

Food

The Estherville Daily News is proud to bring you the Food page every Tuesday. If you know anyone who should be featured on this page, please send their names and why you think they should be featured to: Managing editor, 10 N. Seventh St., Estherville, 51334 or editor@esthervilledailynews.com

SWEET MEMORY OF CHRISTMAS CANDY CANES

By MARY ANN MENENDEZ
SPECIAL TO THE EDN

Memories of Christmas past without the help of one of Scrooge's night visitors, are without a doubt the best part of my childhood.

By far, the birth of the Christ child was and still is the prominent part of my holiday. But like for you, there are treasures of attending family gatherings, decorating the tree and house, buying special gifts and giving them, receiving surprised smiles when gifts were opened, baking cookies with Mom, taste-testing these cookies, leaving some of these cookies on a special plate with hot cocoa for Santa (with a few sugar cubes for the reindeer too!), singing carols, going to church and all the rest.

But when I dig deeper into the Christmas thoughts of my youngest days, what I find that made the strongest impression were two items that affected my senses and that being:

the fresh scent of pine from the Christmas tree.

the fresh taste of a newly unwrapped peppermint candy cane (only red and white ones were in the 1950s).

My Greek grandmother grew her own peppermint in a small section of her backyard. She would dry the herb and incorporated into some of her fabulous ethnic dishes. Whenever she had an upset tummy, she would automatically brew a cup of peppermint tea with some of the dried peppermint leaves.

According to <http://www.extension.ias-tate.edu>, peppermint can grow in all kinds of situations with the two popular kinds being white and black peppermint.

Like every other herb that has occupied this space, peppermint also includes components that are "Greek" to all of us. But the one thing to know is that peppermint contains flavonoids, and that's a good thing.

For as long as I can remember, some candy makers have been coupling peppermint with dark chocolate for a special taste. The pungent peppermint wraps its taste around the smooth even-flavored chocolate for a comforting treat that's available all year.

No one is very certain why the candy cane came to be. According to www.foodtimeline.com, "The origin of the candy cane is an interesting study of food lore and legend. The most popular story is the one about the German choirmaster who handed these out to his young singers in 1670 to keep them quiet during a long church service. There is also controversy as to the origin of the shape. Does it represent a shepherd's crook? Or the letter 'J' for Jesus?"

Doing the math, the candy cane has been enjoyed for 340 years and continues to be a sweet symbol for Christmas. And today, peppermint is not the only flavor as candy makers have created a multitude of heavenly flavors and colors to appease the taste buds of the masses. They still add an old-fashioned festive touch to the Christmas tree when adorning boughs here and there.

And peppermint is also incorporated in some festive Christmas desserts. If peppermint isn't part of your Christmas past, perhaps you'll include some in your Christmas present for sweet memories to remember in your Christmas future!

Mrs. Claus' Cheesecake

1 1/2 cups chocolate cookie crumbs
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/3 cup butter, melted
1 1/2 cups sour cream
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3 eggs
1 tablespoon flour
2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract
3 (8 ounces) pkgs. cream cheese, softened
2 tablespoons butter, softened
2/3 cup crushed peppermint candy
Sweetened whipped cream (half of recipe)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine first 3 ingredients and press into the bottom of a 9-inch spring form pan; set aside. In blender, blend sour cream, sugar, eggs, flour and extracts until smooth. Add cream cheese and 2 tablespoons butter, blending until completely smooth. Stir in crushed candy. Pour onto crust. Bake on lowest rack of oven for 50-60 minutes or until firm. Allow to cool (cheesecake may crack while cool-



ing), refrigerate overnight. To serve, use knife to loosen sides of cheesecake from pan; remove spring form. Spread top of cheesecake with sweetened whipped cream. Garnish with round candy cane. Serves 10.

Sweetened Whipped Cream:

1 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Beat at high speed until soft peaks form. Serves 4.

Snowflake Dessert

2 cups whipped cream
1 pound small marshmallows
1/2 pound candy canes or peppermint candy, crushed
1 pound chocolate cream cookie crumbs

Whip the cream and add marshmallows and crushed candy canes. Spread an even layer of crumbs on bottom of 9 x 13 pan, top with cream mixture and sprinkle remaining crumbs on top with a few crushed candy cane crumbs mixed in. Refrigerate until serving and refrigerate leftovers.

Rudolph's Cookies

3/4 cup softened butter
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon peppermint oil
1 3/4 cups flour
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups of semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In large mixing bowl beat together butter and sugars. Add peppermint oil, vanilla and egg. In separate bowl, mix together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Mix flour mixture into creamed mixture. Add chocolate chips and mix with a spoon until incorporated into the dough. Form dough into tablespoon sized balls, place on slightly greased cookie sheets, and bake for 10 minutes. When done let sit on sheet for 1 minute then move to cooling racks.

Peppermint Puffs

3 fresh egg whites
1 cup sugar
1/3 teaspoon salt
1 1/4 teaspoons vinegar
1 tablespoon peppermint schnapps
1/2 cup crushed peppermint candy
Beat egg whites at high speed until very stiff, about 4 minutes. Reduce to medium speed and add sugar gradually, then salt and vinegar. Continue beating until very creamy, about 4 or 5 minutes, stirring in schnapps during the final seconds. Cover a large cookie sheet with wax paper, and using a spoon, shape into 8 mounds 2 inches apart. Sprinkle tops with crushed peppermint candy. Swirl carefully with a knife from the bottom up and make a peak at top. Bake at 275 degrees 50 or 60 minutes or until delicately browned and dry on the surface. Remove from paper while still warm. To serve, slice off top horizontally and fill with a scoop of mint chocolate chip or peppermint ice cream. Return tops and serve immediately.

