Cookie Program updates based on CDC recommendation and conditions

Cookie Program FAQs

As with so many groups, individuals and organizations, COVID-19 is severely disrupting lives and operations at particularly vulnerable times. We at the Girl Scouts of Western New York understand fully that compared to infection, fatalities and the myriad challenges facing our health-care system, cookie sales are not significant.

Nonetheless, COVID-19 hit this organization, and our peers across the country, at the worst-possible time. The Cookie Program is our backbone, strengthening our organization for the rest of the year to fund girls’ activities like STEM, outdoor programs, summer camp, community service projects, trips and travel, art adventures, and more. Thus we continue this program, while we remain fully sensitive to the challenges you face in your homes, at work and with your families.

If you simply cannot or do not want to continue with the Cookie Program, we understand. But we also want to offer information to make this modified 2020 program work for you. When the COVID-19 restrictions hit, we as a Girl Scout Council were on our way to surpassing our goal – thanks to your girls. Their motivation, creativity and drive were producing an amazing year. That is all changed, and we sympathize if you’re “done” with cookies. But if you want to continue, and girls in your troop have not yet reached their goals, please see our Cookie Program FAQs below and (flyer). We hope these answers and this information will help, and maybe even expand your girls’ learning and experiences.

On Monday 4/6/20, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered NY PAUSE to continue through April 29th. This is the order that all schools and non-essential businesses must stay closed through this date.

Suspended:
In-person cookie platform. Based on New York State Executive order NYS is on Pause and Health Department Guidelines. (New York State on PAUSE | Department of Health)
- Council-arranged and troop-arranged cookie booths, drive through and door to door
- Cookie cupboards
- No person to person delivery
- No girl delivery
- Collection of cash payments suspended

Virtual Cookie Program is Open:

Q. What are ways girls can sell online and use social media? Have the rules changed this year?
- Conducting online sales through the direct ship option is still open. Girls send emails and their customers order and pay online, and the product is shipped directly from ABC. By utilizing social media and digital marketing platforms to reach customers girls can invent new ways to sell cookies, and learn more about digital marketing in the process. Also, they can sell to friends and family members, who are often open to helping their younger relatives. Just be sure not to use the girl-deliver option in Smart Cookies. Credit Card acceptance at the girl level is now available through Smart Cookies, with rules Girl Scouts of the USA set, and updated for the 2020 program.
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- This year, girls have the ability to share their Smart Cookies link to people beyond their friends and families. Our [resources for cookie seller’s](#) page has lots of helpful hints and tips.

- Here’s the short version of the updated rules:
  - Girls may conduct Cookie Program sales activities online using the ABC Smart Cookie online system – there’s lots of online and social options in that platform.
  - Girls are allowed to market their Cookie Program activities on social media. The keyword here is girls. This is a girl program and girls should be doing this, not parents. Girls and parents should review and sign the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) and [Supplemental Safety Tips for Online Marketing](#) before they market on social media.
  - Girls must never post their last name, address, phone number, or email address on social media, or those of any other girl.
  - Links to a girl’s online sales page must not be posted on resale or marketplace type sites, such as Craigslist, eBay, Facebook Marketplace, Amazon, Go Fund Me
  - Does this mean that girls can advertise on Facebook and Nextdoor? Yes it does. But take all the above steps first, and make sure it’s not a “resale or marketplace” site. [Read the whole policy here](#).

Q. Can girls advertise and sell cookies online, taking electronic payment online and have an adult deliver to porches?

- Advertising on approved social media platforms are acceptable as described above and an adult may choose to deliver product in the form of a porch drop off, no person to person contact, following all state and federal safety guidelines.

Q. Cookies for Courage Program is open?

- This program (flyer) gives girls the opportunity to learn philanthropy and community service through cookie sales. Service Units or troops can partner with local companies in their community to support, subsidize or expand sales. The Girl Scout will inform the buyer of the opportunity to purchase a box that can be donated to a predetermined organization.

