bawling. Melody described losing Daphne, and how she always knew she was out there and how she lived with an ache in her heart. And Daphne told Melody about life lived as an only child when she had three siblings in the world. "My girlfriend wrote that book," Daphne said. "I know, that's how I found you. I hope the story about your son wasn't true." "It is. But because of that, I found you again." When I talked to Daphne she said, "So your book reunited a family. Amazing how things work. It's the mystery of life that's so wonderful and oftentimes overlooked. This is a Christmas miracle that came from a lovely Christmas book." We love our party so much that Marybeth and I wrote this workbook to help you start your own. The possibilities for parties are endless: there could be Chanukah, Ramadan, and Valentine's Day cookie parties. We want you to develop a new ritual to have with your friends, family, or community. Cookie parties are an inexpensive way to contribute and give to those we care about. And each one, no matter its form, is anticipated merriment! Bonds are built by sharing fun and stories, both of which inevitably touch our lives. We wrote this together and so there are stories from both of our families and friends. These are our tips, ideas, and recipes for throwing your own great cookie party and cultivating a new holiday tradition. Enjoy! copy; 2010

