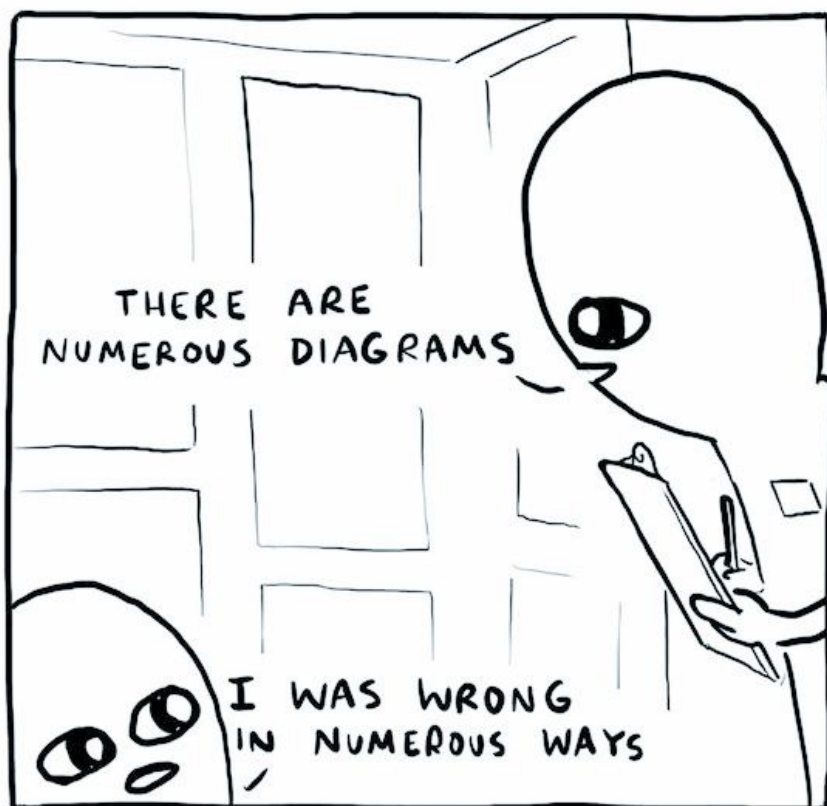
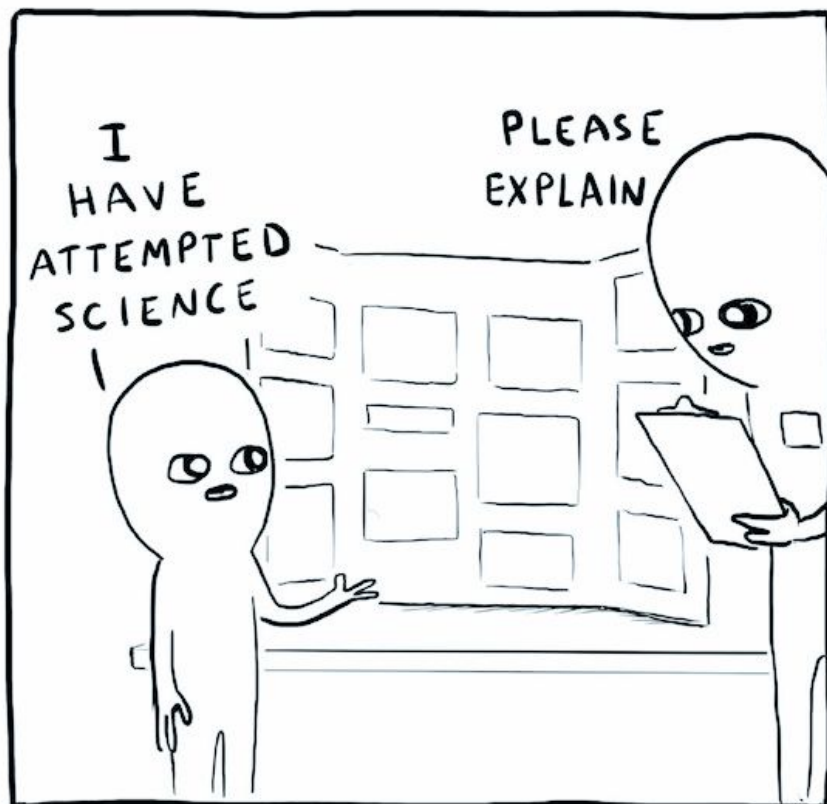


COOKIE LAB RESULTS

# Shortbread

January 2021



NATHANWPYLE

# Meet the Cookies

## Basic Cookie Recipes



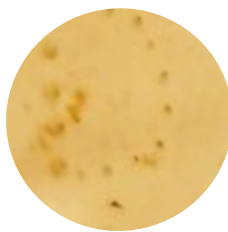
A “The Standard”  
*Irish butter, white sugar*



