

Published October 28th, 2020

## California cookie tradition continues at Rheem

Submitted by Irene Jai



One of the memorable milestones in fourth grade is to learn the diverse and beautiful geography of California. Kids study for a test and once they pass the test, the coveted award is to make their very own California Cookie. Traditionally, excited fourth-graders at Rheem Elementary gather in their school auditorium and enjoy shaping and decorating their cookie dough together. It's a celebratory occasion with many helpful parent volunteers onsite.

This year with distance learning, the remarkable Rheem fourth-grade teachers continued this cherished tradition by hosting an optional Zoom California Cookie Party. Some parents pivoted from the remote party to an in-person gathering, while adhering to social distance guidelines.

Photo provided

To make this event happen, parents and their fourth-graders prepared in advance by making dough, coloring sugar, and gathered specific decorations, some as basic as brown sugar for the desert, and other ingredients only found online such as red dots to mark key cities such as Sacramento and, of course, Moraga. On Oct. 13, parents' hearts were warmed witnessing smiles and laughter from 10 fourth-grade Rheem boys as they each made their own unique California cookie in person. Many parents and kids have not seen each other in person for the last seven months, and the California Cookie Party made everyone realize that they love their community and are thankful for their friendships.

After the party was over, all departed and went home, but there was even more to look forward to. The raw cookie dough went in the oven for a slow cook to maintain high chocolate chip mountain tops and lush sugar green valleys. Once done, the last detail added was the blue icing to illustrate rivers and lakes. Admiring their edible masterpieces, parents asked their proud and salivating students about what each detail represented. Students impressed their parents by locating the Salton Sea, Mt Whitney, and the Mojave Desert on their California Cookies. Last but not least, the students ate their homemade Golden State. California never tasted sweeter.

Despite distance learning, Moragans are finding feasible ways to nurture and maintain our communities in meaningful and responsible ways, together.

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