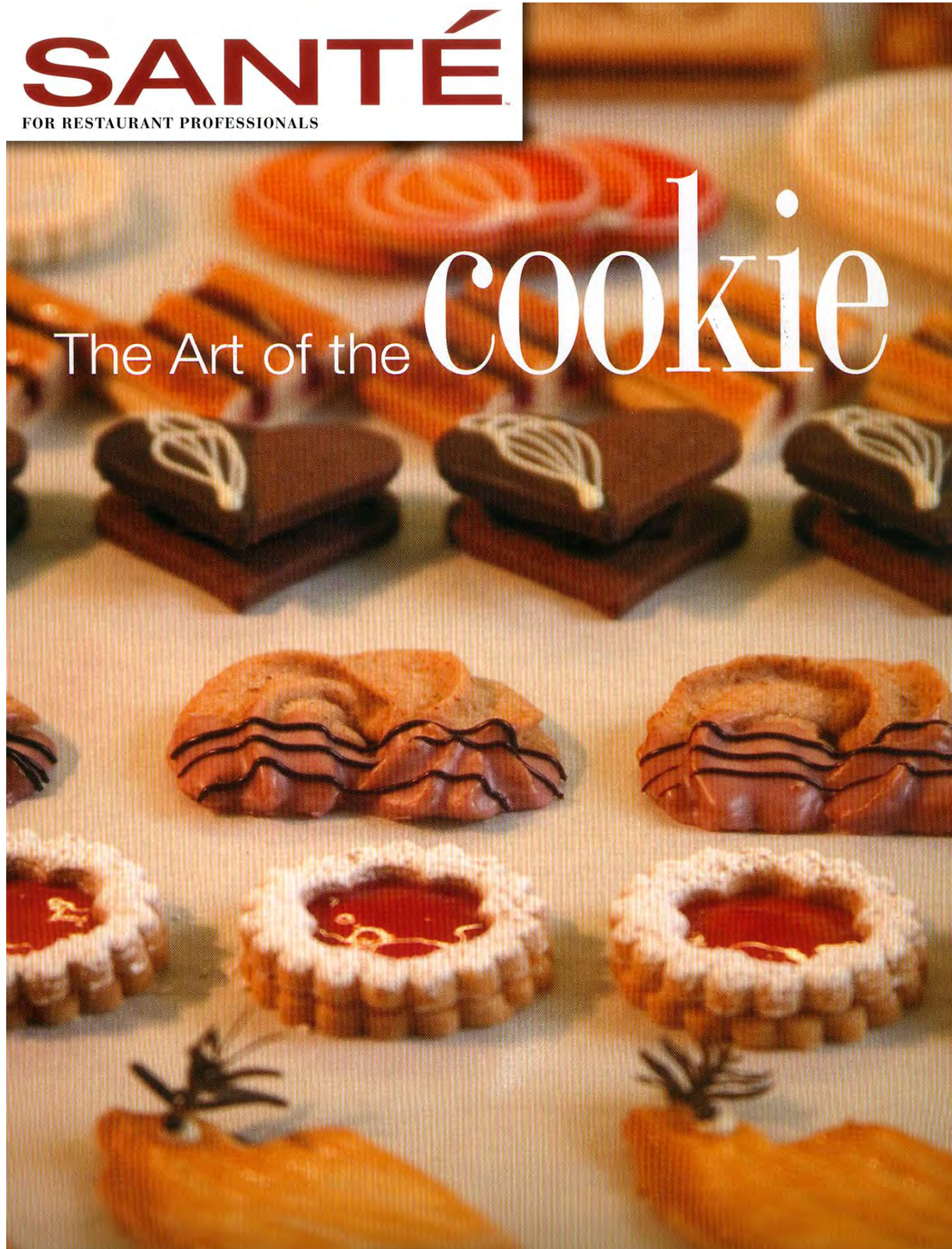


# The Art of the cookie



Cookies are a popular sweet the world over, but in Switzerland they're a *venerable art form*. Trust it to the Swiss—those champions of chocolate, cheese, folding knives and exquisite timepieces—to turn a simple mixture of sugar, butter, eggs and flour into a *vast repertoire of edible amenities* worthy of gift giving and celebration.

