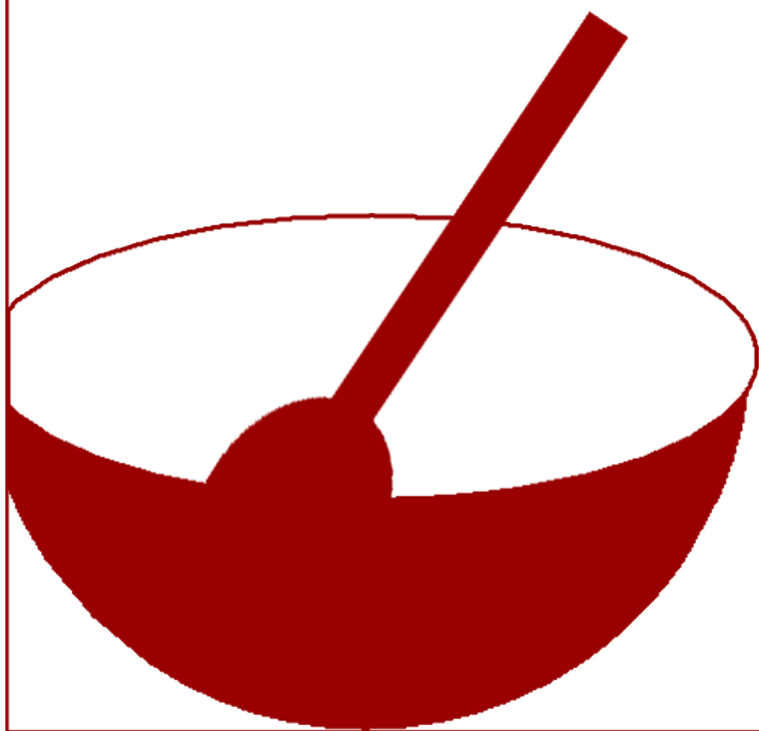


# HOLIDAY TREATS



MORE THAN 20  
HOLIDAY DESSERTS  
TO SHARE &  
ENJOY

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## **About**

I discovered the joy of Christmas baking the second year after we were married, and it's something I look forward to every year now!

The past three years, we've dealt with moving into a new house, welcoming new babies and facing medical issues, so I haven't been able to do as much of it as I would like. This is my year, though, and I'm excited to prepare gifts and treat bags for friends and neighbors once again.

This ebook is packed full of recipes for cookies, nuts and candy that your family is sure to enjoy – whether you make them for yourself, for holiday parties or to give as gifts.

Featuring more than 15 talented bloggers, you'll find quick and easy treats as well as more complicated recipes for the brave and talented among us!

Be sure to print out some of the free planning pages and gift tags linked at the end to help you organize your baking and add a special touch to your gifts!

2010



**tips and tricks**

## Organizing Your Way to a Simple Christmas: Baking

Mandi Ehman is a work-at-home, homeschooling mom of four little girls under seven. She blogs at [Life...Your Way](#) with one goal: to help you sort through all of the facts and opinions so you can make an informed decision about what works best for your preferences, your needs and your lifestyle.

Originally posted on [Organizing Your Way](#).



Holiday baking is one of my favorite parts of Christmas.

I'm not a great cook, but I make some pretty yummy baked goods, and I love to make cookies, chocolate-dipped pretzels and other treats for friends, families, neighbors, etc. The cookies above are just one of the amazing creations that a good friend of mine makes, but they're not something I could ever pull off.

However, what my baking lacks in creativity and adorableness, it usually makes up for in taste (I say usually because there is the fact that I ruined all three pies I contributed to last year's Thanksgiving dinner...).

One of the great things about holiday baking is how much of it can be done ahead of time. Most cookies freeze well, meaning you can start now — before holiday plans begin to fill up your days and weekends — and have yummy, homemade cookies throughout the season.

## Planning Your Holiday Baking

Now is a great time to begin planning all of your holiday baking because manufacturers are putting out more coupons on baking ingredients and stores are putting these same items on sale. You could stock up on common ingredients without planning ahead, of course, but you can make the most of sales and avoid overbuying by taking a few minutes to plan first.

To start, look at your [printable Gift List](#). Who are you planning to bake for? Do you have an idea of what you plan to bake or do you need to start looking for recipes and ideas? Have you decided how you will package any cookies/candy you make (which will help you estimate the quantity for each as well)?

Next, begin filling out your [printable Christmas Baking Planner](#), noting any ingredients or other supplies you'll need to get. Once you have a basic plan in place, add your baking to your [printable Christmas Calendar](#). You may decide to set aside a whole weekend to do all of your baking or to spread it out over several weeks. Either way, make sure it's all on the calendar.

## Tips for Holiday Baking

Here are a few more tips to help you simplify your holiday baking:

:: **Check your supplies.** Double check that you have all of the ingredients for each recipe — and in the quantities you need — before you start. Surely I'm not the only one who has gotten halfway through a recipe only to realize someone has used up half of the eggs and now I don't have enough!

:: **Use parchment paper.** If you're making a lot of cookies at once, line your cookie sheets with parchment paper so you can quickly slide the cookies off and put a new batch in the oven.

:: **Make a game plan for your baking days.** Look at prep times, bake times, etc. For example, Shaina from [Food for My Family](#) suggests making dough that needs to chill first so that you can work on other cookies while it chills. She also suggests starting with the cookies that bake at the lowest temperature so that you can increase the temperature in your oven as you go rather than having to wait on it to cool down.

:: **Clean up as you go.** It's much easier to clean up gooey messes than to wait until they're hard and crusty! Aimee from [Simple Bites](#) recently shared her "clean as you go" method on Simple Mom as well.

:: **Prepare your packaging ahead of time.** Shaina also suggests packing your cookies for delivery right away rather than storing them in larger containers and having to divide them up later.