- A great way for troops/girls to promote the SHARE program to friends and family is to hold a Facebook Event/Facebook Watch Party. Service Units can work with their troops to organize community partners and the Service Unit Product Program Manager can identify troops with large, on-hand inventory. Then troop leaders, or, better, girls, can identify First Responders or Front-Line workers who are willing to bring the product into work with them.

- In an effort to allow girls to continue to “CHASE THEIR 2020 ADVENTURE”, GSWNY is making temporary adjustments to the Cookie Program rules to allow girls to sell their inventory in non-traditional ways during these difficult times. We understand that the Girl Scout Cookie Program not only provides girls with essential lifelong skills, but also funds troops to do amazing things, try new experiences, and get outdoors. Along with other virtual selling options, troops will now be permitted to partner with local businesses and restaurants to help sell troop’s inventory. Troop leaders/adults are permitted to transport cookies to a community partner, still adhering no direct contact, social distancing, and porch drop offs for delivery. You must adhere to federal and state guidelines when delivering product. Please review 10 Point Plan in link: [https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-pause](https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-pause).

Q. In what ways can my troop partner with a local business?

- Service units and troops can partner together to ask local small business to purchase cookies to sell in their business. Below are some examples:
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- A small business purchases cookies from a troop and sells them in their store/restaurant as part of each to go order.
- A small business/restaurant receives cookie inventory to sell with each order; providing payment to the troop once product is sold. Troop adult must manage collecting payment/managing inventory.

Q. How is product delivered to the organization?
- We don’t have all the answers, this is a tricky one, and we want everyone to be safe. Generally speaking, girls should not do anything in person, so preferably girls would leave cookies outside their homes or apartments for pick up, and the community partner who is donating, or the recipient, would pick them up. If this sounds like more effort, it is. And we are cognizant of not exposing anyone to infection, or making Girl Scouts addresses public. As an example from one of our GSWNY troops- a group sold cookies to donate to a hospital, and a person known to the troop who works at the hospital picked them up and took them in on their shift. To make this work as safely and as easily as possible, everyone will need to be flexible and creative. If you have ideas, we’d be pleased to hear them. Adults must adhere to federal and state safety guidelines.

Q. Does a girl(s) have to be present when delivering the cookies to a local business?
- No, girls are not permitted to do any in person delivery, however, girls still have an important job to do.
  - Create posters, flyers, signage that can be used to advertise in a local business
  - Create key messaging for customers; what will the purchase of your troop’s cookies help fund?
  - Create and disperse troop business cards for each box of cookies purchased
  - Create troop thank you cards

Q. Will the option for rescheduling booths in Smart Cookies be available?
- GSUSA is working with the National Vendors (i.e. Walmart, Joanne’s, Dunkin) for a potential reschedule of booths. More information will be shared when available.
- Council will work with local council-sponsored booths when deemed safe by NYS.

Q. Assuming new booth options will be available at later dates, how will they be assigned?
- As you know, these are on hold until New York State deems them safe. We take our guidance based on New York State Executive order from NYS is on Pause and Health Department Guidelines (New York State on PAUSE | Department of Health).

Q. When will cupboards reopen?
- Once we have more certainty, we will make decisions on when to re-open council cupboards. This includes the option of having cupboards open during the sale extension period.

Q. What if my troop needs additional product?
- Stay connected with your SU Product Program Manager for SU inventory within troops, and please work with the SU Product Program Manager to transfer cookies between troops for needs. Adults must follow federal and state safety guidelines.

Q. How can girls continue to sell during this time?
- Girls can sell virtually through virtual cookie booths, ecards, Share Program.
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Q. When selling virtually, what are some methods of collecting payments?
   - ABC Smart Cookies Smart Cookies is now open to accept credit cards at the girl level.
   - Venmo- Leader/Parent account, cannot set up a troop account.
     - No Fees when using bank accounts
     - Free transfer time- 1-3 days
     - Transaction Limit: $299.99 weekly until you verify your identity (through the app-verifying date of birth, address, social security number). Then, up to $4,999 weekly.
   - PayPal- Leader/Parent account, cannot set up a troop account.
     - No Fees when using bank accounts
     - Free transfer time- 1-3 days
   - Zelle- Leader/Parent account, cannot set up a troop account
     - No fees when using bank accounts
     - If bank or credit card offers Zelle, transactions can be completed through a smartphone.
     - Transaction Limit: if bank offers Zelle, contact bank for their sending limits through Zelle. If your bank does not offer Zelle, $500 weekly limit.
     - Look for more detailed information on the Cookies+webpage