Pastry Chef Jörg Amsler, the owner of Truly Jörg's Pâtisseries in downtown Boston and Saugus, Massachusetts, grew up with this illustrious cookie heritage. Born in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, he attended pastry school in Zurich and completed a five-year apprenticeship (four years in pastry and one in chocolate) at Konditorei Rhor, an elite Swiss bakery. Diploma in hand, Amsler moved to Montreal for a position with the Beaver Club Restaurant in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. After winning several prestigious pastry honors in Canada, he was asked to teach at the Culinary Institute of Quebec. In 1988, Amsler traveled around the world three times as the youngest executive pastry chef for the Royal Viking cruise line. Passengers awarded Amsler's desserts and pastry displays the highest marks the pastry department had ever scored prior to his tenure. After leaving Royal Viking, Amsler interned with Master Chef Paul Bocuse in Lyon, France.

In 1990 the pastry wiz moved to the United States and spent the next ten years working on the West and East coasts. By 2000, Amsler was ready to strike out on his own. With big ideas but a shortage of cash, he drew on his own construction skills to build Truly Jörg's patisserie in Chelsea, Massachusetts. It was an instant success, out-growing the original space within a year. Amsler closed the Chelsea operation when his larger Saugus bakery, north of Boston, opened in 2001. In August 2006, Amsler opened another Truly Jörg's outlet, with retail only, in a small cafe space in downtown Boston.

#### No Bite-Size Business

The display cases at Truly Jörg's Pâtisseries are lined with the best temptations of the baking trade—perfect fruit tarts, smartly styled cakes and tortes, buttery pastries and rich chocolate treats. But it's the cookies—in a multitude of shapes, flavors, colors and sizes (\$2.50 to \$4 each for novelty cookies; \$8 per dozen for tea cookies)—



Opposite page: A myriad of tea and novelty cookies at Truly Jörg's Pâtisserie are made from two simple dough recipes. Above: Swiss-born pastry chef Jörg Amsler sells more than 2,000 handcrafted cookies each month.



## Cinnamon Cookies with Port Glaze

### Cinnamon Cookie:

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Unsalted butter, softened | 1 lb., 6 oz. |
| Sugar                     | 1 lb.        |
| Ground hazelnuts          | 1 lb.        |
| Cinnamon                  | 2 oz.        |
| Vanilla                   | to taste     |
| Large egg whites          | 3            |
| All-purpose flour         | 1 lb., 6 oz. |

### Port Glaze:

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| Port wine            | 1–1 ½ cups |
| Confectioners' sugar | ½ cup      |

1. Cream butter and sugar. Add hazelnuts, cinnamon, and vanilla. Beat well until batter is light and fluffy. Slowly beat in egg whites until blended. Beat in flour until combined.
2. Fit pastry bag with medium-size star tip. Fill with cookie batter; pipe out horseshoe-shaped cookies onto parchment-covered baking sheet. Bake at 300°F until golden brown. Cool cookies.
3. Meanwhile, prepare Port Glaze: Add port to confectioners' sugar, mixing until blended and icing consistency is achieved.

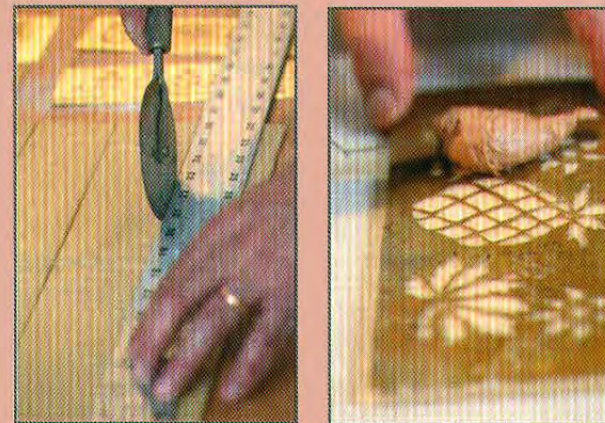
that are one of the most popular to-go sweets. In addition to retail sales of cookies, which account for as much as 25 percent of Amsler's revenues, his shop also has a standing order to deliver 6,000 assorted handmade cookies each week to Progressive Gourmet, a wholesaler that distributes them to fine hotels, restaurants and corporate dining rooms around the country. During the holiday season, that wholesale order can increase by as much as 50 percent. Needless to say, little cookies are big business for the Boston chef.