***Be sure to download [your free Christmas ebook and printable planner](#) for more tips for a simple Christmas!***

## How to Host a Memorable Holiday Cookie Swap

Cooking has always been Aimée's preferred recreational activity, creative outlet, and source of relaxation. After nearly ten years in the professional cooking industry, she went from restaurant to RSS by trading her tongs and clogs for cookie cutters and a laptop, serving as editor of the popular food blog, [Simple Bites](#).

Originally posted on [Simple Mom](#).



Enjoying homemade Christmas baking is highlight of the season for many families, but making everything from scratch can be time consuming and a lot of work. So how do you stock your freezer with a delicious assortment of cookies and bars without spending several days in the kitchen? By hosting an old-fashioned holiday cookie exchange!

### The Concept

Invite a group of bakers to come to your home and have each one bring 10-12 dozen homemade cookies. Bake up a big batch of your family's favorite holiday treats and exchange baked goods together in a cheery, festive environment. Everyone leaves with a variety of goodies to stash away for Christmas entertaining – and perhaps a new recipe or two.

### Is a swap really as great as it is made out to be?

A cookie swap is a social event with a practical side. For me, it marks the beginning of the holiday season and brings friends together for more than just cocktails and chit-chat.

A cookie swap also...

- Saves valuable time during the busiest season of the year. It is much faster to make multiple batches of the same cookie, than to track down ingredients for 7 or 8 different recipes and prepare each one.
- Provides you with a wonderful selection of homemade baked goods to serve your guests over the holidays.
- Introduces new types of cookies to your palate and unique recipes to your repertoire.
- Provides a fun, casual social event that is easy to host – the guests bring the goodies!
- Offers opportunities for a charitable outreach. Guests can be asked to bring non-perishable food items to donate to a local food bank.

What are you waiting for? Pull out that organized holiday calendar and pencil in a tentative date. Then use these simple and fun steps to plan a festive cookie swap your guests will remember well into the new year.

## **How to Host a Cookie Swap**

### 1. Invite Guests

- Go digital to save time, effort and money. I typically use evite or Facebook for my invitations.
- Invite double the amount of guests that you feel you can accommodate. This is the busiest time of the year and not everyone will be able to attend.
- Ask invitees to prepare 6-10 dozen of their favorite or 'most requested' cookie or bar to swap, and an extra dozen for sampling pre-swap.
- Suggest that the cookies be well suited for traveling and freezing; meringues may not make it home, let alone being jostled around in the freezer.
- Request the swap be 'nut free', if this is a concern for you. I have done this in recent years as so many of my girlfriend's children have severe allergies.

### 2. Bake Cookies!

- Prepare a tried-and-true, favorite recipe. You probably already have a family favorite in mind as you read this post. You know, the one that garners the most requests for the recipe. Now you can share it.
- Make them pretty! Don't be shy about showing off if you are gifted with decorating skills. Trust me; guests will appreciate you making the extra effort to dress up those gingerbread men.
- Store the cookies in an airtight container in the freezer if you have made them in advance. Try and maintain their freshness until the big day.



### 3. Prepare to Host

This may be the easiest party to host over the holiday season; the guests bring the treats; all you have to do is put on a pot of coffee and open your home! Sounds simple? It is! If you're the Martha Stewart type, here are a few extras touches you can add to make the event even more special:

- Plan a door prize. A cookie cookbook, a pretty apron, or a cookie jar — you decide how simple or elaborate you want it to be. One year I asked each person to bring a cookie cutter. They showed up with all different sorts of shapes –mittens, stars, and angels—which I placed together in a gift bag. At the end of the swap, I drew a name and one lucky lady went home with the whole collection of cookie cutters.
- Provide tea, coffee, and a festive drink such as hot cocoa or mulled apple cider. My guests have come to expect a pot of apple cider and spices simmering on the stove and it's my most requested beverage.
- Make labels for the cookies. This is a practical 'extra' that identifies everything on the table and can inform guests who contributed which cookie.
- Set up a packaging station where guests can assemble and wrap small boxes of goodies to give away as presents. Provide Chinese take-out boxes (available at craft stores) for holding the cookies and items for dressing up the boxes such as tags, ribbon, and felt-tipped pens.

### 4. 1-2-3 SWAP!

#### *Taste*

Once all the guests have arrived and the table is laden with hundreds of cookies, invite guests to enjoy a hot beverage while you prepare a tasting tray. If each contributor brought extra cookies for tasting, you should have ample baking to serve up to your guests – and any husband that may have 'happened' to stroll through the kitchen.

I love the stories that emerge during this time of sampling and socializing; tales of failed batches of cookies, recipes handed down from grandmothers, and confessions of having felt the need to impress with their cookie contribution!

#### *Swap*

The formula to actually exchange cookies is simple, with guests taking home as many cookies as they contributed. Start by everyone taking a dozen each, rotating around the table so everyone has a chance to access all the cookies. Continue with another dozen and another until all the cookies are gone. This usually takes about two minutes!

#### *Smile*

Observe and enjoy the smiles all around as guests cradle tins stuffed with gorgeous baking; baking which they in turn will bless others with. It's the holiday event that keeps on giving!

**Visit [Simple Bites](#) and [Under the High Chair](#) for more how to tips and fabulous recipes.**

## A Special Cookie Tradition

Alyssa Francis is a Christian mom of four blessings who loves finding creative ways to reduce spending. She and her husband began a journey out of debt in 2007, and haven't looked back since. Motivated by a desire to share her frugal ways, Alyssa founded the popular website [Keeping the Kingdom First](http://www.KeepingtheKingdomFirst.com), where she encourages and equips others to save more and give more, one coupon at a time.

Originally posted on [Keeping the Kingdom First](http://www.KeepingtheKingdomFirst.com).



I did not grow up with many Christmas traditions. When I got married in 2004, it was important for me to start my own. Of course, I had no idea where to begin, so imagine my delight when I received this special kit from a relative.

