

# Feds Ban School's Beloved 'Pink Cookie'

School children in Elyria, Ohio, are mourning the demise of a 40-year tradition—the loss of their beloved pink cookie. The fabled cookie, long served in local school cafeterias, was done in by a pound of butter, six cups of powdered sugar, and the Obama administration's food police.

"It no longer meets the national school lunch program guidelines for snacks," said Amy Higgins, the spokesperson for Elyria City Schools. "It has too many calories."

The USDA "Smart Snacks in School" standards mandate that all snacks must contain less than 200 calories. It's not exactly clear how many calories are in the pink cookie, but the recipe for the frosting calls for a pound of butter.

The cookie was banished to comply with the federal guidelines.

"We can't have them in the cafeteria for sale, period," food services director Scott Teaman told *The Chronicle Telegram*. "The guidelines for snacks are very strict, and there is no wiggle room."

Thus marks the end of a longtime lunchroom tradition, which is sparking disappointment across the city.

"It's a tradition," Higgins told me. "It's not only a tradition, it's one that tastes really, really good. You'd be surprised by how many people are upset about the pink cookie going away. Anyone who's gone to Elyria schools in the last 40 years knows the pink cookie."

Elyria Mayor Holly Brinda remembered tasting her first pink cookie when she was just a little girl.

"I grew up eating them," said Brinda. "They are a comfort

food. It's one of those things that's special to our community."

The mayor says the cookie's demise is the talk of the town.

"This cookie has a cult following," she said. In 2009 the cookie was crowned "Best Cafeteria Cookie" by *Cleveland Magazine*.

The origin of the pink cookie is something of folklore in this town just to the west of Cleveland. It was first made by Jean Gawlik, the school district's longtime food production manager. The foundation of the cookie came from a family recipe she got from her mother.

"It's a delicious, delicious confection," said Higgins. "Everyone loves it."

Reading the recipe alone could result in a sugar rush: butter, sour cream, powdered sugar, Crisco, granulated sugar.

"It's a homemade sour cream-cake cookie," Higgins said. "The reason people fell in love with it: It has just the right amount of sweetness. It's very cakey and rich, and it's got this really light sweet pink frosting on the top."

I feel the sudden urge to drink a glass of ice-cold milk.

"It's one of those indulgences," Higgins told me. "The kids really like the cookie. It's quite a unique flavor."

So if the cookie is so darned popular, why not just change the recipe so that it complies with the federal standards?

"We did try to alter the recipe with whole-wheat flour," Higgins said. "You can get the pink cookie down to the number of calories that would make it allowable, but then it's not the pink cookie anymore. It doesn't maintain the integrity of the homemade recipe."

Changing the recipe of the cookie would be like asking Kentucky Fried Chicken to change its secret recipe of 11 herbs and spices. You don't mess with perfection.

"You can't change the recipe of the pink cookie," said the mayor. "It's like eating diet potato chips. It's not right."

So rather than mess with tradition, the school district's chef decided to shut down production.

"Our food service (department) is working under very strict requirements for what they can serve in school," Higgins said. "That's a good thing. We're trying to offer more healthy options with flair."

Instead of pink cookies, kids will be able to eat things like fruit, vegetables and yogurt.

Yum yum.

The mayor agreed that it's important to make sure kids are eating healthier.

"That being said, I wish there was a way we could make those cookies available on special occasions," she said. "Everybody deserves the equivalent of a piece of birthday cake once in a while."

The mayor even suggested there might be contraband cookies for the taking.

"I don't think you can keep the pink cookie down," she said. "I think this is going to be like prohibition. Our school district is law abiding, but I can see people who love this pink cookie trying to resurrect the cookie in other ways."

Higgins tells me the school district is already working on a plan to sell the cookies to local residents—for special occasions. It's a sort of confectionery speakeasy.

Meanwhile, youngsters will have to satisfy their sweet tooth at the cafeteria yogurt bar—thanks to the Obama administration's food police.

Sorry, kids. That's the way the cookie crumbles.

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