

Cookie-making weather

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Gently (♩=135)

When the short, chil-ly days mean that leaves can-not grow And the
low-han-ging clouds mean a good chance of snow There is spi-cy hot
ci-der for sip-ping to - ge-ther In coo-kie-ma-king wea-ther.

When I lift off the head of my ear - then-ware bear To find
On a night when the chil-dren have school the next day, I must
on - ly old crumbs and loose nut - meats in there, I leave
get a head start. There is no o - ther way, Since their
word for my neigh - bours, one's eight and one's
mo - ther sets rules, and she's drawn a firm
ten, That it's time to make coo - kies a - gain.
line: Her two chil - dren must be home by nine.

When the short, chilly days mean that leaves cannot grow
And the low-hanging clouds mean a good chance of snow
There is spicy hot cider for sipping together
In cookie-making weather.

When I lift off the head of my earthenware bear
To find only old crumbs and loose nutmeats in there,
I leave word for my neighbours – one's eight and one's ten –
That it's time to make cookies again.
On a night when the children have school the next day,
I must get a head start. There is no other way,
Since their mother sets rules, and she's drawn a firm line:
Her two children must be home by nine.

Continued overleaf

I begin with two clementines, each one in slices,
And a wire mesh tea ball enclosing some spices,
For as much of two litres as I've not drunk up,
Having maybe consumed the first cup.
Then I turn the gas flame on to low half past five,
For a flavouring simmer till my guests arrive,
Having sat down to supper, their homework complete,
Making time to bake sweet things to eat.

When the children arrive, and the cider's too hot
To be drunk for a while, so fresh from the pot,
I insist that they tell me what they've lately learned,
That's in part how their cookies are earned.
When it's cooled just enough that it won't hurt the tongue,
I reply with what I learned when I was that young.
Though we want to chat more, I don't let our talk run
Past the time when work should have begun.

Now the children mix margarine, sugar, and flour,
Chocolate pieces and walnuts. It saves half an hour
That I've gathered, weighed, measured, and chopped in advance,
And don't leave those durations to chance.
And it's six dozen tablespoons, four rows of nine
Onto each of two cookie sheets that I consign
To a medium oven. The timer just ticks
While we all give the mixing spoons licks.

When the bell finally rings, and we've cleaned up a bit
Though there's more to be done, I put on a thick mitt
To remove the hot sheets, and the cookies we made
Fit in pairs on my spatula blade.
They get set out on racks for ten minutes to cool,
And I rest for that time on a tall wooden stool
While the children keep washing the tools, though I know
I will rewash them after they go.

On the evening they're made, we are each allowed three,
Disappointing the children, sufficient for me.
Then one half of what's left in my bear and half in
My assistant cooks' old fruitcake tin.
A brief walk through the snow, the third house on the right:
See the children inside, wish their mother goodnight,
And return, in the knowledge we'll bake again soon,
For my cookies won't last half a moon.