Santa's Sweet Rolls

12 frozen dinner rolls, thawed but still cold
1/3 cup coarsely crushed peppermint candy
Icing:

1 tablespoon butter, softened
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
1 cup powdered sugar
3 tablespoons milk

Cut each roll in half. Roll each half into an 8-inch rope. Twist two ropes together. Pinch ends together and place on a large sprayed baking sheet. Cover with sprayed plastic wrap and let rise 30 minutes. Remove wrap and bake at 350 degrees 10-15 minutes. Combine icing ingredients and brush over warm twists. Sprinkle with crushed peppermint candy.

Yuletide Mint Pie

3 tubs of non-dairy whipped topping
2 packages low-fat cream cheese
40 small peppermint patties
1/2 cup sugar
2 chocolate cookie crumb crusts
Let cream cheese soften at room temperature for 30 minutes. Coarsely chop 30 peppermint patties. Mix together cream cheese, chopped peppermint patties, 1/2 cup sugar and 2 of the non-dairy whipped topping tubs. Spread mixture evenly in the pie crusts. Top with the remaining Cool Whip. Garnish each slice with a peppermint candy half.

Mistletoe Fudge

2 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cups butter
2/3 cup evaporated milk
7 ounces marshmallow cream
8 ounces almond bark
1/2 cup finely crushed peppermint candy
Red food coloring
Line 9-inch square with foil so that it extends over sides of pan. Butter foil well. In large saucepan, combine sugar, butter and milk. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Add marshmallow cream and almond bark; blend until smooth. Stir in peppermint candy. Add desired amount of red food coloring. Pour into prepared pan. Cool to room temperature. Score fudge into squares. Put crushed peppermint candy on top of fudge. Refrigerate until firm. Remove fudge from pan by lifting foil; remove foil from fudge. Using large knife, cut through scored lines. Store in refrigerator.

Winter Wonderland Cake

1/2 cup hard peppermint candies
1/4 cup water
2 cups whipping cream
1/4 cup powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 (8 inch) angel food cake ring
1 pint vanilla ice cream
In covered blender container with blender at high speed, blend 1/4 cup candies until coarsely crushed; remove to waxed paper. Repeat to crush remaining 1/4 cup candies, but leave in blender; add water; blend until syrupy. In small bowl, with mixer at medium speed, beat cream, sugar and extract until stiff peaks form. With knife, slice angel food cake into 3 layers. Place bottom layer on cake platter; sprinkle with about 2 tablespoons peppermint syrup; spread 1/2 cup whipped cream over cake; sprinkle with 1 tablespoon crushed candies. Top with second layer; sprinkle with syrup; spread with

1/2 cup cream; sprinkle with candies. Invert top layer carefully; sprinkle cut side of this layer with remaining syrup, then place right side up on assembled cake. Spread remaining cream on top and side of cake. Dust side of cake with some crushed candies. With small ice cream scoop, scoop ice cream into balls; place on top of cake. Sprinkle with crushed candies. Freeze until serving time. Makes 10 servings.

North Pole Brownies

1 pkg. fudge brownie mix
1/2 cup flaked coconut
1/2 cup chopped pecans
3 cups powdered sugar
1/3 cup butter (softened)
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
About 2 tablespoon milk
2 squares unsweetened chocolate
2 teaspoons butter
Heat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare brownies as directed, stir coconut and pecans into batter. Bake as directed. Cool. Mix powdered sugar, 1/3 cup butter and peppermint. Stir in milk, 1 tablespoon at a time. Spread over brownies. Refrigerate 30 minutes. Heat chocolate and 2 teaspoons butter until melted. Drizzle over frosting. Spread evenly. Refrigerate.

Warm Cocoa with a Twist

3 cups hot milk
1/8 teaspoon salt
8 chocolate peppermint patties
1 cup cream
Combine 1/2 cup hot milk with peppermint patties. Mix well until smooth. Add remaining milk and salt. Heat to simmering and add cream. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

Holiday Hearts

2 1/4 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 egg
2 tablespoons milk
3/4 teaspoon peppermint extract
Sift first 3 ingredients; set aside; cream next 7 ingredients together; slowly beat in flour mixture. Divide dough into fourths; cover; chill 1 hour. Preheat to 375 degrees; on lightly floured board, roll each fourth to 1/8-inch thickness; cut with heart-shaped cutter. Place half the cutouts on ungreased sheets; spread with teaspoonful of filling. Top with remaining cut-outs; seal edges. Bake 9 to 10 minutes and cool. Drizzle with peppermint icing and chocolate drizzle. Makes about 25 hearts.
Filling:
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips (reserving 3 tablespoons for chocolate drizzle)
1 tablespoon butter
Stir until smooth.
Peppermint Frosting:
1/2 cup powdered sugar
2 drops peppermint extract
2 drops red food coloring
A little milk
Chocolate Drizzle:
2 tablespoons chocolate chips (from 1 cup of chips)
1 teaspoon butter
Stir until smooth.

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