

The Way the Girl Scout Cookie Crumbles

By David Tipmore

Enraged by the recent "improvement" of Ovaltine, I took a decidedly dim view of the "new" Girl Scout cookies on sale earlier this month. I could not imagine what Beatrice Foods of Louisville, Kentucky, would want to change—surely not the Thin Mints, a superb entry generally presumed to be addictive. *Absolutely* not the lovely Trefoil, perhaps butter's greatest hour. And why spoil the well-heeled Samoa, with its coconut trimmings, or the faithful creme sandwich, or the perky and peanuty Savannah?

In a snit I called Mr. S. F. Curry, a commission agent for Beatrice Foods, and demanded an explanation. I railed about the eatability factor of the Girl Scout cookie, how it should be ingested according to the domino theory of hunger—one after another in quick thoughtless succession while watching television late at night. Cookies are *company*, I stressed, safe dates for lonely nights. And Girl Scout cookies are classic company that should remain unchanged.

Mr. Curry tried, in a pleasant baritone, to persuade me that the Little Brownie Bakers Division of Beatrice Foods gets "99-per cent good" letters. He stated that the cookies were still kosher and baked under rabbinical supervision; that they were still \$1.25 a box, and that the Girl Scouts of America would sell in excess of 12,000,000 packages of cookies this year. He made it clear that the chocolate mint was back to its old cocoa base and that the Do-Si-Do cookie had been improved by a bit of corporate piracy.

"We got a man from the competition over to our side, and he gave us their recipe for a better peanut-butter taste," he explained, noting that the new recipe had made the Do-Si-Do a "great success."

"Prove it," I said rudely. Mr. Curry offered to send a sample box of each entry, including a box of the latest item, the Tag-A-Long, a peanut-butter patty not sold in the New York area. I waited suspiciously. The day the samples arrived I stuck out my chin, poured a shaker of milk, and began eating. It was very late at night. The television was on.

During *Outpost in Malaya*, about troubles on a rubber plantation, I ate one row of the new thin chocolate mints. I decided that, although the chocolate coating felt laminated, the cookie had retained its basic charm. Then I ate seven Do-Si-Dos during the last 15 minutes of *Room*



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Service, chomping between punch lines. The new Do-Si-Do, while indistinguishable from the Savannah, its predecessor, had little appeal for me, which I blamed on the box's illustration of two Girl Scouts who appeared to be "playing doctor" with a large collie, rather than my allergic reaction to peanut butter.

As I switched channels I tasted the Trefoil and found it the same great butter cookie.

The new Vancho, or creme sandwich, seemed particularly attuned to Joe Franklin's *Nostalgia Nightcap*, and so as Joe interviewed an aggressive young actress I sampled the black Vanctions, all 15 of them, and followed that with half a second glass of milk. The black Vanchos beat Oreos and the basic A&P-type chocolate cream sandwich without even trying, but remained inferior to Hydrox. Then I had a couple of white Vanchos just to keep things even and found them a topflight competitor to Vienna Fingers in terms of *time baked*. The Vancho, from a Spanish word meaning "cowhand," stuck to a constant one-sixteenth of an inch of understated white filling, but the shortening was so short that I had to stop and read the side of the box to catch my breath. On the side of the box, 66 possible "opportunity careers" for Scouts to "learn and go and do and see" presented themselves. Irrefutably, the sharp Girl Scout would do well to master "World Games," thus qualifying herself for the diplomatic corps, or "Hostessing," a fast-growing but rather vague field with which any ambitious young woman ought to be familiar. I personally have never met a hostess—or a host, for that matter—who wasn't at least useful, quite excepting those on airplanes.

It was time for the Samoas, an extremely decorated cookie topped with granulated sugar and coconut trimmings, which I tried to pick off unsuccessfully. Coconut, despite what you may have heard, is much better left on trees. Underneath all this decor at a nice, solid, plain Jane of a cookie, probably a distant cousin of the oatmeal-based Do-Si-Do, and nothing to write home about.

The television was still on, and I sat on my orange corduroy bedspread satisfied that, at least in the case of the Little Brownie Bakers, "new" did not necessarily mean "shoddy." By this time it was very late, *Walk Like a Dragon* late. As Jack Lord earned his manhood by doing in James Shigeta, I suddenly got a huge sugar rush and went spinning off through a sucrose dream. I imagined thin chocolate mint macadam, deep gravel pits of creme sandwiches, high Trefoil mountains that I could eat as I climbed. Relentless Girl Scouts with order pads struggled around me, pleading in green uniforms, as I purchased box after box after box, a fallout shelter's worth of cookies for the coming holocaust.

"The Voice" rates the 1977 Girl Scout cookies:

Thin Mint: VVVV

Trefoil: VVVV

Vanchos: Chocolate (VVV), Vanilla (VVV)

Do-Si-Do: VVV

Samoa: VV