*The Sweetest Story Ever Told* is actually no longer available in stores, but the concept is easy to duplicate.

You'll need a simple sugar cookie recipe, or you could even use a store-bought package of sugar cookie sheets.

You'll also need 5 cookie cutters- a star, a heart, a tree, an angel, and a bell. Each shape represents part of the Christmas story.

Get the kiddos involved and make as many sets of the 5 shapes as you can manage. Allow the cookies to cool, and decorate as you wish.

Then, pass out the completed sets in Christmas containers to neighbors and friends, with an attached tag that says:

"An ANGEL brought the glorious news to the shepherds that a Savior had been born. Wise men followed a bright STAR to the manger where Jesus lay. They brought precious gifts much like the gifts we have under our TREE. The best gift of all that day was Jesus. God sent His only Son that whoever accepts Him into their HEART will have life everlasting. Let the BELLS ring out this holiday season as we celebrate Jesus' birthday and God's greatest gift to us."

{[Click here to print ready-to-go tags for your gifts!](#)}

The kids look forward to this special project every year. It is a wonderful tradition that not only focuses of the miracle of Christmas, but demonstrates the joy of giving something from the heart.

**Visit [Kingdom First Mom](#) for frugal living tips and daily encouragement.**

2010



cookies

## Black Forest Crinkle Cookies

[Plan to Eat](#) is a simple meal planning tool that allows you to quickly access your recipe book all in one place so that you can plan your meals, generate an automatic shopping list, and shop with confidence that you have a plan that includes eating great food at home without wasting time or money in the process.

Originally posted on [Plan to Eat](#).



*These are very pretty and yummy cookies that are a take off from a black forest cake, combining chocolate chips and sweet cherries. They are very soft and chewy. A lovely holiday treat!*

### Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 stick unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder *not Dutch process*
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon instant coffee *mixed with 2 T. water*
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup dried cherries
- 3/4 cup powdered sugar

**Directions:**

1. Pre-heat oven to 350; line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Whisk the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl.
3. Melt butter and add cocoa, whisking until smooth. Stir in the egg, coffee mixture, and vanilla, fully blending each one before adding the next. Stir chocolate mixture into flour mixture until combined.
4. Fold in chocolate chips and cherries until incorporated. Form into generous 2" balls, about a heaping tablespoon.
5. Roll balls in powdered sugar 2 times, then place 2" apart on baking sheet.
6. Bake 12-14 minutes or until cookies are cracked but still soft. Do not overbake!
7. Allow to cool 5 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.

**Visit [Plan to Eat](#) for all of your meal-planning needs.**

## Candy Cane Cookies

Mandi Ehman is a work-at-home, homeschooling mom of four little girls under seven. She blogs at [Life...Your Way](#) with one goal: to help you sort through all of the facts and opinions so you can make an informed decision about what works best for your preferences, your needs and your lifestyle.

Originally posted on [Doodles' Place](#).

*Every Christmas, my mom comes over for a day, and we make these candy cane cookies, which I remember making as a little girl. Ours actually turn out pink and white because we use regular food coloring, so if you want red ones, be sure to pick up some gel dye (Michael's and other craft stores have it). Not only are they super cute, I think they're so yummy as well.*

### Ingredients:

1/2 c. butter, softened  
1/2 c. shortening  
1 c. confectioners' sugar  
1 egg  
1 1/2 tsp. almond extract  
1 tsp. vanilla  
2 1/2 c. flour  
1 tsp. salt

### Directions:

1. Mix butter, shortening, sugar, egg, almond extract and vanilla in a large bowl.
2. Add flour and salt and mix well.
3. Divide dough in half and add red food coloring to one part.
4. Take a small piece of each color and roll out into a log shape about 6" long. Twist them together and shape into a candy cane.
5. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for about 9 minutes or until lightly brown.

**Be sure to download [your free Christmas ebook and printable planner](#) for more tips for a simple Christmas!**

## Cannoli Sandwich Cookies

Katie Goodman is a SAHM turned WAHM determined to make family meal time a priority while providing a variety of healthy and delicious food choices. In her free time, she blogs at [goodLife {eats}](#), where she shares what she finds good in the kitchen and in life through recipes, family memories, and yummy photography.

Originally posted on [goodLife {eats}](#).



Sometimes I have crazy ideas. Crazy food ideas. Taking one thing and turning it into another. So I decided to turn a classic Italian Cannoli into a cookie. Why? Because I thought it would be good. Because Cannoli is good. Because cookies are good. Because my husband wouldn't stop saying "Katie's Cannoli Cookies."

### Ingredients:

- 1 c butter, softened
- 3/4 c sugar
- 1/4 c brown sugar, packed
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 c flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp orange zest
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon 1/2 c finely chopped pistachios



- cannoli filling, recipe follows
- melted chocolate, recipe follows

1. Beat butter at medium speed until creamy. Gradually add sugar and brown sugar, beating well. Add egg and vanilla, beat till combined.
2. Combine flour, baking powder, zest, and cinnamon. Add to butter mixture. Beat at medium speed. Stir in pistachios.
3. Shape dough into 2 – 6 inch logs. Wrap with wax paper and freeze until firm. Slice frozen dough into 1/8 inch thick rounds. Place rounds on a parchment paper lined cookie sheet.
4. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10-12 minutes, or until lightly browned at edges. Cool 1 minute on pan. Cool completely on wire rack.
5. Fill with cannoli filling. Assemble sandwiches and drizzle with melted chocolate. Cool in refrigerator until chocolate has hardened.

### **Cannoli Filling**

*adapted from [RecipeGirl](#)*

- 3/4 c whole milk ricotta (drained overnight with cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer and squeezed dry)
- 8 oz. mascarpone cheese
- 1/3 c powdered sugar
- 3/4 tsp vanilla

Mix ingredients together. Fill a pastry bag or ziplock bag with filling. Chill until ready to use. To fill sandwiches, pipe filling on the underside of one cookie. Top cookie with another.

