

Molasses, chocolate, peppermint – and don't forget the sugar

Cookie contest brings out the best from local bakers

LINDA WYNER
Clayton Pioneer

Once again, Clayton's finest junior and senior bakers plowed their way through deep snowdrifts (er, heavy commute traffic) to fill tasting tables 'til they groaned with cookies from their kitchens.

Clayton's own Vintage harmonic trio (Santiago and Joyce Martinez and Roxanne Pardi) rocked the house with their wonderful holiday music while the judges went to work.

Clayton Valley High School freshman Zoe Manoguerro was back judging for a third time, joined by last year's Clayton Pioneer cookie contest winner

Paige Anderson, Clayton Community and Business Association president Mike Fossan, Officer Rich Enea and Lynn Christ from the Clayton Police Department, and Deborah Nork, owner of Cookies By Design. Santa arrived just in time to help celebrate with the winning bakers.

This year's Junior Baker top prize went to 11-year-old Matt Wright, who baked up a batch of soft and chewy Molasses Cookies. The judges swooned and sighed as they bit into these tasty morsels.

Just a point behind and tied for second and third were Allison Barber's Mint Oreo Cookie Balls of Heaven and Grayson Wright's scrumptious Death By Chocolate cookies.



Cady Lang nabbed first place in the Teen Division for her Moo-Cow Cookies, while Katelan Bowden's Russian Tea Cookies were a close second.

The selections from the Master (adult) Bakers were so close that only one point separated the winners. Michelle Lang's Chocolate Peppermint Cookies took first, followed by Mary Ann Collander's Invisible Baklava and Pam Ghatta-Bowden's Oatmeal Chocolate Chippers.

In case you're intrigued by Mary Ann's submission, I'm told that the baklava is invisible because she has to hide it from her husband or it's gone before the family can enjoy it! (I was disappointed, since I'd hoped that it was the calories that were invisible....)

Some of this year's entries used ready-made cake mix as the foundation for the cookies. But the real secret to good cookie-making is to cream together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. This is best done by mixer, but you can always do an

acceptable job by hand. Creaming helps create small air spaces in the butter and this makes for a tender crumb texture in the baked good.

If you weren't part of the lucky crowd who feasted on the cookies after the judging, here are the winning recipes for you to recreate at home. Happy holidays!

**JUNIOR BAKER
1ST PLACE
MATT WRIGHT, 11**

MOLASSES COOKIES
¾ c. margarine, softened
1 c. sugar
½ c. Brer Rabbit mild or full-flavored molasses
1 egg
2 c. sifted all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground cloves
½ tsp. ground ginger
Granulated sugar (for rolling cookies)

With electric mixer at low speed, beat margarine and sugar in a large bowl until creamy. Add molasses and egg, beating until well-blended. In medium bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, cloves and ginger. Add to molasses mixture and mix well. Cover and chill.

Preheat oven to 375. Form chilled dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in sugar and bake on non-stick cookie sheet about 2 inches apart for 6-8 minutes. Remove to wire rack to cool.

**JUNIOR BAKER
2ND PLACE TIE
GRAYSON WRIGHT, 7**

**DEATH BY
CHOCOLATE COOKIE**
2 packages (16 squares) Baker's semi-sweet baking chocolate, divided
¾ c. firmly packed brown sugar
¼ c. butter or margarine
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
½ c. flour
¼ tsp. baking powder
2 c. chopped nuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 350. Coarsely chop 8 squares of the chocolate and set aside. Microwave remaining 8 squares of chocolate in large microwaveable bowl on high for 1-2 minutes. Stir chocolate until melted and smooth.

Stir in sugar, butter, eggs and vanilla. Stir in flour and baking powder. Stir in reserved chopped chocolate and nuts. Drop by ¼ cupfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 12-13 minutes or until cookies are puffed and feel set to the touch. Cool on cookie sheet for one minute and transfer to wire rack to cool completely. Makes about 18 cookies.

