

# Author Q&A

a conversation with the authors of the book



*Christmas Cookies Are for Giving*  
*Recipes, Stories and Tips for Making Heartwarming Gifts*



by Kristin Johnson and Mimi Cummins

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## How would you describe CHRISTMAS COOKIES ARE FOR GIVING?

**Mimi:** Its goal is to encourage people to create or carry on family traditions by giving them all they need to make delicious Christmas cookies for giving: inspiration, know-how, recipes, and a look at how other families carry on their Christmas cookie traditions.

**Kristin:** One part recipe book, one part giving advice, one part feel-good Christmas stories, and an all-around delicious gift book for the holidays. The short story “The Giving Christmas Cookie” is great family reading and you can enjoy the cookie recipe that comes from the story.

## How did you come to co-write the book?

**Mimi:** When the publisher approached me about doing this book, I realized that with the theme of giving, it had to be much more than just a cookbook. So I contacted my old childhood friend and co-worker Kristin Johnson, a very talented writer, about helping me enrich the book with stories and other ideas. She did a great job helping us to recapture the wonder of Christmas baking.

**Kristin:** It was a sweet deal, pun intended. How could I miss the chance to do a book with my childhood friend? Working on the book with Mimi has been a wonderful experience.

## What do Christmas cookies mean to you?

**Mimi:** Everyone knows that we have over-commercialized Christmas, but every year we go through the same holiday frenzy, only to regret that once again, we didn’t have a very peaceful or merry Christmas in spite of all our good intentions to *slow down this year*. For me, baking is a way to slow down and spend some quality time alone or with my children. And giving cookies as gifts not only affords me the satisfaction of offering my friends and family something home-made, but it also helps me to spend less time at the mall. At the very least, even if I do end up rushing all over town in a gift-buying frenzy, I will have those few hours of baking with my children as memories.

**Kristin:** Since I’m in California, Christmas cookies connect me to a time when I was surrounded by snow. My family and I love making them together, and when Mimi was younger, she loved eating them at our house. Christmas cookies are also a way to connect me to my family through recipes that have been passed down, a yummy way to honor the past. I wrote about this in the essay “A Dash of Cinnamon, A Pinch of the Past, A Smidgen of the Future,” which has appeared in *The Desert Woman* and on *OldFashionedLiving.com*. I also spoke about this in an article in *The Desert Sun*, where I was photographed holding the book on a tray!

## How did you collect the recipes in the book?

**Mimi:** Many of the recipes were handed down from my grandmother Evelyn Garchow. I developed a couple of the recipes myself, and others were donated by visitors to *Christmas-Cookies.com*. There are also a few recipes donated by food promotion organizations. In doing research for this book I found that many of the top-rated reader-donated recipes at *Christmas-Cookies.com* actually originated from a food promotion organization. So I contacted a few of these groups about donating their favorites to the book. They were very enthusiastic and contributed some wonderful recipes.

**Kristin:** Our own families and friends, for a start. There's the Nut Roll that come from one of our oldest family friends, Aunt Mary Walker, and from my mother Kathy Johnson and my grandmother, Kay Liebold. Plus, Mimi got a fabulous idea and sponsored a story and recipe contest on Christmas-Cookies.com.

### **Who inspired you to love Christmas cookies?**

**Mimi:** My grandmother Evelyn. When I was a girl, Christmas cookies meant going to Grandma's house with cousins to bake cookies every year. It was a precious family tradition for all of us. We had lots of fun with flour and sugar and frosting, and stayed up after bedtime and were spoiled in every way by Grandma.

**Kristin:** My family, my friends, and myself as a kid! I've never lost that child's excitement about Christmas. My grandmother Kay Liebold's kitchen was full of the kinds of goodies and tasting and unlimited supply of cookies you love as a kid. But in later years when my grandmother couldn't bake any more, I enjoyed making cookies with my mom, just as I always have.

### **Who tested all the recipes?**

**Mimi:** I tested them all and solicited the opinions of my family, friends, and neighbors. Most of these recipes were tried and true already, but during this process I perfected them or at least was able to make accurate notes for writing the recipe itself, such as the yield that often I didn't have.

**Kristin:** Mimi has two growing hungry boys and a husband to eat the efforts. (Laughs) She did a tremendous job and the photos of the cookies make everyone immediately gain ten pounds!

### **What is the significance of the prayer on the cover?**

**Mimi:** It reinforces the theme of the book, how baking homemade cookies is one way to help put faith, love, joy and health back into our Christmas time.

**Kristin:** We wanted the ethereal and the divine in the book, because spirit brings people together in the story "The Giving Christmas Cookie." I wrote the prayer for the story and Mimi included it in the cover design. When the characters in the story make the cookie, they say the prayer.

### **Could you talk about the mix of short stories such as personal stories and "The Giving Christmas Cookie" and recipes?**

**Mimi:** As the Webmaster of Christmas-Cookies.com, I have received many messages from people thanking me for finding lost recipes for them. These recipes are heirlooms. Family recipes represent a little slice of our own history. When someone rediscovers grandma's long-lost cookie recipe, reading the recipe and baking and eating the cookie takes them right back to those idyllic days gone by. So we asked the Christmas-Cookies.com audience to send us their stories about why Christmas cookies are so important to them. We received some charming responses, and they're in the book.

**Kristin:** Mimi and I agreed that this needed to stand out from other recipe books. To me, food and Christmas stories go hand in hand. Besides, in many fiction books, you do see recipes and true stories, so why not the other way around?

### **How much invention went into "The Giving Christmas Cookie" and what was the inspiration for the story?**

**Mimi:** When my grandmother was in a nursing home we would take the kids to see her. The ladies there loved seeing the children, it was the highlight of their day. When my youngest was born, we took him to see Grandma, but all of the ladies wanted to hold him and talk to him, and he ended up "making the rounds" on every visit. It made me realize how important it is to share our lives not only with all of the people around us who don't necessarily get to savor the everyday joys of holding babies, or baking home-made Christmas cookies.

**Kristin:** My mom mentioned, during the last time Mimi visited my family, that she'd never seen a story of a magical Christmas cookie. The story takes place with four generations of women visiting a nursing home before Christmas dealing with one of the women's illness. There's a Christmas miracle in the story that happens through—you guessed it—a cookie. It's a bittersweet, ultimately positive story that shows how Christmas miracles touch everyone.