B “The Store-bought”  
*Walkers™ demerara sugar*



C “The Caramel”  
*Irish butter, light brown sugar*



D “The Meltaway”  
*Irish summer butter, powdered sugar*



E “The Whipped”  
*The Meltaway, but whipped fluffy before baking*

## Flavored Cookie Recipes



Earl Grey  
*Earl grey tea leaves, white chocolate, white sugar*



Rosemary Cheddar  
*Dried rosemary, aged white cheddar, cayenne, black pepper (no sugar)*

# Results

## Best Flavor: B

B (“The Store-bought”) won praise for maintaining a strong buttery flavor while introducing complex notes from a darker sugar.

## Best Texture: C

C (“The Caramel”) was noted for striking a balance between a classic snap and a softer, “gentle bite”.

## Most Controversial: E

E (“The Whipped”) was voted as both the best and worst cookie of the batch, in flavor and in texture.

## Greatest Potential for Improvement: Earl Grey

A popular flavor, the Earl Grey garnered the most feedback with actionable suggestions to help it become its best self. Basically, fix the burnt crunch of the white-chocolate-turned-accidental-toffee.

## Celine’s Favorite Flavor Analysis:

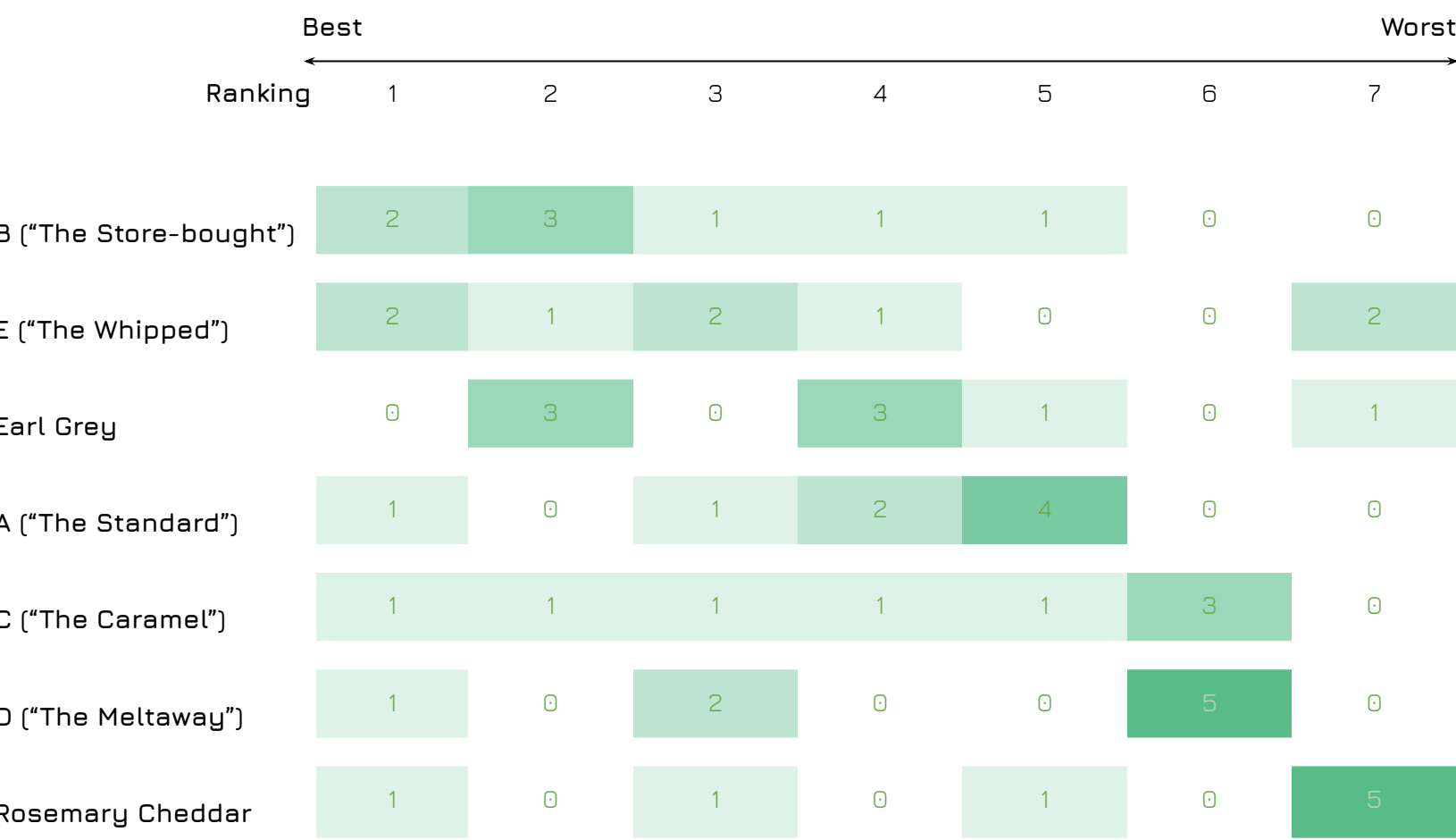
“...the Earl Grey, which hit strong with the sweet and left quickly, leaving the memories of Fruit Pebbles cereal.”

