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「bakery foods」

COOKIES

The Sweet & Simple Life

By Anne Ford

If Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie's antics on "The Simple Life" have taught us anything, it's the importance of demonstrating flexibility in new situations. In episode after episode over the last four years, the twiggly socialites have shown what is, for them at least, arguably admirable innovation.

Forced to forgo your usual antics in favor of a dreary 9-to-5 job? Hold office-chair races down the company hallway! Sent to work in a jail? Flirt with the inmates while you're on the clock! (The latter came in handy during a 2004 episode of the show, long before Hilton's recent prison time for DUI-related charges.)

Of course, we're not comparing cookie manufacturers to Paris and Nicole — at least until producers at E! decide to film the pair on a *Snackwell's*-making stint. Hey, we'd *Tivo* that in a heartbeat.

Still, you could say that like the stars of "The Simple Life," cookie producers are having to adjust to new realities, including increasing food-allergy awareness and heightened portion-control concerns. And like socialites trading in their *Jimmy Choos* for *Crocs*, many of these manufacturers are focusing on products that, while satisfying, are more straightforward than sexy.

Cookies — Top 15 Brands
 (For 52 weeks ending April 22, 2007)

Rank	Brand	Dollar Sales (in millions)	% Change	Dollar Share	Dollar Share Change vs. Previous Year
1	Kraft Nabisco Oreo	\$477.8	+ 0.2	14.0	+0.1
2	Kraft Nabisco Chips Ahoy	\$316.8	+1.1	9.3	+0.1
3	Private Label	\$311.1	+5.9	9.1	+0.5
4	Kraft Nabisco Newtons	\$108.9	+12.9	3.2	+0.4
5	Keebler Chips Deluxe	\$101.8	+0.4	3.0	+0.0
6	Pepperidge Farm Milano	\$87.1	+7.2	2.6	+0.2
7	Keebler Fudge Shoppe	\$84.3	-2.3	2.5	-0.1
8	Kraft Nabisco Nilla	\$81.9	+6.9	2.4	+0.2
9	Pepperidge Farm Chunk	\$80.1	-5.0	2.4	-0.1
10	Archway	\$78.1	-18.2	2.3	-0.5
11	Kraft Nabisco 100 Calorie Packs	\$76.0	+5.2	2.2	+0.1
12	Kraft Nabisco Teddy Grahams	\$72.5	-12.3	2.0	-0.3
13	Murray Free Sugar	\$68.9	+6.2	2.0	+0.1
14	Kraft Nabisco Misc	\$68.2	+15.0	2.0	+0.3
15	Keebler Sandies	\$66.0	+0.7	1.9	+0.0
Total, including brands not shown		\$3,417.0	-0.1	100.0	

Source: Information Resources, Inc.
 Total U.S. – Supermarkets, drug stores and mass merchandisers (excluding Wal-Mart)

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Fashionably Folksy

"Our *Snacking Cookies* are performing much better than our higher-end, soft-baked cookies are," says John DePaolis, the "chief cookie officer" for **Country Choice Organic**, Eden Prairie, Minn.

None of the familiar flavors in the *Snacking Cookie* line — vanilla wafer, ginger snap and the recently introduced chocolate-chip and iced oatmeal — will put parents in the positioning of pondering, as DePaolis puts it, "Will my child eat a carob spelt cookie?" All four are available in 8-oz. boxes.

Canada-based **Hollandia Bakeries**, Mount Brydges, Ont., Canada appears to be following the trend toward familiar flavors with its new 15.9-oz. bags of bite-size Ginger Snaps and Old-Fashioned Oatmeal Cookies, available primarily in Ontario.

"They're great for satisfying your taste buds without eating a big cookie," says Doug Smith, vice president of sales. The company hopes to eventually expand its presence in the United States, where, Smith says, "we're still in the growing process."

It's easy to tell that another Canadian company, **Dare Foods**, Kitchener, Ont., Canada, is serious about the "simple" concept. Just look at its line of thin, not-too-sweet *Simple Pleasures* cookies in flavors such as almond and chocolate.

The latest products in the line, *Simple Pleasures* Baked Cookie Bars, came out in April and retail for \$2.99 for a box of six. True, the cookie bars' varieties — Raisin Spice, California Crunch and Oatmeal Cranberry — are a little more exotic than oatmeal or chocolate chip. Then again, anyone who thinks raisins and cranberries are exotic needs to watch more cable.

Barbara's Bakery, Petaluma, Calif., has long been a leader in the natural-food market, with hits such as *Snackimals* animal-shaped snacking cookies for kids. The company recently extended that line with a new Snickerdoodle flavor and a new packaging format that comprises six 1-oz. bags.

