

## How Many Cookies Does It Take to Fill a Home?

Mom always wanted to be a baker—open up her own bakery on a small-town street corner, the perfect setting for a Hallmark movie. Baking was her expression, her pastime, her way to deal with the troubles of life. There were always dozens of chocolate chip scones stacked on top of each other miles high filling the whole house with a baked sugar-sweet smell. The perfect way to wake up on a Saturday morning, or warm snickerdoodles on a cold and bleak Sunday afternoon. The house always smelled of baked goods. I preferred it that way.

My sister and I loved the holiday times especially because that meant mom would spend her free time in the kitchen dedicating hours and hours baking, icing, and glazing. Our house would be filled to the brim with sweet treats and baked goods. Everyone came over to try mom's baking. I mean, I couldn't blame them; she did have the best chocolate chip cookie recipe, and she would always make cinnamon roasted pecans. Those were a fan favorite.

"Ms. McIntyre, these cookies are so delicious." My friend Mitchell said while frantically packing away all the cookies set out on the table into a Tupperware container to take home.

"Here, take another container so you can bring some home for your parents."

My sister and I would always sneak downstairs in the middle of the night, me for more roasted pecans, her, for mom's lady locks. "The best late-night snack around," according to her, but she would eat lady locks whenever wherever. That's why when mom made lady locks she had to make about three dozen especially if she wanted to give some to her friends or co-workers. Mom always had to separate what we can eat and what she's giving to others; My sister and I would definitely eat everything.

While baking seemed to be what made her happy, sometimes I would find her in the kitchen covered in so much buttercream frosting as if it could take away the pain, as if the frostings sweetness could take away the sourness of life. She was trying to put her life back together after it was forcefully and unwillingly torn down; after love turned its back on her and forced her to hand over divorce papers. After her husband betrayed her and left her to question everything about love and a faithful relationship. After life told her to move, get out, and start somewhere new and all alone to raise two kids. Help always seemed so far away. So, maybe she thought if she made more cinnamon rolls or snickerdoodles than our table could hold it would fix something inside of her. Maybe the frosting would be the glue to hold her broken pieces together. Or maybe the sugar sweetness of her bake goods would mask the sour hand she had been dealt. The sour hand she has been forced to live with and make do.

It's hard to imagine mom ever being upset. She was the buttercream frosting glue that held our family together. She was always there, always ready to put my needs before hers, and while I will never stop appreciating everything she has done for me, I wish she would chase after her dreams and go after what she wants. While I know she does not regret much in life and she says she wouldn't do anything differently, I think a small subconscious part of her would. A small part of her would open up her own bakery or even apply to culinary school.

Mom always wanted to be a baker—open up her own bakery on a small-town street corner, but she gave up that dream because everyone else gave up on her too, and what she going

to do with two kids? Finish icing a cupcake while her kids were screaming in the next room? No. She had to step up and be what a parent should be. So, she did what any mother would do, she tucked away her fantasy into the deepest darkest corners of her mind, and she raised her family.

She raised her family on snickerdoodles and lady locks.