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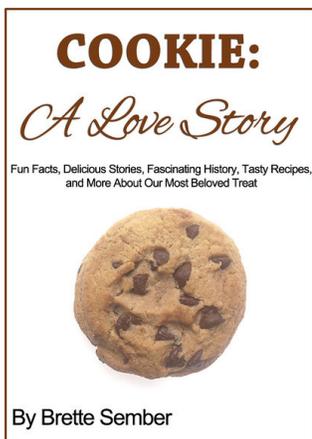
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Christmas cookies from around the world

2012/11/20 by [Donna Hull](#)



Travel the globe without leaving your kitchen. Christmas cookies from around the world, today's guest article from Brette Sember, will let you do just that. And Brette should know since she wrote the book on cookies: [Cookie: A Love Story: Fun Facts, Delicious Stories, Fascinating History, Tasty Recipes, and More About Our Most Beloved Treat](#).

Although cookies are an exceptionally American treat, they are enjoyed in other areas of the world. The word cookie itself comes from the Dutch for 'little cake,' and the

cookie's roots are deeply connected to Western Europe: the cookie traveled with the colonists to the States and took on a life of its own once it got here. There are cookies on every continent now and it has truly become a dessert enjoyed all over the world!

Christmas Cookies From Around the World

South America

South American cookies showcase the products of the continent, including cornmeal, citrus, cinnamon, brown sugar, peanuts, and pine nuts. A special South American cookie is the alfajore, two shortbread cookies cradling a rich dulce de leche filling. Although they are a traditional South American cookie, they actually originated in the Middle East, traveled to Spain with the invasion of the Moors, then came across the ocean with Spanish explorers. Seville cookies, from Mexico include orange, lemon, and lime flavors. Although we might associate the [Mexican wedding cake cookie](#) with Mexico, it actually is a type of cookie made in many cultures around the world, and has become very Americanized.

Europe



Linzer cookie

Although cookies are deeply connected to this area, the cookies enjoyed here differ greatly from American cookies. Western European cookies are always shaped and precise, in comparison to American drop cookies. This makes them feel elegant and very European. The [linzer cookie](#) is a prime example from Austria—two butter cookies sandwiching a black currant filling, with a delicate center cut out.

[Germans still make springerle](#), butter cookies spiced with anise which are made by rolling dough onto a cookie board or rolling the dough with an imprinted rolling pin. Springerle originated as a treat for the winter pagan holiday, when those who couldn't afford to sacrifice an animal instead made animal springerle and offered those to the gods. Once Christianity took over, springerle was used to illustrate Bible stories or to celebrate life events and were sometimes exchanged like Christmas cards.

The French are known for the madeleine, a cake-like cookie baked in special molds, and dusted with powdered sugar. Scandinavians are associated with their delicate butter cookies: each specific shape having a different name. Italian cookies have become popular in the U.S., so you may be familiar with *cucidata*, [pizelle](#), and *biscotti*.

Middle East

Cookies from the Middle East are usually made with semolina flour and use regional flavors such as honey, dates, walnuts, and cardamom. The [mamoul is made in a wooden cookie mold](#) and delicately flavored with orange flower water.

Africa

The British influence is unmistakable in South Africa, where they make [soetkoekies](#) with red wine, cinnamon, nutmeg, almonds, brown sugar and egg white glaze on the top. These sometimes have festive red stripes decorating them. These cookies are often packed up and taken to the beach for a Christmas picnic (it's summer at Christmastime here).

Asia

Although cookies have not traditionally been enjoyed in this region (the fortune cookie is an American invention!), in Burma large cookies are made in a two-piece cookie board and served as a meal. The *kue semprong* uses rice flour, coconut milk, sugar, and cinnamon to achieve a crisp, delicate texture.

Australia

The Anzac is practically the national cookie of Australia. Named after the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), the cookie was made during World War I as a durable treat with some nutritional value that could be sent to troops. Anzacs are sold for Anzac Day (similar to Veterans' Day) to raise funds for veterans.