**JUNIOR BAKER
2ND PLACE TIE
ALISON BARBER, 9**

**MINT OREO COOKIE
BALLS OF HEAVEN**
(from www.dallasnews.com)
1 17-oz. package Cool Mint Creme Double Stuff Oreos
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 c. semisweet chocolate chips
5 tsp. shortening, divided
1 c. white chocolate
Green food coloring (optional)

Crush Oreos and mix with cream cheese with an electric mixer on high until thoroughly blended (about 2 minutes). Roll into 1-inch balls and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Using a double boiler, melt chocolate chips and 3 tsp. of shortening over low heat. Carefully slip balls into chocolate using a toothpick and spoon. Place on a sheet of wax paper and refrigerate for an hour or until chocolate is hardened.

See Cookies, page B8



Tamara Steiner/Clayton Pioneer

COOKIE CONTEST JUDGES TOOK TIME OUT FOR A PHOTO WITH SANTA. Back row: Officer Rich Enea, Jr., Santa, Mike Fossan, Deborah Nork, Lynn Christ; Front row: Paige Anderson, Zoe Manoguerro and Linda Wyner.

Discover The Possibilities With Lynne French



Concord \$479,980

Must see 10+ Property! Remodeled 4BD w/fantastic curb appeal! Gardener's paradise w/ a lovely eat-in kitchen, newer cabinets, stainless appliances & stone counters. Hardwood floors & designer paint add class to living & dining rooms warmed by a fireplace.



Concord \$310,000

La Terraza Condo – Completely remodeled 2BD/1BA upper unit has a large balcony w/storage & great view of pool & greenbelt. Kitchen offers maple cabinets & granite counters; bath w/dual marble vanity; master has a walk-in closet. Convenient inside laundry a big plus!



Concord \$399,000

Ayers Ranch – Great location & endless possibilities! 3BD/2BA home has a roomy kitchen and large dining area with new vinyl, and an open family room w/fireplace. Front and back lawns are amply sized and out the back door you have a large covered patio & storage.



Pittsburg \$376,000

Wonderful Investment! – Perfect family home 4BD/3BA incl. detached in-law w/kitchen & bath. Fresh paint & baseboards, lovely tile floors plus hardwood. Flowing floor plan & family room access to backyard w/covered deck & built-in hot tub.



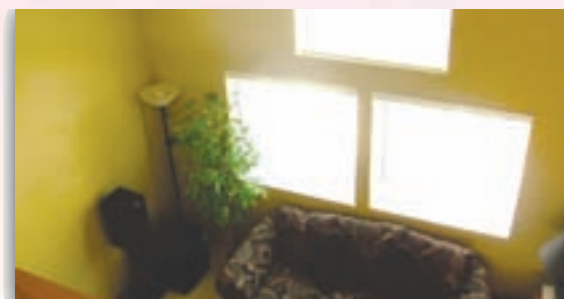
Concord \$689,980

Pine Hollow Estates – View Christmas lights from the top end of the road. Richly updated 4BD/2.5BA w/over 2,100 s.f. & new fencing, beautiful pool. Master w/double doors & family room w/French doors & fireplace. Make your holidays warm & bright.



Concord \$519,980

Clayton Border – Updated to please! 3BD/2BA w/dual pane windows, recessed lights, crown molding. Gourmet kitchen w/handset tile counters & newer floors thru-out! Family, Formal living & Dining rooms. Located on a cul-de-sac. RV Pkg. possible.



Concord \$335,000

Newhall Village – Condo w/attached 2-car garage! Gorgeous 2BD/1BA w/vaulted ceilings, oversized windows, updated flooring & paint + inside laundry. Open living space makes this light & bright 2-story feel like a townhome. Call Shelly Gwynn (925) 207-3069.



Concord \$544,980

Clayton Valley Highlands – Upgraded 3BD/2BA w/nearly 1,700 s.f. has an expanded master suite w/elegant bath incl. jetted tub. Recessed lighting, neutral paint, raised panel doors & spacious bedrooms w/mirrored closet doors. Inside laundry & poss. RV Prkg.



Lynne offers
FREE staging
on her listings

LYNNE FRENCH
Discover the Possibilities

THIS AREA'S #1 REALTOR®

*ASSISTING MORE BUYERS AND SELLERS
THAN ANYONE ELSE

*Statistics based on Clayton closed listings by listing/sales agent
(1/05-12/05). Data by MaxEBRDI.

(925) 672-8787
www.LynneFrench.com

Stop by and visit us at
6200 Center St., #E, Clayton

Windermere
LYNNE FRENCH
& ASSOCIATES

Clayton Resident
& Broker Owner