

BEHIND THE RECIPES

Little Debbie Hack: Homemade Oatmeal Creme Pies

All the nostalgic appeal of the classic, baked from scratch in your own home.



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Having made their way into countless lunch boxes across the country for generations, Little Debbie Oatmeal Creme Pies are a true American icon. The soft oatmeal sandwich cookies with their creamy, marshmallow-y filling are instantly recognizable. But is it possible to make an excellent version—one that's just as recognizable as the classic but with the wholesome appeal of a freshly baked cookie—from scratch?

Digging into Little Debbie's Bag of Tricks

Happily, some sleuthing and thorough recipe testing reveal the answer to be yes. Taking a look at the ingredient list for the Oatmeal Creme Pie, a few key players stand out. There's flour, oats, and sugar, of course, but also raisin paste, molasses, and spices. The molasses isn't surprising—the company markets the snacks as oatmeal molasses cookies—but the raisin paste felt like a clue hidden in plain sight.

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Grinding whole oats and raisins together in a food processor before incorporating them into the cookie dough proved to be an excellent first step in re-creating the iconic snack. This produced soft cookies big on oat flavor, with a unique, bright sweetness and pleasing caramellike texture from the raisins. As an unintended bonus, the raisin paste wouldn't even be detectable to any raisin haters. Adding a small amount of molasses brought the flavor even closer to that of the original inspiration.

Cracking the Code to Cookies with Crackly Tops

The texture and flavor of these new cookies were nearly spot on, but the tops were smooth and dull-looking. How to generate the signature crinkly, cracked tops? Two simple changes did the trick: Increasing the baking soda by $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon and upping the oven temperature 25 degrees improved the rise and oven spring, allowing the cookies to soufflé and crack as they baked and then deflate into the desired flat shape as they cooled. This resulted in stunning cookies with pronounced dark cracks across the surface, dead ringers for the original.

Finally, re-creating the lightly sweet, marshmallow-y creme filling proved quick and simple. Marshmallow Fluff, softened butter, confectioners' sugar, and a touch of salt and vanilla whipped gleefully into a light cloud in the food processor produced a tasty, creamy filling stable enough to resist squeezing out the sides of the cookie sandwiches.

When assembled, the irresistible cookies and snowy creme filling became something altogether more, like a classic remastered. If you're an old fan of the original, with fond memories of finding them in your lunchbox, or if you're just a lover of excellent homemade cookies, you're going to love these.