### **Melted Chocolate**

- 4 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
- 1 tsp shortening

Melt chocolate and shortening together. Drizzle over assembled cookies.

**Visit [goodLife {eats}](#) for more tasty recipes and beautiful photos.**

## Chocolate Candy Cane Blossoms

Mandi Ehman is a work-at-home, homeschooling mom of four little girls under seven. She blogs at [Life...Your Way](#) with one goal: to help you sort through all of the facts and opinions so you can make an informed decision about what works best for your preferences, your needs and your lifestyle.

Originally posted on [Doodles' Place](#).



### Ingredients:

- 48-72 candy cane chocolates
- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 cups white sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together cocoa, white sugar, and vegetable oil. Beat in eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a separate bowl, and then stir into the cocoa mixture. Cover dough, and chill for at least 4 hours.
3. Use a melon baller to shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in confectioners sugar and place on ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.
5. Unwrap chocolates while you wait and immediately press one into center of each cookie. The cookie will crack around the edges as you do. Move to a wire rack to cool.

About 6 dozen cookies.

**Be sure to download [your free Christmas ebook and printable planner](#) for more tips for a simple Christmas!**

## Chocolate-Glazed Cinnamon-Raisin Oatmeal Cookies

Cooking has always been Aimée's preferred recreational activity, creative outlet, and source of relaxation. After nearly ten years in the professional cooking industry, she went from restaurant to RSS by trading her tongs and clogs for cookie cutters and a laptop, serving as editor of the popular food blog, [Simple Bites](#).

Originally posted on [Under the High Chair](#).



*After a hard day, and having just mixed up a batch of our family favorite chewy oatmeal-raisin cookies, I decided to melt some of my Lindt Extra Thins on top as the cookies were cooling on the rack. The results were rather delicious.*

### Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 cup butter, room temperature
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh cinnamon
- 1/4 cup coconut
- 3 cups oatmeal (not quick or instant)
- 1 cup raisins
- 36 Lindt thins, 70% Cacao

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time and beat well, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Combine and add flour, baking soda and salt. Mix in coconut, oatmeal and raisins and stir just to combine.
3. Drop spoonfuls of dough onto a greased cookie sheet and bake 8-10 minutes until edges start to brown slightly. Tops will still be slightly raw. (I like to under-bake my oatmeal cookies so they are chewy as opposed to crispy.)
4. Let cool on pan for a minute or so and then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Place a Lindt Thin on the top of each cookie and watch them melt.
5. Allow cookies to cool completely and wait for the chocolate to harden before transferring cookies to a tin.

Makes 3 dozen large cookies.

**Visit [Simple Bites](#) and [Under the High Chair](#) for more how to tips and fabulous recipes.**

## Chocolate Pecan Puddle Cookies

Cooking has always been Aimée's preferred recreational activity, creative outlet, and source of relaxation. After nearly ten years in the professional cooking industry, she went from restaurant to RSS by trading her tongs and clogs for cookie cutters and a laptop, serving as editor of the popular food blog, [Simple Bites](#).

Originally posted on [Under the High Chair](#).



*I so enjoy the reaction when I bring these cookies here or there, or serve them up to guests, that I have almost been hesitant to share the recipe, and thus the glory. But so many people have asked for the recipe that I can't keep it a secret any longer!*

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups pecans (or hazelnuts or walnuts)
- 4 cups icing sugar
- 2/3 cup cocoa
- 1/2 tsp. fine sea salt
- 4 large egg whites
- 1 Tbsp. good vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350F.
2. Toast your pecans, cool them and roughly chop them.

3. In a large bowl, stir together the icing sugar, cocoa and salt. Add the nuts, then stir in the egg whites and vanilla. Stir until well combined.
4. Line a baking sheet with parchment and drop the batter in small mounds (about 1 tablespoon each) spacing them well away from each other.
5. Bake for 9-11 minutes – they will spread, puff, crack on top, get glossy and then turn matte. Slide the cookies on the parchment off the sheet onto a cooling rack and let them cool.

Makes three dozen 2-inch cookies.

Adapted from [101 Cookbooks](#), via [Dinner with Julie](#)

**Visit [Simple Bites](#) and [Under the High Chair](#) for more how to tips and fabulous recipes.**

## All Gingerbread, All the Time

Cooking has always been Aimée's preferred recreational activity, creative outlet, and source of relaxation. After nearly ten years in the professional cooking industry, she went from restaurant to RSS by trading her tongs and clogs for cookie cutters and a laptop, serving as editor of the popular food blog, [Simple Bites](#).

Originally posted on [Under the High Chair](#).



*I absolutely love gingerbread. If I had to pick a favorite holiday cookie, gingerbread would win without question. It probably stems from my childhood and good memories of baking and decorating cookies to my heart's content. Every step is special, from the measuring of the spices for the dough, to the rolling and cutting of playful Christmas shapes, and perhaps the most fun of all, the detailed icing work.*

### Ingredients:

- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened

- 2/3 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2/3 cup molasses
- 2 cookie sheets or jelly roll pans lined with parchment or foil

**Directions:**

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, spices, salt and baking soda. Stir well to mix.
2. Place the butter and brown sugar in the bowl of a standing electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on medium speed until well mixed, about 1 minute. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, beating smooth after each addition. Scrape down bowl and beater.
3. Lower speed and beat in about half the flour mixture. Beat in all the molasses then scrape bowl and beater. Add the remaining flour mixture, about 1 cup at a time, and beat after each addition until it has all been absorbed.
4. Remove the bowl from the mixer and give the dough a final mixing with a large rubber spatula. Scrape half the dough onto a large piece of plastic wrap and press it to about a 1/2-inch thickness. Wrap the dough securely and repeat with the remaining dough. Chill the dough for at least 2 hours or for up to 3 days.
5. When you are ready to bake the cookies, set racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees.
6. Unwrap one of the pieces of dough and cut it in half. Rewrap one of the halves and return it to the refrigerator.
7. On a floured surface, roll the dough until it is about 1/4-inch thick. Use a floured cutter to cut the cookies. As they are cut, place the cut cookies on the prepared pans with about 1 inch between them on all sides. Repeat with remaining dough. Save, press together, and reroll scraps (they don't need to be chilled before rerolling).
8. Bake the cookies until they become dull and dry looking and feel slightly firm when pressed with a fingertip, about 12 to 15 minutes. If you overbake the cookies, they will be very dry. Slide papers from pans onto racks to cool.
9. Store the cooled cookies between sheets of parchment or wax paper in a tin or plastic container with a tight-fitting cover.