# Aggregated Flavor Ranking

1. B “The Store-bought”
2. E “The Whipped”
3. Earl Grey
4. A “The Standard”
5. C “The Caramel”
6. D “The Meltaway”
7. Rosemary Cheddar

# Aggregated Flavor Ranking

Count of votes for each rank, out of 8 total respondents



# Selected Quotes

Winner: B (“The Store-bought”)

*“So buttery, and B had even more flavor that kept it interesting.”*

*“Darker, more well developed sugars gives this a savoriness the other cookies don't have.”*

## The Debate

AKA Try to understand the people who absolutely disagree with you.

### E (“The Whipped”)

“The flavor I want from a shortbread: buttery with a hint of sugar and... all those flavors rolling over your tongue with the noticeable hint of flour.”

Ranked E as #1 in flavor

“:[ Bland”

“Too chalky, and flavor was lost as a result.”

Ranked E as #7 in flavor

### C (“The Caramel”)

“A little molasses-y which is nice.”

Ranked C as #1 in flavor

“Had a doughy blandness..”

Ranked C as #6 in flavor

### Rosemary Cheddar

“Extraordinary. First umami, then a floral bouquet... Sharpness from cheddar... Many distinct layers of flavor!”

Ranked as #1 in flavor

“Really cheesy, complex flavors, pepper hits later which I love.”

Ranked as #3 in flavor

“Flavor is way too strong. Bitter and overpowering”

“I didn’t like how tight the flavors were and the burn of pepper.”

