Navigating Questions About Palm Oil in Girl Scout Cookies

For Girl Scout volunteers to use with families, older girls, and customers

Thank you for all you do for girls. We know you're often at the forefront of your communities when it comes to questions about Girl Scouts, so we're making sure you have the most accurate and updated information about the palm oil industry and Girl Scout Cookies. We're aware of the potential concerns you, your Girl Scouts, their families, and your cookie customers have about palm oil in our cookies, and we take the matter seriously.

Here are some talking points you can use with families, older girls, and customers if questions arise:

- We're aware of the concerns about how palm oil is gathered. To be clear, GSUSA does not support the use of child labor in the production of Girl Scout Cookies. We have worked with, and continue to work with, our bakers to increasethe transparency and sustainability of our production lines and ingredient sourcing. If certain suppliers are not following safety and ethical standards, we rely on our bakers and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), of which Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is an affiliate member, to take action.
- The world's food supply is intricately tied to the use of palm oil, which is an ingredient found in the majority of baked snacks sold in the United States. Although we continue to explore alternatives, currently, there are no viable or readily available alternatives for use in the production of Girl Scout Cookies.
- Palm oil is used in many of the products on supermarket shelves, from margarine and chocolate to ice cream, soaps, cosmetics, and fuel for cars and power plants. It's smooth and odorless, making it an ideal ingredient for foods such as baked goods. It also has a natural preservative effect that extends the shelf lifeof foods.
- Because few alternatives exist and palm oil is used widely in the food industry, we believe promoting proper manufacturing principles is our responsibility. We have worked to ensure that our ingredients are part of an ethical supply chain, and we rely on our bakers and the RSPO to ensure that our suppliers are following safety and ethical standards.
- The RSPO is a nonprofit organization of growers, buyers, manufacturers, conservationists, and otherinterested parties striving to develop and follow best practices to ensure an ethical supply chain.
- The RSPO's mission includes advancing the production of sustainable palm oil products, establishing global standards for the palm oil supply chain, and engaging and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligning to these standards. The RSPO has banned the use of child labor since its founding, and it established clear standards and protocols, including age verification, to protect children's' rights.
- Palm oil is an agricultural commodity, similar to flour, soy, and sugar. Although it's easier to trace commodities in global supply chains today thanks to technology and data collection, tracing bulk commodities, such as palm oil, remains complex and a large investment of time and resources for companies.
- GSUSA's licensed baker partners, ABC Bakers and Little Brownie Bakers (LBB) use Mass Balance RSPO certified palm oil (i.e. RSPO "Mixed" certification label), which supports sustainable palm oil production practices. Both bakers' future goal is to achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil products for all Girl Scout Cookies they produce. They continue to work with their suppliers to explore strategies and timeline to achieve this goal.
- Little Brownie Bakers (LBB) is managed by Ferrara, a related company of the global manufacturer Ferrero Group. Ferrero Group received the highest certification level afforded by the World Wildlife Fund for sustainable practices.
- For more information from our licensed bakers, visit their websites: Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers.
- Read more from the RSPO

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do I do if girls have questions or concerns about palm oil?

This issue is complex, even for adults. Here are some ways to help girls explore the topic.

- First talk to the girls about their questions so you understand their perspective and can gather the right resources.
- Use GSUSA and RSPO's Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit which contains a volunteer guide, the RSPO Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit for Kids and additional resources.

What steps has GSUSA taken to get closer to using 100% RSPO- segregated certified palm oil in Girl Scout Cookies?

GSUSA has continued to listen to girls and work with our licensed baker partners to navigate the palm oil supply chain. We are committed to working with our bakers to help them achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil in the future. GSUSA and its licensed bakers became members of the RSPO in 2012. Over the years, our bakers have purchased RSPO Credits (formally known as Green Palm Certificates) to encourage the production of certified sustainable palm oil and offset the amount of palm oil used in their products. Since then both bakers have transitioned to using Mass Balance RSPO certified palm oil (i.e. RSPO "Mixed" certification label) in Girl Scout Cookies.

Are GSUSA's Licensed Bakers removing Palm Oil from Girl Scout Cookies?

We are pleased to share that Girl Scout Cookies baked by both Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers use Mass Balance RSPO certified palm oil (i.e. RSPO "Mixed certification label) and include the RSPO Mass Balance logo on their packaging. Both bakers' future goal is to achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil products for all Girl Scout Cookies they produce. They continue to work with their supplies to explore strategies and timelines to achieve this goal.

What do I do if girls in my troop want to boycott selling Girl Scout Cookies?

Girl Scouting teaches girls to stand up for what they believe is right a just, and to take a position on improving the world around them; not only for themselves but for those around them. We applaud girls for standing up for an issue they are passionate about. GSUSA and our Girl Scout Councils share this passion and there is no place for child labor in the production of Girl Scout Cookies. An effective way to advocate for change is by belonging to organizations, such as RSPO, who advocate for and enforce these ethical standards in the parts of the word where we are not present. We hope our commitment to doing what is right is seen by our members as a sign of our commitment to improvement.

Each year, it is up to each individual troop and girl to decide if they will participate in the cookie program- a program that helps power life-changing programs, experiences, and learning all year long. We hope that through gaining a deeper understanding around palm oil use, Girl Scouts join us to use our voices to find productive ways to take action around this global issue and continue to be Girl Scout Strong. We have created a Palm Oil Toolkit to help facilitate these conversations.