Makes about 24 large cookies or 8 or 9 dozen small cookies.

*Recipe shared by [Nick Malgeiri](#).*

**Visit [Simple Bites](#) and [Under the High Chair](#) for more how to tips and fabulous recipes.**



## Gingered Orange Shortbread

*Shaina Olmanson is the home cook and photographer behind [Food for My Family](#) and [Olmanson Photography](#), a daily contributor to Babble.com's [Family Kitchen Blog](#) and the editor of the [food channel](#) for Lifetime Moms. Shaina can usually be found in one of three places: cooking, at the computer or behind the camera.*

*Originally posted on [Food for My Family](#).*



*The basics of shortbread are simple: butter, sugar, flour and a bit of salt. They are perfect alone, but the possibilities are endless. Here is a delicious gingered orange shortbread that was a huge hit last Christmas:*

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 sticks of butter, softened
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup candied ginger, minced
- 3 tablespoons orange zest
- 3/4 teaspoon orange extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 10 ounces white chocolate
- 2 tablespoons sugared candied orange rind

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 300° F.
2. Cream butter. Cream together sugar and salt with the butter and then stir in the ginger pieces, orange zest and orange extract. Mix in the flour just until the dough comes together.
3. Form into a rectangular log, wrap in parchment and refrigerate for one hour or more until the dough is firm.
4. Cut into 1/4" slices and place on cookie sheet. Bake at 300° F for 20-25 minutes being careful not to let the edges burn. Allow to cool on the cookie sheet.
5. Melt chocolate over a double boiler or in the microwave in 30-second increments, stirring after each 30 seconds just until smooth and glossy. Dip one corner of each shortbread cookie into the chocolate. Allow to let excess drip off before placing back on the parchment. Sprinkle chocolate with candied orange peel. Allow chocolate to set, placing in refrigerator if necessary for 5 to 10 minutes.

Makes 30-35 individual cookies.

**Visit [Food for My Family](#) for more tips and recipes.**

## Kifli Cookies

Katie Kimball may have to use a saw to get through pie pumpkins, but she loves fall flavors and smells anyway. Find her roaming a Michigan apple orchard, jumping in leaves with her two young children, or writing about food and faith at [Kitchen Stewardship](#).

Originally posted on [Kitchen Stewardship](#).



*Kifli cookies offer a rich, palate-pleasing flavor but take a complex, multi-step process to prepare, making them decadent from beginning to end. They are my ultimate favorite Christmas cookie and the reason I have white flour in my house this season. My mother made kifli every year that I can remember, and as they crumble on my tongue, memories of childhood come vividly to mind.*

### **Ingredients:**

#### *Dough*

- 1 pound (4 sticks) butter
- 5 c. flour
- 4 beaten egg yolks
- $\frac{3}{4}$  c. cold water
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. white vinegar

*Filling:*

- 4 egg whites
- pinch of cream of tartar
- 1 ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbs almond extract
- 1 pound ground walnuts

**Directions:**

*Dough:*

1. Use a pastry blender to cut the butter into the flour.
2. In another bowl, blend the egg yolks, water and white vinegar. (Be sure to reserve the egg whites for the filling.)
3. Add the wet ingredients to the flour mixture and mix only until it holds together. The key to a flaky pastry is light handling. The more you move the dough, the tougher it will become.
4. Refrigerate.

*Filling:*

5. Whip 4 egg whites into a meringue. Add the cream of tartar, sugar, and almond extract. Mix well. Fold in the ground walnuts.

*Building the Cookies*

6. Divide both dough and filling into 8 equal sections. Roll the dough on a lightly powdered sugared surface into a pie shape. Spread with filling and cut into ~12 equal wedges. Roll from edge to center.
7. Bake on a cookie sheet 20-30 minutes at 350 degrees. Sprinkle with powdered sugar while cooling on racks.

**Visit [Kitchen Stewardship](#) for more healthy recipes and green living tips.**

## Mack's Shortbread: A Christmas Classic

Sherri is a work-at-home mom to two young boys and has been married to her high school sweetheart, Gwynn, for 13 years. Read more from Sherri at [Serene Journey](#), where she shares simple tips to enjoy life, and at [Zen Family Habits](#), where she talks about all things family.



*Mack's shortbread is a family tradition at Christmas. It's named after my Great Grannie whose name was actually Sarah but people called her Mack. Don't ask me!*

*These shortbread cookies are the best I've ever had and are the only ones we make in our family. I'm sharing the recipe and hopefully you will enjoy it with your family this holiday season.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 Cup Butter
- 1 Cup Flour
- 1/2 Cup Corn Starch
- 1/2 Cup Icing Sugar

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 300F.