Q. Is it possible for GSWNY to subsidize 100 percent of the shipping so troops can promote direct ship if we are not allowed to deliver?
   - GSWNY will continue to subsidize 50% of shipping costs on 5 or more boxes of cookies. An adult may choose to deliver product in the form of a porch drop off, no person to person contact, following all state and federal safety guidelines.

Q. How do girls use the Smart Cookies Credit card option?
   - Girls click "my orders > take Cookie order> fill out information and click circles as "delivered", "paid" (yes) and then "credit card." This will open up the credit card page. The full $5.00 will be credited to the troop in Smart Cookies. Instructional video: http://wfcmssmediaprod.blob.core.windows.net/wfsmartcookies/1547/how-to-girl-credit-card-processes-all.mp4

   - If a girl wishes to take an ABC Smart Cookie credit card payment, the girl should confirm available product with troop leader before completing the credit card transaction. The troop leader will have to do a T2G transfer in ABC Smart Cookies.

Q. If they choose Cookie Share, does it create a virtual cookie share or does the troop have to pull from their inventory to cover the order?
   - If a Cookie Share is ordered through Girl Delivery, the troop leader will need to transfer those packages of cookies to the girl (doesn't matter the variety). The leader will then set those cookies aside to be donated when permitted.

Q. We have inventory on hand because our booth sale was canceled due to COVID-19. Can we return packages?
   - As always, cookies cannot be returned. Please hold onto all unsold inventory. A survey will be sent out 4/9/20 to troops to collect additional information and directions on handling unsold inventory will be shared at a later date.

Q. What can I do to manage my troop’s inventory?
   - Create T2G transfers for allocating cookie packages into the girl line.
   - Communicate on hand inventory with SU Product Program Manager.
   - Encourage girls to sell virtually- virtual cookie booths, e-cards.
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- Promote Share Program within troop.

**Q. What should our troop do if we have a large on hand inventory?**
- Reach out to the troops within your service unit to see if anyone needs additional product to use for their Share Program.
- A troop Survey will be sent out 4/9/20 to give council additional information to support troop’s needs.

**Q. Can we sell cookies at a reduced rate?**
- The price of cookies are $5 per box, this has not changed.

**Q. How can I pay my cookie bill if offices are closed?**
- Cookie payments can be made through e-payment (www.gswny.org) or check/money order mailed to the Buffalo Service Center (3332 Walden Ave, Depew, 14043).

**Q. Can troops make multiple payments through e-payment, instead of one final payment on the due date?**
- Multiple payments can be made throughout the cookie program and is encouraged.

**Q. Will there be changes to the girl reward program?**
- We will have an alternate recognition offered at the 2000 level if the production of Anastasia does not occur. Shea’s is working with GSWNY to re-schedule a future date.
- Recognition orders will be due May 12, 2020. This date will be reevaluated as needed and communicated based on changes. Stay tuned for more information as it becomes available.

**Q. When does the Cookie Program end?**
- The Final Cookie Payment deadline is May 12, 2020, however again, we will continue to reevaluate and communicate any changes to this date.
- Cookie recognitions will be due on May 12th, however we will continue to reevaluate and communicate any changes to this date.
  - Unsold inventory will not count towards girl recognitions and troop proceeds.
- We will continue to evaluate the end date, and will communicate updates weekly. However, if troops decide to end and close out the 2020 Cookie Program, they can pay their cookie bill, and place their recognition orders.
- Based on troop survey results, council will reevaluate the program end date to reflect troops’ needs.

**Q. How to prevent chocolate from blooming**
- As you would any similar food, Do Not store chocolate cookies in sunlight or in a room over 65 degrees. Store off the floor, on a table or shelf.

Thank you and we are here to support you, please contact Customer Care with any questions at customercare@gswny.org or call 1-888-837-6410.