Ranked #7 in flavor

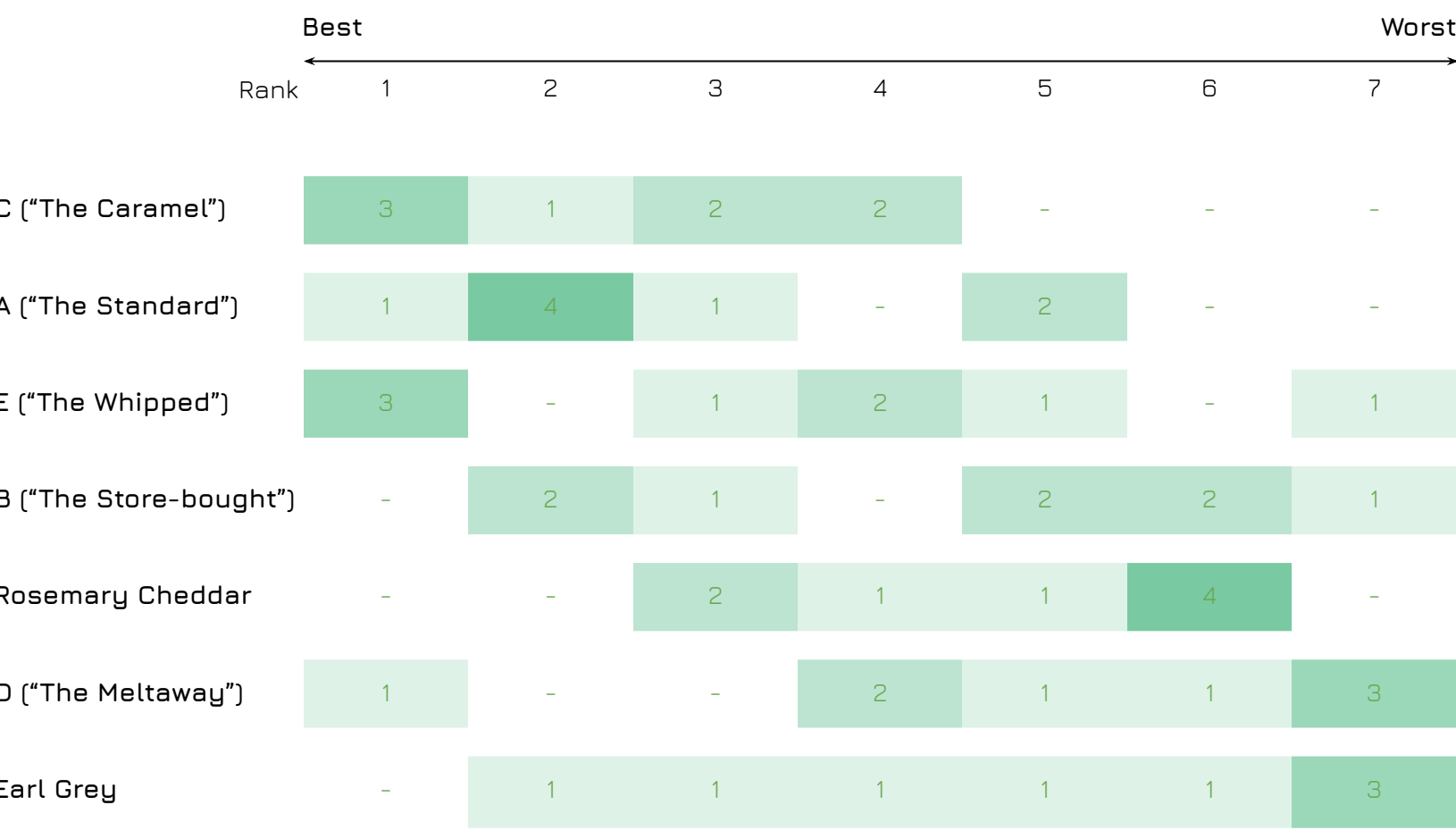
# Aggregated Texture Ranking

1. C “The Caramel”
2. A “The Standard”
3. E “The Whipped”
4. B “The Store-bought”
5. Rosemary Cheddar
6. D “The Meltaway” / Earl Grey (tied)



# Aggregated Texture Ranking

Count of votes for each rank, out of 8 total respondents



# Selected Quotes

Winner: C (“The Caramel”)

*“C had the best balance between melting in your mouth and the crumbliness that I would expect from a shortbread.”*

Loser: D (“Meltaway”)/ Earl Grey

*“The Earl Grey is a little too grainy, and the white chocolate caramelized too much.”*

*“Cookie base melts, but it’s crunchy”*

## The Debate

AKA Try to understand the people who absolutely disagree with you.

### E (“The Whipped”)

“E was the most prototypical of a shortbread texture, with the softness complementing the butter.”

Ranked E as #1 in texture

“Really unexpected. It's nice except it's so melt-in-your-mouth that the cookie feels like it disappears really quickly”

Ranked E as #4 in texture

“Too powdery, sticks in my mouth”

Ranked E as #7 in texture

### B (“The Store-bought”)

“Fit the bill for what I would expect a shortbread cookie to feel like.”

Ranked B as #2 in texture

“Doesn't dissolve/melt in your mouth as a shortbread cookie should.”

Ranked B as #6 in texture

### D (“The Meltaway”)

“Melted in mouth like freeze dried ice cream.”

Ranked D as #1 in texture

“Dense at the top and powdery at the bottom”  
“Dry texture, with a weird gummy after-texture”

Ranked D as #6-7 in texture

# Discussion: What is “good”, anyways?

The data shows a wide variety of cookie preferences. Variance is expected, especially for ranking data, where changing one cookie’s score inevitably affects every other cookie. However, an optimistic baker might hope for loose clustering at the “top”, “middle”, and “bottom” of the ladder.

Instead, most of the cookies had flavor and texture rankings that spanned almost the entire spectrum. This lack of coherence bordered on controversy; almost half the cookies were voted as both the best and the worst in at least one of the categories.

This may be reflection of study design. In order to prioritize tastiness over normative definitions of shortbread, the survey emphasized personal preferences (inevitably variable). Furthermore, a small sample size (N=8) makes it impossible to differentiate between controversy, normal variation, and outliers.

Nonetheless, useful patterns have emerged to inform future shortbread bakes:

- Whipped and un-whipped textures can both be enjoyable and “traditional”
- Complex flavors enhance the cookie. Experiment more with darker sugars and roasted flavorings (e.g. tea, nuts, etc).
- Bake the Earl Grey cookies for less time to preserve a softer chocolate texture
- Ditch the powdered sugar and cheese, due to the textural complications.
- Pay attention to butter texture at room temperature. Softer butters appear to make for greasier cookies. (More experimentation required.)

Thanks again to all who participated in this study! For recipes and further notes, please refer to [bit.ly/shortbread-recipes](https://bit.ly/shortbread-recipes).