But the biggest news from **Barbara's** is its foray into 100-calorie-pack territory, with new Organic 100-Calorie Mini Cookie packs in chocolate, ginger and oatmeal.

"We've gotten just amazing press out of it," says Kent Spalding, **Barbara's** director of marketing, who adds that he doesn't know of another company that offers a organic cookies in a 100-calorie format.

Outside the organic arena, **Pepperidge Farm**, Norwalk, Conn., is rolling out 100 Calorie Packs of its Chessmen, Chocolate Chessman and Chocolate Chuck cookies. The Norwalk, Conn.-based company also offers Soft Baked Cookies in new Oatmeal, Molasses, Milk Chocolate Chunk and Tahiti Coconut varieties.

Meanwhile, **Kraft Foods**, the Northfield, Ill.-based company that pioneered the 100-calorie trend, still is riding the portion-control wave. In August, it will launch two 100-calorie *Nabisco* packs aimed at kids: *Alpha-Bits* Mini Cookies (alphabet block-shaped shortbread cookies) and *Barnum's* Animals Choco Crackers (chocolate-flavored animal cookies). Both will be sold in boxes of six packages for \$2.89. Since 2004, Kraft has sold around \$200 million in 100-calorie pack products, according to Chicago-based Information Resources, Inc. That mainly includes supermarket and drug stores, excludes Wal-Mart and doesn't add in sales from other channels such as convenience stores, warehouse clubs, dollar stores and others.

As jailbird Paris Hilton might say, "That's hot."

A hot cookie, that is. *SOI*

Uncomplicated Cookies

In the natural snacks market, "organic is almost the cost of entry," says John DePaolis, the "chief cookie officer" of **Country Choice Organic**, Eden Prairie, Minn.

That is, as the demand for organic cookies grows, manufacturers have to figure out how to differentiate themselves from the pack.

Counter-intuitively, "we do it by offering less," DePaolis says. "For some consumers, coming to organic is scary enough. Our products tend to be fairly straightforward translations of conventional products."

Other organic cookie makers, including **Newman's Own Organic**, Westport, Conn., appear to be taking the same track. One example: the latter's *Hermits*, an old-fashioned soft molasses-sweetened cookie in original, cinnamon and ginger.

Plainly Delightful

As in fashion, sometimes it's not what you add to a cookie that makes it attractive — it's what you leave out.

"We want everybody to feel part of the party," says Lori Sandler, creator of **Divvies**, South Salem, N.Y. But for people with food allergies, one unlabeled peanut butter cookie could turn an after-school party into an emergency-room visit ... or worse.

That's why Sandler and her husband, Mark — whose son has serious food allergies — launched **Divvies** about 20 months ago. None of the company's cookies, popcorn, candy or cupcakes contains peanuts, tree nuts, milk or eggs. That makes them suitable not only for people with food allergies, but also for vegan, kosher and lactose-intolerant consumers.

Before *Divvies*, Sandler says, "There was never a gourmet, homemade bakery-style cookie that people with or without food allergies could really enjoy together."

The 3-in. chocolate chip, molasses ginger, oatmeal chocolate chip, and oatmeal raisin cookies are available in boxes of 13 or in boxes of 12 two-cookie packages at www.divvies.com. In addition, several venues in **Disney World** sell chocolate chip *Divvies*.

Objects of Decadent Desire

Appealing as simplicity can be, there's still plenty of room for tasty complications in the

cookie market, as both large and small manufacturers demonstrate.

The Hershey Co., Hershey, Pa., offers cookies based on popular candies, including *Hershey's* with Almonds, *Almond Joy*, *Reese's*, *Heath*, and *York*, available in grocery stores, C-stores and the like. Chocolate coatings and fillings such as peanut butter and marshmallow mean consumers won't find "100-calorie" claims on labels in this line.

Brand-new from **Brent and Sam's**, North Little Rock, Ark., are Pure Naturals Triple Chocolate Bliss cookies made with semisweet and white chocolate chips.

Dancing Deer Baking Co., Boston, features Milk Chocolate Chai Chews, a "cookie interpretation of chai," and new Peanut Butter Brownies. Mostly available in natural groceries such as Whole Foods, *Dancing Deer* products soon will include *Reindeer Noses*, bite-size gingerbread cookie rounds aimed at holiday shoppers.

In May, the **Kellogg Co.**, Battle Creek, Mich., added *Sandies* Butter Pecan Drops to its *Keebler* offerings, at a retail price of \$3.79 for a 9.5-oz. package.

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