

Name: _____

Class: _____

A Sweet Invention

By Tracy Vonder Brink
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In this informational text, Tracy Vonder Brink explains how a popular treat came to be. As you read, take notes on how people learned about Ruth's cookies.

- [1] Ruth Wakefield wanted a cookie, but not just any cookie. Ruth wanted something new. Something different. And she was just the person to create¹ it.

In the 1930s, Ruth and her husband owned the Toll House restaurant in Whitman, Massachusetts. Toll House was a well-known stop on the way between Boston and Cape Cod. Actors, singers, and other celebrities of the time all ate there. Ruth was in charge of the restaurant's great food.

Ruth had studied cooking in college, and she was good at it. People said that all Ruth had to do was taste a dish, and then she could make it without even looking at a recipe.² She was always learning and trying new things. Every January, Ruth and her husband took a trip overseas to try foods in different countries, such as France and Egypt.



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Toll House was especially known for its desserts. Ruth made lemon meringue pie, Boston cream pie, and gingerbread. The restaurant served a thin butterscotch cookie, but Ruth wanted to create something brand-new. On the way home from one of their trips overseas, she planned out a new recipe.

- [5] At that time, chocolate was used in desserts, but it was always melted and mixed in. What if Ruth could use chocolate a different way? She thought back to a college class on cooking where she learned how foods work together. She also recalled her past experiments with chocolate.

Back home, Ruth ordered bars of semi-sweet chocolate from the grocery store. Then she used an ice pick to break the chocolate bars into pieces and added the bits to cookie dough. She tried batch³ after batch until she had one she liked. Ruth named her new cookie the Chocolate Crunch Cookie.

1. **Create (verb)** to make or invent
2. **Recipe (noun)** a list of materials and steps to follow to make a food
3. an amount of something created at one time

Chocolate Crunch Cookies were a hit! Customers at her restaurant loved them so much they asked her to make them at home. They shared the cookies with their friends. People wrote to Ruth and asked her for the recipe. She was happy to give it to them.

Ruth's cookies grew even more famous after she was invited on a radio show to talk about them. Then the recipe was printed in the newspaper. The cookies were so popular that the chocolate bar company saw their sales go up 500% in the region⁴ where Ruth lived! In 1939, the company asked Ruth if they could use her recipe and the Toll House name on their chocolate bars. Ruth agreed.

Everyone who made the cookies from Ruth's recipe had to break up the chocolate bars the way Ruth did. It wasn't always easy — Ruth's daughter remembered her mother's hands turning red and sore from chopping up chocolate when making a big batch of cookies for the restaurant. Then, in 1940, the chocolate bar company made chocolate chips for the first time and put them on sale with Ruth's recipe on the bag.

- [10] Nobody had seen anything like chocolate chip cookies. Other companies began making their own chocolate chips and cookies. Chocolate chip cookie mix appeared on store shelves. Ruth's cookies became popular and stayed that way. Chocolate chip cookies are still named as one of people's favorite types of cookies.

Ruth retired⁵ in 1967 and sold her restaurant. Today, the Toll House name and Ruth's recipe still appear on bags of chocolate chips and on chocolate chip cookie products. Her skill at cooking and experimenting with new tastes gave us one of our favorite treats. The next time you enjoy a chocolate chip cookie, thank Ruth Wakefield.

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4. **Region (noun)** an area of land
5. **Retire (verb)** to stop working

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the main idea of "A Sweet Invention"?
 - A. Chocolate chip cookies started out as a healthy snack.
 - B. There are many different kinds of cookies that people like.
 - C. Ruth Wakefield was a cook who invented the first chocolate chip cookie.
 - D. The Chocolate Crunch Cookie was the first cookie served by the Toll House restaurant.

2. How does the author organize the information in the text?
 - A. by asking questions about chocolate chip cookies and answering them
 - B. by explaining the steps a baker needs to follow to bake chocolate chip cookies
 - C. by listing how chocolate chip cookies are different from other kinds of cookies
 - D. by telling the story of how chocolate chip cookies were created and what happened next

3. Which detail shows that Ruth had the skills to invent the chocolate chip cookie?
 - A. "Actors, singers, and other celebrities of the time all ate there." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "She thought back to a college class on cooking where she learned how foods work together." (Paragraph 5)
 - C. "People wrote to Ruth and asked her for the recipe." (Paragraph 7)
 - D. "Ruth's cookies grew even more famous after she was invited on a radio show to talk about them." (Paragraph 8)

4. In paragraph 11, "product" most closely means —
 - A. the final result
 - B. a special type of bag
 - C. something made to sell
 - D. the answer to a math problem

5. How did the chocolate chip cookie become popular?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In this text, the author explains how Ruth Wakefield invented the chocolate chip cookie. Why is it important to learn about how foods were invented? What is your favorite cookie or treat? How do you think that treat was invented?
2. Ruth Wakefield experimented with ingredients to make the chocolate chip cookie. Have you ever experimented with food? What did you try? Did you like the results? If you have not experimented with food, what kind of experiment would you like to do? What ingredients would you use?
3. If you were Ruth Wakefield, would you have shared your recipe with others? Why or why not? How would things be different if she did not share her recipe with others?