



Little Debbie® Fast Facts

Little Debbie® by the Numbers

- McKee Foods Corporation, a privately held, family-run company based in Collegedale, Tennessee, has sold more than 157 billion Little Debbie® snacks since the brand became available in 1960. If you lined up all those snacks, that would cover over 9.9 million miles — enough to circle the Earth almost 400 times! That's also enough snack cakes to stretch to the moon and back more than 41 times!
- Little Debbie® snacks have even orbited the earth on the space shuttle, traveling more than 17,500 miles an hour.

Little Debbie® is America's Best-Seller

- According to Information Resources, Inc., which tracks data on food in America, sales of Little Debbie® snacks represent a third of the snack cake market, making Little Debbie® the No. 1 brand of snack cakes.
- There are more than 75 varieties of Little Debbie® snacks with suggested retail prices on multi-packs ranging from 99 cents to \$2.99 per carton. The product is sold in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico, as well as on U.S. military bases throughout the world.
- The top-selling Little Debbie® varieties are Oatmeal Creme Pies, Swiss Cake Rolls and Nutty Bars® Wafer Bars. McKee Foods sells over 200 million cartons of these 3 products every year.

History of McKee Foods and the Little Debbie® Brand

The Early Years

- McKee Foods Corporation was founded in Chattanooga, TN in 1934 when a young couple with a big dream pawned their new truck and bought Jack's Cookie Company with a down payment of \$288 and a lot of hope. The couple was O.D. and Ruth McKee, and their small bakery is now McKee Foods Corporation, the manufacturer of America's number-one snack cake, the Little Debbie® brand. How this bakery grew from five employees and a few thousand dollars in yearly sales to more than 6,000 employees and more than \$930 million in annual sales, is an inspirational story of determination, focus, confidence, faith and family.
- After trying many — mostly unsatisfactory — ways of making a living for his growing family, O.D. began selling five-cent Virginia Dare cakes in Chattanooga in 1933. On Mondays, he would take out the back seat and use the car for deliveries. On Fridays, the car seat went back in, and the 1928 Whippet again became the family car. A year later, O.D. had learned some very valuable lessons — he could sell, he loved being his own boss and there seemed to be a market for baked goods, even during a depression.
- In the fall of 1934, a small bakery came on the market in Chattanooga, and O.D. wanted badly to buy it. But he needed the agreement of one very important person — his wife. Ruth was a little reluctant. She was just beginning to feel more comfortable financially, and although O.D. had proven he could sell, he had not yet proven he could manage a manufacturing plant. But eventually she came around to his way of thinking and joined him in a partnership that would make the best use of their combined talents. Four months later they had to add a second shift of employees.

Little Debbie® is the Granddaughter of the Founder

- The Little Debbie® brand is better known than its parent company. In 1960, the company founders O.D. and Ruth McKee decided to create a brand for the products they were selling and chose to name it after one of their grandchildren - four year old Debbie. The original image of Debbie used on packaging and advertising was based on a black and white photo of Debbie in her favorite outfit. Atlanta artist, Pearl Mann, did the original color artwork. She made young Debbie look older, around eight or nine. Minor changes were made to the logo in 1987.

Production Innovation

- In the early years, Mr. McKee was known for developing various pieces of equipment to speed up production. The idea for one such innovation came one day when O.D. had to fill in for an employee who ran a hand-powered cookie machine. After running the machine for several hours, his arm became sore. Realizing there had to be a better way, he set out to find it. He used parts from an old washing machine to fashion a way to mechanically operate the cookie dough dropper so the dough could be deposited automatically.

- While most bakeries placed their unwrapped cookies in jars or bags, Mr. McKee had his soft cookies individually wrapped to ensure freshness — a tradition that continues today.
- Mr. McKee applied technologies from other industries to increase the efficiency of his business. In 1952, as sales increased, it became necessary to wrap snack cakes at a faster rate. Mr. McKee brought in a wrapping machine used in the candy industry and used it to wrap cakes. Initially, it wrapped 160 cakes per minute, but he soon modified it to wrap 180 a minute, and before long, it could seal more than 200 cakes a minute.

Little Debbie® in NASCAR

- Little Debbie® snacks has sponsored the Wood Brothers No. 21 race car since the 2006 NASCAR Nextel Cup season. Veteran Ken Schrader is the driver. During the 2006 Nextel Cup Season, Schrader raced more than 12,700 miles. That's like driving from New York to Los Angeles four times.
- The story of how Schrader's racing career began is almost legend. At the young age of three, Schrader's dad Bill tied a cable from his go-kart to a post in the backyard of their Midwestern home. Schrader would go around in circles. When the go-kart ran out of gas, Schrader would ask his dad to fill it back up. Then he would start going in circles all over again. Schrader's love of racing has only progressed over the years. "I guess you could say that I have been dizzy ever since," Schrader said. "I really don't think it is an exaggeration when I say that racing is all I've ever known. I've been racing since I could walk, and it is really all I have ever wanted to do. To be honest, I would race everyday if I had the opportunity."

Little Debbie® in Popular Culture

- Little Debbie® Fudge Brownies were one of Elvis Presley's favorite snacks.
- Nick Saban, the highest paid college football coach in the United States and head coach of the University of Alabama, eats Little Debbie® Oatmeal Creme Pies each morning.
- Little Debbie® Oatmeal Creme Pies had a supporting role in the Disney family adventure *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* in 1989.
- Friends co-star Courteney Cox grew up enjoying Little Debbie® Nutty Bars® Wafer Bars in Birmingham, Alabama.
- The first national Little Debbie® commercial from the 1980s featured comedian and impersonator Rich Little rapping while posing as Jack Nicholson, George Burns and Crocodile Dundee (Paul Hogan).