Anzacs

3/4 cup rolled oats
1/2 cup sugar
3/4 cup coconut
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
2 tablespoons golden syrup
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 tablespoons boiling water
1/2 cup butter, melted

Pre-heat oven to 320 degrees.
Mix oats, sugar, coconut and flour.

Mix golden syrup, soda and boiling water. While frothing, add melted butter and pour into dry ingredients. Mix thoroughly. Drop spoonfuls onto tray allowing room for biscuits to spread. Bake for 15–18 minutes. Cool on cake cooler.

Brette Sember is the author of [Cookie: A Love Story: Fun Facts, Delicious Stories, Fascinating History, Tasty Recipes, and More \(www.CookieALoveStory.com\)](#). Sember blogs at [Putting It All on the Table](#) and is the author of several cookbooks.

Christmas cookies from around the world—do you have a favorite? Post a comment to share it with us. By the way, if you buy Brette's book, look for my essay on making purple snowmen at Christmas. Yes, it really happened.

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[Donna Hull](#)

A boomer travel and lifestyle authority who is exploring the world one activity at a time. Besides writing and publishing **My Itchy Travel Feet**, she also writes about boomer travel for [My Well-Being Powered by Humana](#), [Make It Missoula](#) and is the author of [My Itchy Travel Feet: Breathtaking Adventure Vacation Ideas](#).

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[sheryl](#) November 21, 2012 at 1:32 pm

So interesting to read all about the different cultures and their cookies – never knew the fortune cookie comes all the way from America!
sheryl recently posted..[Do You Lie About Your Age? Should You?](#) 

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[Irene S. Levine](#)

Twitter: [moretime2travel](#)

November 21, 2012 at 1:59 pm

My mouth is watering! So amazing that cookies are so cross-cultural.
Irene

Irene S. Levine recently posted..[Advice on How to Keep Traveling with Bad Knees & Other Stuff](#) 

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[merr](#) November 23, 2012 at 1:06 pm

Love this. What a lovely gift to combine several varieties, pack them in a tin and share for gifts. So special.

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[Donna Hull](#)

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[November 25, 2012 at 5:37 pm](#)

That's a great idea – a basket filled with several different varieties of cookies from Brette's cookie cookbook.

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[Living Large](#) [November 23, 2012 at 2:44 pm](#)

I love the Christmas cookies our daughter sends us from Germany every year. This was a very interesting list!

Living Large recently posted..[Don't Act Your Age](#)

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[November 25, 2012 at 5:36 pm](#)

What type of German Christmas cookies does your daughter send?

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[MyKidsEatSquid](#) [November 29, 2012 at 7:49 pm](#)

I'm going to have to try the Anzacs recipe. When is Anzac's Day?

MyKidsEatSquid recently posted..[THE Best combread](#)

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[Alexandra](#) [November 30, 2012 at 2:20 pm](#)

My sister-in-law always sends us a box of homemade cookies at Christmas. Every year without fail. We look forward to it. My favorites are the crescents made with hazelnuts. Not sure what country they come from. And the Danish butter cookies with jam in the middle.

Alexandra recently posted..[We've Moved!](#)

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[Mark H](#) [December 5, 2012 at 1:18 pm](#)

Even the beloved Anzac biscuit makes the list. Its biggest value is that they lasted a long time (note – no eggs as they were tricky to source during the war) surviving the long journeys at sea when sent from Australia to the European war fronts. I strongly suggest that your readers give the recipe a go – they are delicious...

Mark H recently posted..[Best Christmas Markets Around the World](#)

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[Donna Hull](#)

Twitter: [DonnaLHull](#)

[December 19, 2012 at 3:43 pm](#)

Mark, I might just have to turn on the oven and get out the cookie sheets to bake some Anzac biscuits.

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