

HODGEPODGE

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Dear Parents,

Christmas time brings fun with friends and family. And speaking of fun... have you ever thought of having a cookie swap? It's lots of fun and you can also participate in raising funds for the Great American Bake Sale. Funds raised go to helping end childhood hunger. Go online to Great American Bake Sale for info. Happy holidays and let's talk cookies...

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Cookie Swap Ideas

Six weeks before: invite friends and tell them to bring anywhere from 4 to 6 dozen cookies, this will depend on how many people you invite. Create your own invitations on recipe cards using a "Night Before Cookie Swap" poem or shape them into gingerbread men cut-outs. Also ask guests to bring recipes of their treat to share with others and a container to bring their cookies home in.

Three weeks before: Start thinking about what goodies you might like to serve at the swap. Cakes, trifle or your own special cookies are good ideas. Serve with hot cocoa, tea, or white and chocolate milk or perhaps a punch would be nice. An easy punch recipe is to combine 1- 32 oz. bottle of apple juice & 1- 32 oz. bottle of cranberry juice and 2 cups club soda served chilled with floating orange slices. Your swap could also be a potluck. Make your own cookies to share now and freeze them in zip-lock bags.

Three days before: bake the desserts or food you will serve at the swap. Decorate the table for the cookies. One idea is to use all kinds of containers; cake stands, parfait glasses, glass bowls or perhaps baskets. No tablecloth? Cover the table with gift wrap.

One hour before: arrange beverages near the cookie table. Set out your food and turn on some festive music.

At the swap: give raffle tickets to guests as they arrive and raffle off prizes like cookie cutters, holiday decorations or cookbooks. The prizes could be for the most original recipe, best cookie display or most festive holiday outfit. Set up a table of gift tags, markers, ribbons & stickers along with gift bags ...everyone will have so much fun creating personalized cookie packages to give during the holidays. When ready to swap you might have each guest talk a little about their cookie, does it have a special ingredient, a story attached to the recipe etc.

Don't want to participate in the Great American Bake Sale?

Extend your circle of sharing. Ask guests to bring a new

package of store-bought cookies to the swap. Collect the packages and **deliver them to a local shelter or nursing home.** **When your guests leave** you might want to have a party favor for them. One example would be to purchase holiday coffee mugs (the dollar store is good for this) and fill them with hot cocoa mix, hard candies, cookie cutters etc.

Cookie baking tips:

- ❑ If your cookies are spreading too much, the dough is too warm. Refrigerate dough until chilled. Also let cookie sheets cool between batches.
- ❑ If your dough is too dry, try adding 1 to 2 T. milk to it.
- ❑ Soft cookies should be stored in a container with a tight fitting lid, crisp cookies in a container with a loose-fitting lid.
- ❑ If you don't have wire racks to cool your cookies on, place sugar on wax or parchment paper to cool.