

Debbi Fields, Yes Mrs. Fields Herself, Shares Her Tips For Success In The Kitchen And In Life

BY LUCY LEA TUCKER | JULY 11, 2019 | PEOPLE FEATURE



Popular Posts



HOME & REAL ESTATE
A Snowmass Village Abode Gets A Smart Update



PEOPLE
In The Kitchen With Aspen's Culinary Boon: Latino Sous-Chefs



Some follow fortune-cookie advice to navigate life—however part-time Aspenite Mrs. Fields offers innovative and sweet wisdom. From Oakland, Calif., Debra Sivyer Fields is the bright and plucky youngest of five daughters, born to the prophetic maiden name Sivyer, which translates to “flour sifter.” Indelibly, Fields put her mark on both American and cookie history with her cursive signature, the Mrs. Fields logo, and in her progressive business and life philosophies.

At age 12, Fields’ ambitious career began as Major League Baseball’s first female ball girl for the Oakland A’s. Later, in high school, she claimed fame as a professional water skier. Growing up, her mother disliked cooking and considered food preparation an added chore to raising five girls. Upon receiving her first paycheck, she purchased the highest quality, best ingredients she had ever tasted and her love of baking cookies for family and friends began.

Though not overly academic, Fields was drawn to sharp minds. At 19, she met her first husband during his studies at Stanford University. She took his surname, and opened her first store in Palo Alto in 1977, Mrs. Fields Chocolate Chippery. Her husband eventually came to work for her.

Then, like her mother, she gave birth to five daughters. She continued building her business through all five of her pregnancies. At the height of the Mrs. Fields Cookies boom, there were more than 700 stores across the globe. After 20 years, she sold the business, but she still owns and uses the original Kitchenaid mixer that she bought with her savings when she first started.

Following the Cookie Crumbs

Fields’ guidelines to success in business translate to life lessons as well.

- She is fiercely positive: “Focus on your strengths and positives because no one is going to give you a pat on the back unless you give it to yourself first.”
- She sets her standards high. One of her favorite quotes is: “Good enough never is.” Her rule across the stores was to donate any cookies to charity if they did not sell within two hours of being baked. That way, no cookie was ever compromised.
- She had clever tactical entrepreneurial ideas. She devised an hour-by-hour management system and put staff on commission. With this strategy, everyone was accountable and had a stake in the (cookie) game.



LIFESTYLE

Trail Running Hits Its Stride In The Roaring Fork Valley

• She doesn't hold back on the good stuff in baking—and in life. "Everything I love, I add more." Like chocolate chips!

Anyone who has ever tasted her cookies might disagree, but Fields claims she is not a professional baker. "I've learned by failing my way to success. I'm willing to try everything. I'm a bit of a renegade," she says. The following are "Mrs. Fields Do's & Don'ts" in renegade baking. (Mostly they are do's, since she embraces positivity.)

DO use cold ingredients when baking. "The colder the ingredients, the better the cookie. The colder the dough, the better the cookie," she says.

DO use all-purpose unbleached Gold Medal flour and store it in the freezer.

DON'T store baking soda or powder in the freezer; they activate with moisture.

DO use C&H dark brown sugar. Fields loves the richness of the molasses.

DON'T use light brown sugar.

DO use Madagascar vanilla.

DO use Guittard chocolate. (It's her favorite; she suggests chunks over pieces.)

DO use AirBake or Wear-Ever cookie sheets. The lighter the baking sheet, the better. Dark cookie sheets retain heat and make cookies crispy. Use parchment paper so cookies slide off faster and cleanup is easier.

DO use a Hamilton Beach ice cream scoop (model 67-1) to scoop dough.

DO use a convection oven and an oven thermometer. Test ovens you have not used before. Standard temp: 300 degrees.

DO make trial batches to ensure cookie perfection. She says: "If it's hot or humid— everything changes, and you must be ready for it."