

## Moravian Cookies <sup>[1]</sup>

### Moravian Cookies

by Amy Kemp, 2017; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, November 2023

See also: [Moravians](#) <sup>[2]</sup>



A sheet tray of Mrs. Hanes Moravian Cookies before baking in Clemmons, NC. Image courtesy of PBS.

<sup>[3]</sup>One of the most famed historic [Moravian](#) <sup>[4]</sup> culinary treats is the spice cookie. The cookie is extremely thin, usually around one millimeter in height, and is traditionally circular and about two inches in diameter with scalloped ridges.

After 1492, European travelers brought new goods and spices back to their homelands, influencing the region's traditional foods. The Moravian spice cookie is a descendant of the German Lebkuchen cookie. Moravians brought the treat with them when they immigrated to [central North Carolina](#) <sup>[5]</sup> in 1753, attracted by the region's fertile soil, plentiful water, and moderate climate.

The traditional Moravian spice cookie was favored by molasses, ginger, and cloves. These spices, if stored well, could still be used after their long journey from their tropical regions of production to North Carolina. The spices were expensive, however, so the cookies were usually prepared only for holidays and special occasions. Early Moravians referred to these cookies as 'cakes.'

The spice dough was made in large batches and was not all baked at once. The dough could be stored for days or weeks during the winter, intensifying the spices' flavor.

The trademark thinness of the cookie had many traditional advantages. Rolling the cookies very thin allowed for a greater number of cookies to be produced from the dough. Thin cookies also baked quickly, allowing the baker to get on with other chores. Molasses, a main ingredient in the cookies, also bakes very hard, and a thick cookie could easily not be bitten or chewed.

Today, the Winston-Salem area is considered the center of Moravian cookie production, with millions of pounds of cookies being baked, packaged, and distributed worldwide each year. Many companies around Winston-Salem are noted for their Moravian Cookies, including the Salem Baking Company, Dewey's Bakery, and Mrs. Hanes' Moravian Cookies. Current flavors extend far beyond the original spice, and one can often find popular varieties such as lemon, chocolate, pumpkin, or key lime.

In 2022, the PBS series *Carolina Impact* published an episode about the Moravian cookie. It was titled "[Hanes Moravian Cookies](#) <sup>[3]</sup>." The episode showcased Mrs. Hanes' Moravian Cookies, their production process, and their history in North Carolina.

## References:

Hughes, Leah. "Sweetest History Lesson". *Our State*, December 2012.

"Nibble & Nosh Your Way Through Winston-Salem's Moravian Culinary Trail". *Visit Winston Salem*.  
<https://www.visitwinstonsalem.com/2021/05/01/nibble-nosh-your-way-through...> [6]

## Additional Resources:

"Unearthed: Winkler Bakery Offers a Sweet History Lesson," *Our State*, March 2015. <https://www.ourstate.com/unearthed-winkler-bakery-offers-sweet-history-lesson/> [7]

## Image Credits:

"Hanes Moravian Cookies." *Carolina Impact*. PBS.org. September 27, 2022. Accessed November 20, 2023 at <https://www.pbs.org/video/hanes-moravian-cookies-dlupek/> [3].

## Subjects:

[100 North Carolina Icons](#) [8]

[Food and drink](#) [9]

[Moravians](#) [10]

## Authors:

[Kemp, Amy](#) [11]

## Origin - location:

[Piedmont](#) [12]

[Forsyth County](#) [13]

[Winston-Salem](#) [14]

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