2. Cream butter with electric mixer.
3. Add other ingredients in order and mix well. (You can use an electric mixer to incorporate the dry ingredients but it doesn't have the same melt in your mouth effect that mixing them in with a spoon does.)
4. Use about a teaspoon of dough and roll into a ball using your hands.
5. Place them on a non-greased cookie sheet and press them down with the back of a spoon. (You will need to dip your spoon in a bit of water so the dough doesn't stick.)
6. Put 1/4 of a maraschino cherry in the center of each cookie
7. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

**Visit [Serene Journey](#) and [Zen Family Habits](#) for tips for finding simple happiness.**

## Mint Chocolate Chip Cookies

Katie Hostetter is a wife to Xon, stay-at-home mama to Bradley, a licensed registered nurse, and lover of all things domestic. She lives in a cabin on a farm in Kentucky and blogs daily at [Frugal Femina](#), where she shares the latest tips on bargain shopping, coupons, freebies, giveaways, and more.

Originally posted on [Frugal Femina](#).



*These are my favorite chocolate chip cookies ever. They're soft and chewy and everything I love about a cookie. I use Andes mints to make them a little more Christmasy, but you can leave them out if you want the regular variety.*

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 6 tablespoons white sugar
- 6 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1-1/2 teaspoons almond extract {Sometimes I use vanilla or coconut extract.}
- 1 egg
- 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons flour {I have used white-whole wheat flour before.}
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup chocolate chips {Plus a few more to melt & drizzle on top of finished cookies.}
- 1/4 cup Andes baking chips
- 1 cup walnuts

**Directions:**

1. First you'll want to preheat your oven to 375 degrees.
2. Use a mixer to beat the butter, white sugar, light brown sugar, salt, and almond extract until they are mixed well. Then beat in the egg.
3. Next, you need to get a separate bowl, and whisk together the flour and baking soda. Add it to the wet mixture, and mix on a low speed just until it's absorbed. Mix the chocolate chips, Andes chips, and walnuts in a separate bowl. Stir them into the dough.
4. Form into 1 1/2-inch balls, and place on an ungreased baking sheet, a few inches apart. Bake until the edges are golden brown, or about 10-12 minutes. Let them cool on a wire rack. Make sure you don't overbake, cause you want them nice and soft!
5. Drizzle with some melted chocolate chips to up the cute factor.

**Visit [Frugal Femina](#) for fun and thrifty talk for a well-managed home.**



## Monster Cookies

*Shaina Olmanson is the home cook and photographer behind [Food for My Family](#) and [Olmanson Photography](#), a daily contributor to Babble.com's [Family Kitchen Blog](#) and the editor of the [food channel](#) for Lifetime Moms. Shaina can usually be found in one of three places: cooking, at the computer or behind the camera.*

Originally posted on [Food for My Family](#).



### Ingredients:

- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 cups white sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 28 ounces peanut butter, approximately one large jar (creamy or chunky based on your preference)
- 1 stick softened butter
- 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1-1/2 teaspoons honey
- 6 eggs
- 9 cups oatmeal
- 2-1/2 cups M&M's or chocolate chips (you could also substitute toffee bits or other candies)

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix sugars, baking soda and salt together. Add peanut butter, butter, vanilla and honey. Cream together. Mix in 6 eggs.
3. Add oatmeal 2 cups at a time, thoroughly mixing after each addition. Stir in chocolate.
4. Scoop dough onto cookie sheets and bake at 350°F for 12-14 minutes until tops begin to brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool on a cooling rack before packaging.

Makes approximately 120 cookies.

**Visit [Food for My Family](#) for more tips and recipes.**

## Oatmeal Almond Chocolate Chunk Cookies

Katie Goodman is a SAHM turned WAHM determined to make family meal time a priority while providing a variety of healthy and delicious food choices. In her free time, she blogs at [goodLife {eats}](#), where she shares what she finds good in the kitchen and in life through recipes, family memories, and yummy photography.

Originally posted on [goodLife {eats}](#).



*You know how sometimes peanut butter cookies are kind of dry? Not these. I think it's the oatmeal. But they're ooey, gooey, chewy, chocolately good. So go ahead and give them a try. And don't feel too bad about it either, because after all there are some healthy things about them. Not that dessert needs to be healthy to be good, but it always helps.*

### Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 stick (14 tablespoons) unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup almond butter
- 1 1/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup ground almonds

- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned oatmeal (not quick cook)
- 8 ounces semi-sweet or dark chocolate chunks or chips

**Directions:**

1. Line baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone baking mat. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Combine flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. Beat butter until creamy. Add sugars beating until fluffy, approximately 3 minutes. Scrape the bowl as necessary. Beat in almond butter until incorporated. Beat in vanilla and then eggs, one at a time.
3. Gently stir in the dry ingredients (I switched to the paddle on my kitchen aid mixer). Add ground almonds and oatmeal and stir until just incorporated. Stir in the chocolate chunks.
4. Roll cookies into 2 Tbs sized balls. Place on baking sheets and bake cookies for 10-12 minutes. Edges should be slightly browned and the cookies puffed. Cool on sheets for 5 minutes before transferring to a cookie cooling rack.
5. Freeze any leftover cookie dough for use later. Check out my How To Freeze Cookie Dough post.

If peanut allergy is a concern: Look for an almond butter labeled "Peanut Free," i.e. Barney Butter. For the ground almonds, I recommend Blue Diamond Brand as a peanut-free option.

*Heavily adapted from [Almond Butter Cookies](#).*

**Visit [goodLife {eats}](#) for more tasty recipes and beautiful photos.**

## Peanut Butter Blossoms

Mandi Ehman is a work-at-home, homeschooling mom of four little girls under seven. She blogs at [Life...Your Way](#) with one goal: to help you sort through all of the facts and opinions so you can make an informed decision about what works best for your preferences, your needs and your lifestyle.

Originally posted on [Doodles' Place](#).



*A holiday favorite, these peanut butter blossoms are fun to make and to eat!*

### Ingredients:

- 48 chocolate candies – Hershey Kisses, chocolate bells, etc.
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 3/4 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- granulated sugar

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Beat shortening and peanut butter in large bowl until well blended. Add granulated and brown sugar and beat until fluffy. Mix in egg, milk and vanilla, beating well. In a separate bowl, mix flour, baking soda and salt. Slowly beat flour mixture into peanut butter.
3. Use a melon baller to shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in granulated sugar and place on ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.
5. Unwrap chocolates while you wait and immediately press one into center of each cookie. The cookie will crack around the edges as you do. Move to a wire rack to cool.