"The European-style cookies are really popular with restaurants and hotels because they're small and more refined than American cookies, and they make a very good presentation, especially when you assemble six or seven on a plate," Amsler states. "American cookies, like chocolate chip or peanut butter tend to be too big for that...you eat one and that's it."

The other distinction that the chef makes between the American and the European cookie is in the various kinds of dough and techniques used. "In this country you generally see simple drop cookies, where one dough makes one kind of cookie," Amsler explains. "But in the Swiss and European tradition, one dough is usually made into many different kinds of cookies by adding or

## Baked-On Beauty

To make a sandwiched stencil cookie, Chef Amsler first cuts out rectangles of rolled sugar dough — two for each cookie. Next he makes a "jam" of chocolate cookie dough beaten with a little egg white to a spreading consistency. The stencil is placed atop one rectangle and the jam is spread very thinly over it, filling in the design; the matching rectangle cookie is left undecorated. Amsler loosens and removes the stencil, then bakes the cookies at 300°F. When cooled, the cookies are sandwiched with ganache.



substituting various components and individualizing the style of each cookie." For restaurants wanting to feature cookies as part of a dessert presentation, for afternoon tea, as an after-dinner amenity or for special events, this kind of multipurpose cookie dough is an ideal staple.

## Can-Do Dough

Amsler's classic Sugar Dough is the foundation for all of Truly Jörg's cutout cookies, air-brushed holiday cookies, linzers, stenciled sweets, buttery fruit-and-almond paste bars and fanciful rose-shaped cookies. A simple mixture of all-purpose flour, sugar, butter and eggs, the sweet dough "is flavorful and great to work with," says Amsler, "because it rolls out easily, can be rerolled often and holds its shape when baked." Without leavening to expand the surface of the dough, it can also be scored or marked and will retain the design after baking.

The chef's Chocolate Sable Dough — a classic blend of flour, cocoa powder, sugar, butter and eggs—is similarly forgiving and adaptable. He makes it in 60- to 70-pound batches at a time. The chef notes, "It's a very pliable dough and holds its shape perfectly when baked." The flavor of the chocolate dough is distinctly bittersweet. "I don't make it very sweet because these cookies are often sandwiched with ganache or dipped in a glaze that has plenty of sugar. The almost-bitter chocolate cookie offsets that sweetness really well."

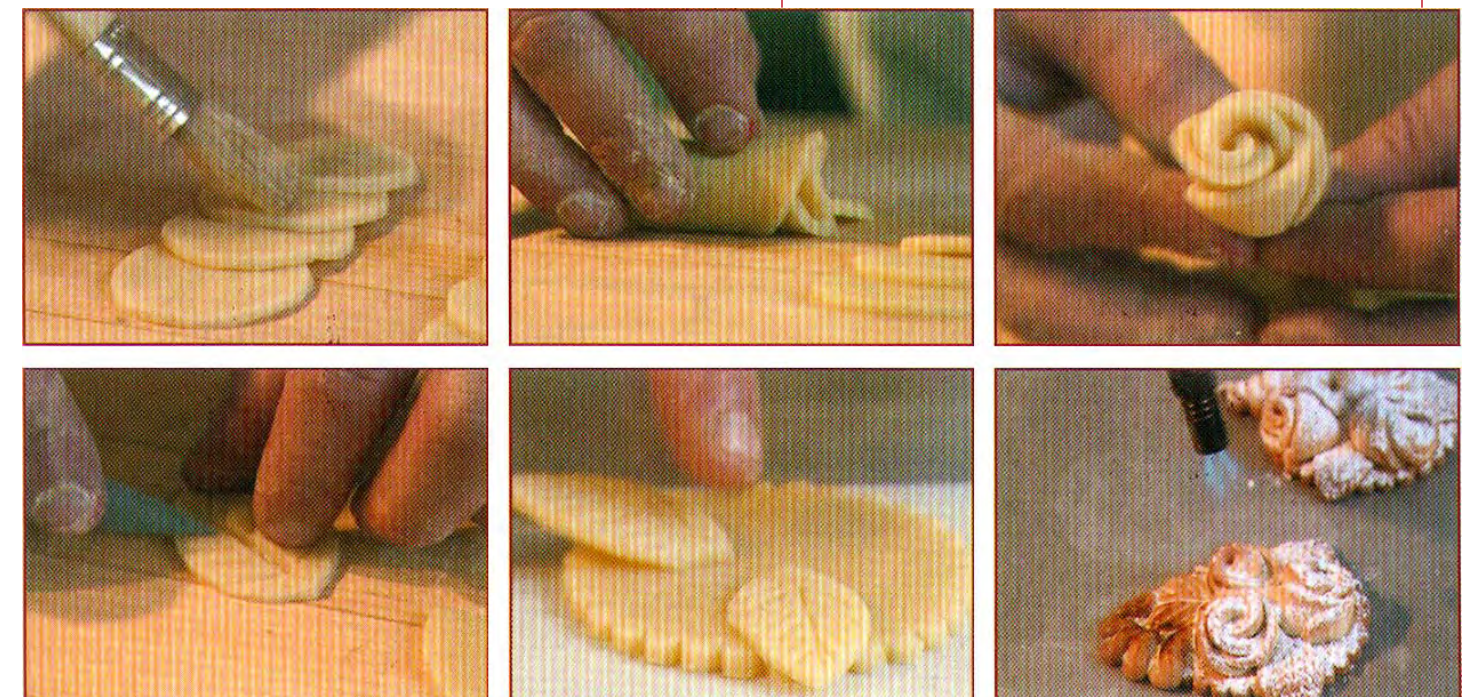
Because ingredients are minimal in these European cookie dough recipes, it's essential that they be top-notch. Amsler uses only unsalted butter, fresh eggs, and unbleached all-purpose flour in his cookies, eschewing any shortening, pasteurized eggs or artificial flavorings. His almond paste is the real thing—an equal blend of sugar and almonds.



