



Wackym's Cookies are the Perfect Base for a Sweet-Savory Pairing

Susan Axelrod | July 15, 2022

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I'm an avid baker, and never met a packaged cookie that wowed me until I bit into a [Wackym's Kitchen](#) Lemon Shortbread at Good Food Mercantile in San Francisco last February. "Ohhhh ..." I sighed as I scanned the other flavors lined up on the table and asked the man in the feathered fedora standing behind it, "Have you ever tried your cookies with cheese?" He certainly had, Paul Wackym replied. I later learned about his trajectory from fashion to food, and that oddball hats have become his trademark.

Educated in art and design, Wackym was the creative director at high-end Dallas women's clothing manufacturer Howard Wolf for many years before becoming the product development manager for Neiman Marcus' Epicure Workroom. "The first day on the job I hopped on a plane and went to Hong Kong to develop product for the next Christmas," he says. "I had such success with packaged cookies that the seed was planted." His successes included the department store's chocolate chip cookie (the subject of a widespread myth that a shopper paid \$250 for the recipe); Wackym revamped the recipe and redid the packaging, leading to a significant jump in sales. After he was laid off from a subsequent creative director position when the company filed for bankruptcy, his partner, Darren Stanley, urged Wackym to start baking full time. "I had entertained lavishly for years using recipes from my mother, including making many different kinds of cookies at Christmas," Wackym says.

In 2008 he rented space in a catering kitchen and began selling his cookies at the farmers' market. His tenacity garnered what is now a longstanding relationship with the Texas food emporium Central Market, and eventually Whole Foods in the southwest and Zabar's. Two Wackym's Kitchen cookies—Lemon and Salted Caramel—won a 2022 Good Food Award.

Stanley, a CPA, now runs the business side of Wackym's Kitchen, while Wackym, known as Dough Master Sid, oversees baking operations at a 10,000-square-foot facility turning out between 75,000 and 85,000 cookies a day—nine different everyday cookie varieties and four shortbreads—all made with real, high-quality ingredients. Another 25 seasonal offerings rotate into the regular lineup, which includes Margarita, Chocolate Snicker Doodle, and Oatmeal Walnut Currant. Fresh lime is used in the Margarita cookie and the Salted Caramel cookie is salted on the outside. "We recycle the parchment paper, so the cookies get the salt on the top and the bottom," Wackym says. Sporting one of his signature wacky hats, he still sells cookies at the Coppell Farmers Market weekly, "a great place as a testing ground."

Asked about his favorite flavor, "mood and proximity" are always factors, he says. "My go-to for candy is our Salted Caramel Chocolate Chip. My go-to for food is our Oatmeal Walnut Currant. Ever since I came up with our Butterscotch Shortbread, that's the one I want to take to bed."



Ginger Orange Cookie + Bloomy Rind Cheese

A solid standby is our Ginger Orange cookie—fresh ginger and fresh orange evenly balanced with each other, not ginger-snap spicy. It pairs beautifully with the floral notes and clean citrus finish of [Cypress Grove Humboldt Fog](#). I have also served them with [Cowgirl Creamery Mt Tam](#) along with The Juice Hive Watermelon Rind Chutney.

Cornmeal Rosemary Shortbread + Ricotta + Hot Honey

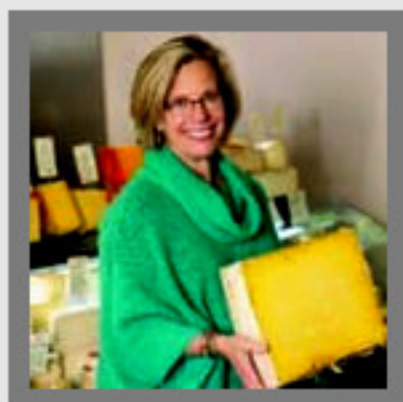
Our most versatile cheese-pairing cookie is our Cornmeal Rosemary Shortbread. It is slightly sweet with a back note of rosemary. The cornmeal adds a swell mouthfeel, and the shortbread has a toasted nutty flavor from its bake time and from real vanilla. I most often recommend a soft blue—Stilton is divine when schmeared on top. A caterer friend serves them with [Mozzarella Company's Goat's Milk Ricotta](#) mixed with a pinch of cayenne and piped onto the shortbread and a drizzle of [Clif Family Cobanero Chili Hot Honey](#), plus a pinch of micro greens on top.

Tripple Ginger Shortbread + Blue

Our Triple Ginger Shortbread—a fresh, candied, and powdered ginger trifecta—is a ginger-lover's treat. It packs a powerful punch and plays beautifully with [Jasper Hill Farm Bayley Hazen Blue](#).

Hatch Chile Cheese Nibbles

Not to be forgotten is our Hatch Chile Cheese Nibbles—salty, cornmeal-based treats made with sharp cheddar and blue cheese combined with a blend of both red and green Hatch chiles. I made a savory pesto macaroni and cheese recently and processed two packages of the Nibbles with three cups of shredded parmesan cheese and a stick of melted butter for the topping. Yummy.



Susan Axelrod

Editor-in Chief Susan Sherrill Axelrod's love affair with cheese began at age 12, when she bicycled to a gourmet shop to taste an exotic newcomer—French brie. She lives with her partner in midcoast Maine, where she enjoys a well-made cocktail, hiking with their dog, Lucy, and spending as much time as possible on the water.