Dining Diaries: Finals and Chocolate Chip Cookies

It's already December and we're in the last two weeks of classes! Can you believe it?

Even though the semester is ending soon, it's going to be busy. Sometimes it's the last few weeks that are the toughest. There are so many finals, papers, and projects ahead! I know myself, and I know that I'm not very productive when I try to do work at home. So this week I'll be bringing my laptop to campus each day and finding places to study. The library's a great homework spot, of course, but I also really like the dining halls at Hamp and Frank. There's a good amount of background noise, if you work well in that environment like I do. And just think of all the coffee refills!

When the work is piling up, I also find it really helpful to take a few breaks throughout the day to de-stress. On Saturday, my roommate and I took a study break to bake cookies. It was a total spur-of-the-moment decision, and so much fun. We played music in our kitchen and chatted while we cooked. It was nice to take a half hour away from work, and afterwards, we had a full tray of warm, fresh-from-the-oven chocolate chip cookies to get us through the rest of our studying. I thought maybe they'd get us through the week ahead, but I don't think the batch lasted even twenty-four hours!

If you're looking for a study break, there's still plenty happening on campus this time of year, like concerts, shows, and residential events. On Friday, a few friends and I went to the Winter Festival in Southwest, where there was music, hot chocolate, and fried dough! Later, we went to a dance recital at Totman Gym. I check my emails to find out what's happening around campus, and I also keep an eye on the UMass events calendar.

How are your final weeks of fall semester going? If you need a pick-me-up, here's our chocolate chip cookie recipe. It's inspired by my mom, who bakes these "healthier" cookies all the time at home. She's never written down her recipe, so here's my best
attempt at recreating it! Feel free to make changes if you don't have some of these ingredients, like the coconut oil or almond flour. You can also bake them in a 9x13-inch pan to make chocolate chip bars. I've tweaked this recipe so many times, and it's never been an issue . . . there's no such thing as a bad chocolate chip cookie!

My Mom's Chocolate Chip Cookies
3/4 cup coconut oil
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup white sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup almond meal
1 cup whole-wheat flour
1/4 cup rolled oats
1 teaspoon baking soda
12 ounces dark chocolate chips

With a mixer, combine the coconut oil with the brown sugar and white sugar until fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, and then the vanilla. Stir in the almond flour, whole wheat flour, oats, and baking soda. Once combined, stir the chocolate chips into the dough. Drop tablespoon-sized spoonfuls of dough on a cookie sheet, and bake at 350 for 10-12 minutes.

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