

Legislative Analysis



OFFICIAL STATE COOKIE

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House Bill 5919 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Edward Gaffney
Committee: Agriculture and Resource Management
First Analysis (6-9-04)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would designate the Michigan Treasure Cookie as the official state cookie.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no fiscal impact on state or local government.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Throughout the years the state has adopted various objects, animals, and plants as official state symbols. As the magazine *Michigan History* says, Michigan's symbols "represent the state in a colorful and special way". In addition to the state flag, coat-of-arms, and seal, the state's officially designated symbols include: a flower (the apple blossom); a bird (the American robin); a tree (the white pine); a stone (the Petoskey stone); a gem (chlorastrolite, also known as Isle Royale greenstone); a fish (the brook trout); a type of soil (the Kalkaska soil series); a reptile (the painted turtle); a game mammal (the white-tailed deer); a wildflower (the dwarf lake iris); and a fossil (the mastodon). Conspicuously absent from this list, given that agriculture is one of the state's leading industries, is a state food, and in particular a state cookie. Legislation to designate an official state cookie was introduced at the behest of an intrepid group of fourth grade students from Defer Elementary School in Grosse Pointe Park.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to designate the Michigan Treasure Cookie as the official state cookie.

While the bill does not include an official recipe, the following recipe is from Defer Elementary School.

Recipe (makes about three dozen cookies)

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of all purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Diamond Crystal brand kosher salt
- 1 cup softened butter or margarine
- 1 cup Pioneer brand granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed Pioneer brand brown sugar
- 1 egg

- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ½ cups semi-sweet chocolate chunks
- 1 ½ cups Graceland Fruit brand dried cherries
- Additional granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350° Fahrenheit
2. Combine flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl; set aside. Beat butter, 1 cup granulated sugar, and brown sugar in a large bowl at medium speed of electric mixer until light and fluffy (about two minutes). Beat in egg and vanilla until well blended. On low speed of mixer, gradually beat in 1/3 of flour mixture at a time, until all is used. Scrape sides of bowl between additions of flour mixture. Stir in chocolate chunks and cherries. Refrigerate covered dough for at least one hour.
3. Roll chilled dough into golf-ball-sized balls. Roll the balls in the additional granulated sugar. Space three inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Gently press with bottom of glass to flatten. Return remaining dough to the refrigerator until ready to use.
4. Bake 13 to 15 minutes or until cookies are set. Cool cookies about five minutes on cookie sheets; transfer to wire racks. Cool completely.

Variations:

- Substitute 1 ½ cups of Graceland Fruit brand dried blueberries instead of dried cherries.
- Add ½ cup chopped Michigan walnuts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Other state cookies

Currently two other states have official state cookies. New Mexico became the first state with an official cookie when it designated the bizcochito, a small anise-flavored shortbread cookie, as the official state cookie in 1989 (New Mexico Statutes 12-3-4). New Mexico remained the only state with an official state cookie until 1997, when Massachusetts designated the traditional chocolate chip cookie as its official cookie, recognizing that the cookie was first invented at the Toll House Restaurant in Whitman, Massachusetts in 1930. The Boston Cream Pie was designated the official state dessert in 1996 after it narrowly beat out nominations for the Toll House Cookie and Indian pudding. Other official foods of Massachusetts include cranberry juice as the official state beverage (designated in 1970) and the corn muffin as the official state muffin (designated in 1986).

Legislation in Pennsylvania to designate an official state cookie as been held up for several years as state lawmakers struggle to chose between the Nazareth Sugar Cookie and the chocolate chip cookie. Legislation introduced to anoint the chocolate chip cookie points out that “[s]nack food production is a key element of the Commonwealth’s number

one industry, agriculture” and that “[n]aming an official cookie of the Commonwealth would recognize the steadfast and loyal devotion of the citizens of Pennsylvania to the chocolate chip cookie.” (See Senate Bill 320 of the 2003-2004 legislative session). In addition to the bill designating the Nazareth Sugar Cookie (House Bill 219), another would designate the oatmeal chocolate chip cookie (House Bill 2479).

Legislation in Wyoming (House Bill 0171 of 2003) that would designate the chocolate chip cookie as the official state cookie includes a recipe.

Proposed Michigan symbols

Other recent proposals for state symbols include: a state dog (the golden retriever); a state children’s book (*The Legend of Sleeping Bear*); an insect (the green darner dragonfly); an agricultural insect (the honeybee); a waltz (the “Wolverine Waltz”); a state burger (the cherry burger); a state amphibian (the marbled salamander); and a state game bird (ruffed grouse).

ARGUMENTS:

For:

While naming official state symbols may seem rather pointless to some, designating an official state cookie does have larger public policy implications. By naming an official cookie made largely of Michigan products, the bill supports the state’s agricultural industry. While there would be no “official” state recipe for the cookie, the recipe provided by Defer Elementary School utilizes products from several Michigan-based businesses, including Diamond Crystal Brand Kosher salt from St. Clair County, Graceland Fruit in Benzie County, and Pioneer Brand Sugar, a product of the Michigan Sugar Company.

Against:

State symbols, in general, are designed to draw attention to something unique about the state or to aspects of Michigan life in which state residents can take particular pride. The proliferation of such symbols to an already lengthy list could very well render existing state symbols less consequential.

POSITIONS:

Several students from Defer Elementary Schools in Grosse Pointe Park testified in support of the bill. (6-8-04)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.