## Sugar Cookie

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Granulated sugar           | 1 lb.    |
| Unsalted butter, malleable | 2 lbs.   |
| Large eggs                 | 3        |
| Vanilla extract            | to taste |
| All-purpose flour          | 3 lbs.   |

1. Cream sugar and butter. Beat in eggs, one at a time, then vanilla. Add flour and mix until blended.
2. Let the dough rest in refrigerator overnight. Roll out to ¼-inch thickness, cut as desired and arrange on parchment-covered baking sheet; bake at 300°F until lightly golden at edges.



To make rose-shaped cookies, Chef Amsler arranges four rounds of sugar-cookie dough in a row, slightly overlapping. The row of cookies is rolled up from one end to the other to create a log shape. The log is pinched in half lengthwise to make two "roses." Amsler clusters the roses on a larger sugar-cookie base with cookie leaves and bakes them together at 300°F. To finish, confectioners' sugar is sprinkled on top and then browned with a small torch.

## Chococolate Sugar Cookie

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Granulated sugar           | 1 lb., 2 oz.  |
| All-purpose flour          | 4 lbs., 8 oz. |
| Cocoa powder               | 8 oz          |
| Unsalted butter, malleable | 4 lbs.        |
| Large eggs                 | 4 or 5        |
| Vanilla                    | to taste      |

1. Combine sugar, flour and cocoa powder in mixing bowl. Cut butter into small pieces; mix with dry ingredients until all butter pieces are incorporated. Add eggs and vanilla gradually, mixing just until combined. Do not overmix.
2. Let dough rest in refrigerator overnight. Roll out to ¼-inch thickness, cut as desired and arrange on parchment-covered baking sheet; bake at 300°F for 10 minutes.

The chef laments, “There’s a cheaper macaroon paste available, much stronger tasting, made from apricot pits, that many bakeries use instead of natural almond paste, which is much more expensive.”

Amsler personally shops for many of the bakery’s raw materials at the Restaurant Depot, a wholesale supplier in Chelsea, outside of Boston. Other premium ingredients, such as imported jams, fine chocolate, natural flavorings, food colors and almond paste, are special-ordered from trusted vendors. Special cookie molds, stencils and other decorating equipment are sourced on the Internet—one of the few ways modernity has changed Amsler’s craft. Otherwise, he relies on many of the classic practices and tried-and-true cookie recipes that he learned decades ago during his apprenticeship in Switzerland. After all, he grins, “there are some things that can’t be improved.”



To find Chef Amsler’s traditional Anise Dough recipe for making molded cookies, go to [isantemagazine.com](http://isantemagazine.com).