About 4 dozen cookies.

***Be sure to download [your free Christmas ebook and printable planner](#) for more tips for a simple Christmas!***

## Pumpkin Yummy Cookies

Susan Heid is passionately committed to helping moms make small changes managing their homes & families to give them more time, order and less stress. Her tenacious spirit, no nonsense approach, and generous heart fuels her passion to empower moms in their most important role, which she does at [The Confident Mom](#).



*These pumpkin yummy cookies are fun and easy to make with the kids!*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup pumpkin
- 1 egg
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1 ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt

### **Directions:**

1. Mix sugar, butter and eggs in a medium size bowl with a mixer. Add pumpkin. Mix well.

2. Sift dry ingredients and add to mixture, mix well.
3. Drop teaspoonfuls of cookie dough onto a baking sheet.
4. Bake at 350 degrees for about 12-14 minutes. Cool completely.

**Cream Cheese Icing:**

- 1 pkg (8 oz) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 3-4 cups confectioner's sugar
- 1-2 tsp vanilla

**Directions:**

1. Combine cream cheese and butter in a bowl and mix until smooth. Add the sugar slowly until you reach the desired consistency. Stir in vanilla.
2. Frost completely cooled cookies. You may also sprinkle a small amount of cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice on the top for decoration.

**Visit [The Confident Mom](#) for strategies and tips for strengthening your family.**



## Toasted Almond Crisp Cookies

Tara Kuczykowski is a married mom of three boys and two girls, ages 2 to 8 years. For the past two-and-a-half years, Tara has been helping families stretch their budgets at the popular money-saving blog, [Deal Seeking Mom](#), and she's now sharing her tips, tricks, recipes and more at [Unsophisticook](#), where she's "keeping it real in the kitchen!"

Originally posted on [Unsophisticook](#).



*To make these delicious toasted almond crisp cookies, I started with this [Lace Cookies recipe](#) and made some substitutions along the way. The end result is a cookie that is slightly less lacey and more like a brittle, which tastes like the crunchy topping on a crème brûlée with a hint of almond. They're divine!*

### Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon molasses
- 2 tablespoon heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/3 cup finely chopped toasted almonds
- 1/4 cup all purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

**Directions:**

1. Combine the butter, granulated sugar, molasses, cream, and almond extract in a saucepan. Boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves, about one minute.
2. Turn heat to low and stir in toasted almonds, flour, and salt.
3. Working quickly, drop level teaspoons of dough onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Space the cookies about 3 inches apart to allow for spreading.
4. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. Rotate cookie sheets halfway through cooking. Slide parchment off cookie sheets onto wire racks to allow cookies to cool.

Recipe yields approximately 30 cookies.

**Visit [Unsophisticook.com](http://Unsophisticook.com), where Tara keeps it real in the kitchen.**

## Toffee Chocolate Chip Cookies

Jen Tilley has an insatiable appetite for all things related to baking and cooking. She is the author, photographer and recipe developer on [How To: Simplify](#), a blog that shares tips, tricks and recipes to simplify life in the kitchen. She enjoys sharing recipes that require very few ingredients and only a small amount of prep and cook time.

Originally posted on [How To: Simplify](#).



*Do you ever find yourself sitting on your couch. when all of a sudden you get a craving for cookies, ice cream or anything that would satisfy your sweet tooth? I don't have a huge sweet tooth but when it starts begging to be satisfied, sweets are all I can think about. I created these delicious cookies after one such craving!*

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips
- 1 cup Heath Bar bits

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Prepare baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place sugar, dark brown sugar, eggs and vanilla in a bowl and whisk until smooth.
3. Add baking soda, salt and flour to the sugar mixture and whisk together until smooth.
4. Fold in chocolate chips and Heath Bar bits.
5. Drop rounded tablespoonfuls onto baking sheet approximately 2 inches apart.
6. Bake for 10-12 minutes, remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.

Visit [How To: Simplify](#) for more tips, tricks and recipes to simplify life in the kitchen!

2010



**nuts & candy**

## How To Toast Nuts {And Why}

Tara Kuczykowski is a married mom of three boys and two girls, ages 2 to 8 years. For the past two-and-a-half years, Tara has been helping families stretch their budgets at the popular money-saving blog, [Deal Seeking Mom](#), and she's now sharing her tips, tricks, recipes and more at [Unsophisticook](#), where she's "keeping it real in the kitchen!"

Originally posted on [Unsophisticook](#).



*You can use toasted nuts to impart a richer flavor in any recipe that calls for nuts. Nuts have high concentrations of natural oil, so it's not necessary to add oil when toasting. And it's SO easy!*

### **Ingredients:**

- Your favorite nuts, preferably whole

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
2. Spread the nuts out in a single layer on an ungreased cookie sheet.
3. Place the cookie sheet in your preheated oven and toast for five to ten minutes until nuts are golden brown. Roasting time varies depending on the size of the nuts used.

**Visit [Unsophisticook.com](#), where Tara keeps it real in the kitchen.**

## Oreo Truffles

Andrea Dekker is a Professional Organizer and the creative mind behind [Simple Organized Living.com](http://SimpleOrganizedLiving.com). She hates clutter, loves all things domestic, and can't turn down a great deal. Whether she's in the kitchen or the closet, her goal is to simplify, streamline, and create efficiency.

Originally posted on [Simple Organized Living](http://SimpleOrganizedLiving.com).



