

Table

Around the

Gail Simmons' Sweet Holiday TREATS

"I love giving a gift that has a story," says Gail Simmons, judge on the Emmy Award-winning series *Top Chef*. (Season 13 premiered last week and airs Thursday nights on Bravo.) These gluten-free cookies are a delicious example. "They were a recipe passed down to me by my mother's best friend, my aunt Sue, who is my guru when it comes to baking," she says. "They come from someone whom I admire so much from my childhood, and that's what makes a gift like that so special."

Made with a generous amount of melted dark chocolate (the dark stuff with 70 percent or more cacao is the healthiest) for a rich batter, these cookies are crispy on the outside with a chewy, fudgy center. But take care, says Simmons, "they're addictive!" —*Alison Ashton*

Chewy Dark Chocolate Meringue Cookies

- ▶ 4 egg whites
- ▶ 1/2 tsp lemon juice
- ▶ 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- ▶ Pinch of salt
- ▶ 3/4 cup sugar
- ▶ 12 oz 70–72 percent cacao dark chocolate, melted and cooled
- ▶ 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, plus walnut halves for garnish
- ▶ 1/2 cup chopped dried cherries or cranberries

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Using a hand mixer or stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, beat egg whites, lemon juice, vanilla and salt until foamy. Gradually add sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Fold in chocolate, walnuts and cherries.
3. Scrape half of batter into a large zip-top plastic bag. Cut a 3/4-inch hole in one corner of bag. Pipe 2-inch cookies onto prepared cookie sheets. Repeat with remaining batter and a clean zip-top bag. Top each cookie with a walnut half. Bake 15 minutes or until outside is set and dry. Cool completely on sheet pans. Store in an airtight container for up to a week. **Makes 36.**



Visit Parade.com/gailsimmons for a sneak peek at season 13 of *Top Chef* and for more of Simmons' holiday cooking tips.

