



Cookie Shines

One of Pi Beta Phi's most cherished traditions is the Cookie Shine, a gathering that has brought sisters together for more than 150 years. While each chapter and alumnae club celebrates in its own way, the purpose of Cookie Shines is the same: to celebrate the bonds of sisterhood and the joy of being together.

A Longstanding Tradition

The Cookie Shine traces its origins to one of the earliest Pi Phi gatherings.

In 1873, **SARA RICHARDSON**—a charter member of Illinois Beta at Lombard College—encouraged her sisters Flora, May and Alma, who were students at the University of Kansas, to establish a chapter of I.C. Sorosis (now Pi Beta Phi). Kansas Alpha was chartered on April 1, 1873, and just a few months later, the chapter hosted

its first social event: a party at the Richardson home in Sara's honor.

Sisters arranged a spread of food and treats to share. John Fraster, the chancellor of the University of Kansas, was in attendance, and as the women gathered around the feast, he remarked that it resembled a "Cookie Shine,"—a term he used to describe any cheerful, informal gathering, whether planned or spontaneous. The name delighted the group



of women, and they immediately embraced it as their own.

By 1885, nearly every Pi Phi chapter had adopted the Cookie Shine as a tradition. Since then, it has been woven into the fabric of Pi Phi life and is celebrated at conventions,

alumnae club meetings, installations, Founders' Day gatherings and leadership retreats. Many notable members have enjoyed Cookie Shines, including Iowa Gamma **CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT**, a renowned suffragist and

Vermont Beta **GRACE GOODHUE COOLIDGE**, the future First Lady of the United States. Once the tradition was established, Pi Phi's founders attended many Cookie Shines as well.

Shared Across Generations

No two Cookie Shines look exactly alike. Some chapters and alumnae clubs host them several times a year, while others reserve them for special occasions. Some chapters keep their Cookie Shines intimate and private, while others open their doors to friends. Some gatherings are spontaneous, while others follow a set menu—arrow-shaped sugar cookies are a favorite. Chapters have used Cookie Shines to honor new members, celebrate Big and Little Sister pairing, welcome visiting officers and celebrate engagements.

Whatever the arrangement, a few common threads remain. Food is typically arranged on a cloth large enough for the whole chapter or club to gather around, often displayed in Pi Phi shapes such as arrows, angels, Greek letters or the Pi Phi crest. In some chapters and clubs, a large cookie is passed around the room, with each member sharing a memory or wish before breaking off a piece. Others mark the occasion by signing—and later embroidering—a special Cookie Shine sheet, with names added throughout the years to form a living record of sisterhood.

The Cookie Shine is a tradition connecting Pi Phis all over the world and across generations. As one Pi Phi wrote in *The Arrow* in 1912, "The term 'Cookie Shine' itself, and the occasion for which it stands, has become so inseparable a part of the social life of our Fraternity that it will always be held in unquestioned and loving regard by all of us."

Indiana Beta **ELIZABETH SCHRADER** captured the significance of the Cookie Shine as well. "The homemade cookies are never the same shape or texture, the candies never taste quite the same and the smiling faces surrounding the Cookie Shine cloth change with each ceremony that passes," she said. "What does remain is the sisterhood this tradition represents. It reiterates the fact we are part of something bigger, and that Pi Phis new and old are all united by the bond of sisterhood."

At Convention 2023 in Phoenix, Arizona, Pi Beta Phi celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Cookie Shine. More than 800 Pi Phis of all ages gathered to honor this milestone.

Surrounded by more than 11,000 pieces of candy arranged in Pi Phi symbols, attendees were reminded that the sweetest moments are always the ones shared with sisters.



Cookie Shine Memories



“Just yesterday I experienced what was my last time sitting in the center of the Cookie Shine, a bittersweet moment of course. I laughed, clapped and sang with my fellow seniors, grabbing my own messy piece of the arrow cookie I’ve watched passed around so many times before. We each grabbed our own needle and thread and one by one added our names to the tapestry of Ohio Beta. We laughed at the sewing prowess, or lack thereof, of ourselves and the women who came before us. Regardless of our skill with the needle, we are now a permanent part of this special tradition. More names will be added with each passing year, but we know that we will have left our mark. A part of us will always share this ceremony, and all it represents, with the women who follow in our footsteps.”

– **MAUREEN LICURSI TAYLOR**, Ohio Beta, initiated 2006

“I love Cookie Shines ... and not because of those delicious arrow cookies with the perfect icing, although those are irresistible. It is because of the very special memories Cookie Shines create with our sisters. It is not exactly how a Cookie Shine is executed that make them so special but rather the unique, intimate experience created by the Cookie Shine that make them so memorable for us all.”

– **MARI LOU PSIHOGIOS DIAMOND**,
Oregon Alpha, initiated 1975



“I will never forget how excited I was for my best friend’s, **ROBIN HINTON HOPKINS**, wedding. I thought a Cookie Shine would be perfect and how special that would be on the night before her wedding. Robin’s little sister, **SARAH SHOEMAKE DOLES**, and I surprised Robin that night with a huge Cookie Shine with all of her favorite treats. As the song says, ‘the joy of friendship true, the joy of having knowing you, will last your whole life through.’

– **MICHELLE MAYO FISH**, Missouri Alpha, initiated 1989



The Cookie Shine Poem

The Pi Phi Cookie Shine poem was written
by Pi Beta Phi's Poet Laureate
EVELYN PETERS KYLE, Illinois Alpha

*True Friendships in the
wine and blue,
Bring Pi Phi's many things,
Disguised we are as angels,
As we sprout our own small wings,*

*We learn our great traditions
As pledges through the year,
Under careful supervision
Of the Sisters we hold dear.*

*The Cookie Shine — Pi Phi's alone
Is a custom we love best,
Of all the history we have known*

*This stands out above the rest.
Kansas U was having a "spree",
The girls laid out a "spread,"*

*This was June of 1873,
When Chancellor Fraser said,
"This feast looks like
a Cookie Shine,"*

*The girls laughed as they listened,
And thought this name
was so very fine,
The "spread" was then
re-christened.*

*And so from Coast to
Coast it's grown,*

*With no official version,
Each chapter has its very own,
And its favorite diversion
So, as the years ahead unfold,
And Pi Phi's love you know,
May your Cookie Shines
bring joys untold. ✨*