*These oreo recipes are extremely simple to make, and you can make them ahead and put them in the freezer. Any recipe in which oreos is the main ingredient is bound to be a hit, and these are no exception.*

### Ingredients:

- 1 package Oreo cookies
- 1 8oz. package cream cheese (softened)
- 2 8oz packages white chocolate chips
- 3 T. semi-sweet chocolate chips

### Directions:

1. Smash Oreos in a food processor or with a rolling pin and plastic bag.
2. Place Oreo crumbs into your mixer, add softened cream cheese, and mix well.
3. Use a melon baller or Tablespoon to form truffles and place on wax paper.
4. Freeze truffles for around half an hour until balls are firm.
5. Meanwhile, melt white chocolate chips in a microwave bowl on medium power for 30 second increments

6. Dip truffles into white chocolate and freeze again.

7. Melt semi-sweet chocolate chips in a plastic sandwich bag. Cut off a small corner of the bag and drizzle over truffles.

**Visit [Simple Organized Living](#) for tips and tricks to simplify and organize your life.**

## Peppermint Truffles from Ganache

*Shaina Olmanson is the home cook and photographer behind [Food for My Family](#) and [Olmanson Photography](#), a daily contributor to Babble.com's [Family Kitchen Blog](#) and the editor of the [food channel](#) for Lifetime Moms. Shaina can usually be found in one of three places: cooking, at the computer or behind the camera.*

Originally posted on [Food for My Family](#).



*The bonus of making [hot chocolate from ganache](#) is that I also successfully crossed off one of the items on my holiday "baking" list: truffles. They are flashy, and I like adding a few here and there to cookie gift containers. Plus, they're easy, especially if you've already made ganache for hot chocolate.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 10 ounces dark chocolate
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons peppermint schnapps
- 10 ounces milk chocolate melting pieces
- 2 peppermint candy canes, crushed



**Directions:**

1. In a small saucepan bring the cream to a boil. Pour over the dark chocolate in a stainless steel bowl, stirring constantly until all chocolate is melted. Stir in peppermint schnapps.
2. Allow to cool completely on the counter. Refrigerate several hours or overnight.
3. Using a small cookie scoop, scoop the ganache into small balls and lightly roll until smooth. Freeze on a cookie sheet for at least one hour.
4. Melt the milk chocolate over a double boiler or in the microwave in 30-second increments until smooth and glossy.
5. Remove ganache balls from the freezer and dip one by one into the melted chocolate. Immediately sprinkle with peppermint pieces.
6. If necessary, place the truffles in the fridge for a few minutes to set the chocolate.

Makes 30-40 truffles.

**Visit [Food for My Family](#) for more tips and recipes.**

## Rum Glazed Roasted Pecans

*Shaina Olmanson is the home cook and photographer behind [Food for My Family](#) and [Olmanson Photography](#), a daily contributor to Babble.com's [Family Kitchen Blog](#) and the editor of the [food channel](#) for Lifetime Moms. Shaina can usually be found in one of three places: cooking, at the computer or behind the camera.*

*Originally posted on [Food for My Family](#).*



*One of our favorite things to get at fairs, festivals and our local farmer's market is a cone of roasted nuts. But they're easy to make at home, and you can package them in cellophane bags and give them out or add them to cookie baskets and boxes during the holidays.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons rum
- 2 cups whole pecans

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Mix together and heat sugars, salt and 2 tablespoons of rum over medium-high heat until it boils, stirring occasionally. Continue to heat while stirring for approximately 7 minutes until syrup begins to appear clear and non-granular.

3. Pour in pecans, stir until coated with sugar. Carefully add 2 additional tablespoons of rum. Stir continuously until syrup returns to a boil.
4. Spoon pecans onto a parchment-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake in a 350° F oven for 15-20 minutes until bubbling stops and syrup starts to appear hard. Remove from oven and allow to sit on the baking sheet until completely cooled. Break apart and store in a cool, dry place.

Makes 8 1/4-cup servings.

**Visit [Food for My Family](#) for more tips and recipes.**

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## About Mandi Ehman and Life...Your Way



You might wonder, with a name like [Life...Your Way](#), whether I believe in any absolutes. Let me assure you that I do.

I believe in right and wrong, the God of the Bible, the covenant of marriage and the sanctity of life.

However, I also believe there are lots of gray areas where each of us have to make our own decisions. Some of these are a good/better/best kind of thing. But most are simply to-MAY-to versus to-MAH-to.

In this internet age, we're hit with opinions, facts and information from every angle every day — about food, finances, motherhood, success and more. And each day we have to wade through it all and try to decide what's best for ourselves, our family and our children.

Life...Your Way has one goal: to help you sort through all of the facts and opinions so you can make an informed decision about what works best for your preferences, your needs and your lifestyle.

### About Mandi

Eight years ago I married the guy who lived across the street.

We set off on a cross-country adventure, moving 3,000 miles away from our family to a city where we knew no one. We made a lot of stupid decisions and did a lot of growing up, and two years later our oldest daughter was born. In the five years that followed, we had three more babies, moved three times and built our dream home on a little slice of heaven in the middle of nowhere. We made a few more mistakes, and our hearts broke as we said goodbye to three babies that we never got to hold in our arms.

These days, my husband has the privilege of being a stay-at-home dad, and I have the incredible privilege of pursuing my passion — writing, blogging and more — while also being home for all of the milestones I wouldn't want to miss and the boobos that need kissing. We're a homeschooling family, which means we get to spend every day together. And most days we consider that a blessing!

Although it might sometimes seem like I've got it all figured out, let me assure you that I don't. There are probably dirty dishes in my sink right now, and I end up wasting time on Facebook more often than I care to admit. Our marriage is beautiful, but not perfect, and I still get buyer's remorse after a stupid impulse purchase. I'm the spokesperson for [Plan to Eat](#), but sometimes I totally ignore my meal plan and we end up eating out because mama doesn't feel like cooking.

But through it all, we're just a family trying to make the best decisions we can while pursuing our passions and enjoying each other. And here at Life...Your Way, I try to share the things I'm thinking about and the lessons we're learning along the way.