

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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JIGGLE JOYS!

Readers far and wide responded to my request for Jell-O stories and recipes.

I've let each contribution speak for itself, a kind of glimpse into a family, written for those who watched the original recipe being made by a loved one.

"These are the good ones I remember from my youth (very long ago) – the recipes themselves were yellow and almost unreadable," one reader wrote. "But I do love these – and you've inspired me to make them again. Somehow Jell-O just seemed to fall off my radar over the years."

Why does Jell-O remain popular? How did it become the official dessert of Utah? Why did the Jell-O Mold Building (see middle column, this page) gain such a foothold in the hearts of Seattleites?

Some things are incomprehensible; they just are. But in the case of Jell-O, perhaps we can make a good guess: Maybe we like it because it comes in pretty colors, and it wiggles a lot.

Northwest Connection

Seattle has its own unique link to Jell-O. A 1908 building that stood at the corner of Western and Wall was more recently covered with 400 vintage Jell-O molds by an artistic inhabitant. Popularly known as the Jell-O Mold Building, it was torn down in 1997 to make way for high-priced condos.

Why Jell-O molds?

The artist who spent 7 months in 1992 affixing the molds told the Seattle Times (June 1997):

"I think it applies to a common note in a lot of people," Diane Szukovathy said. "Everybody knows what Jell-O is. It's a common denominator, with a good sense of humor. Because the community has embraced it (the building), I think of it as part of the community."

In April 1997, the Seattle Times reported that the Jell-O traveling museum would arrive at the Pacific Science Center that October. To celebrate the visit, a new Jell-O flavor was created: Sparkling White Grape, meant to be mixed with a carbonated beverage instead of water to evoke a champagne taste.

Alas! Despite the build-up of excitement, the Jell-O Mold Building was demolished in August 1997.

Readers' Choice

No Jell-O in this one, but too good to ignore!

Charlotte – Gran's recipe

Beat 2 egg whites stiff.

Add scant ½ cup sugar and beat well.

Beat ½ pint heavy cream stiff (if you over beat, cream will turn to butter). Gran often used Cool Whip – just 1 container, as I recall.

Dissolve 1 package Knox gelatin in ¼ cup sherry wine. (By sitting dish of gelatin and sherry in hot water, the gelatin will dissolve thoroughly – which is critical or dessert will be grainy in texture.) Bring up to 1/3 cup sherry once dissolved. Cool slightly. Add to beaten egg whites.

Fold in cream – mix thoroughly but lightly.

Spoon into small cups or dessert dishes (portions are small because dessert is rich) and refrigerate until served.

Gran sometimes shaved a little dark chocolate on the top of each – just for presentation.

- J., Los Angeles, Calif.



My Favorite Jell-O Recipe

- 1 large or 2 small boxes raspberry Jell-O
- 1½ cups of boiling water (to dissolve Jell-O)
- 2 packages frozen raspberries
- 15-oz. jar of applesauce

Prepare Jell-O according to box directions using boiling water. Stir in raspberries. Fold in applesauce. (Carol's favorite is Trader Joe's unsweetened applesauce.) Let set in refrigerator. The Jell-O will never get real hard, but will have a softer consistency.

- C., Glendale, Calif.

This combination of salty and sweet is very tasty.

Strawberry Jell-O / Pretzel Stuff

2 cups pretzels, coarsely crushed
¾ cup melted margarine
1 cup plus 3 tablespoons sugar
8 oz. cream cheese
1 container whipped topping
1 6-oz. package strawberry Jell-O
1 cup boiling water
½ cup mini marshmallows
2 packages frozen strawberries

Combine pretzels, margarine and 3 tablespoons sugar. Press into 13X9-inch baking dish. Bake at 400 degrees for 8 minutes.

In a large bowl, beat 1 cup sugar with cream cheese. Fold in whipped topping. Spread this mixture over pretzels. Refrigerate until chilled.

Mix Jell-O and hot water. When dissolved, add marshmallows and stir until they are dissolved. Stir in strawberries with juice. Let stand for 10 minutes, then pour over whipped topping mixture.

Refrigerate until chilled. Cut into squares to serve.

- C., Seattle, Wash.

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Your Jell-O recipe request brought to mind immediately my own Jell-O past. Having grown up at the time Jell-O was touted as the Wonder Food (1950s version of gourmet cooking), I made and ate tons of it. Of course, my grandma made way too much of that pale green – Waldorf, I think? – salad. Apart from sometimes DRINKING it before it set, my absolutely favorite thing to do was this (not a recipe really, but my idea of an artistic dessert):

First, buy two to four different colors of Jell-O (grape, raspberry, lime would be pretty).

Next, if you have them, get those tallish parfait glasses with a foot on them. Pour an inch or two of one color Jell-O (say, grape) in the bottom of each glass and THEN – the important part – put them in the fridge at an ANGLE, tipping each glass's foot between the metal rack things and LEAN them against the side of the fridge.

When the Jell-O sets, make the next color (lime?) and pour an inch or two of it into each glass on top of the grape and tilt

A BIT OF HISTORY

1845 – PETER COOPER OBTAINED THE FIRST PATENT FOR A GELATIN DESSERT. BUT HOME COOKS CONTINUED TO USE SHEETS OF GELATIN, WHICH HAD TO BE CLARIFIED BY BOILING WITH EGG WHITES AND SHELLS AND DRIPPED THROUGH A JELLY BAG BEFORE BEING POURED INTO A DESSERT MOLD.

1897 – PEARLE WAIT DEVELOPED A FRUIT-FLAVORED VERSION OF COOPER'S GELATIN. HIS WIFE, MAY WAIT, NAMED IT JELL-O. THE FIRST FLAVORS WERE STRAWBERRY, RASPBERRY, ORANGE AND LEMON.

1899 – WAIT SOLD THE BUSINESS TO ORATOR WOODWARD, A NEIGHBOR, FOR \$450.

1904 – THE FIRST JELL-O COOKBOOK APPEARED. CHOCOLATE AND CHERRY WERE ADDED AS FLAVOR CHOICES.

1900-1925 - DURING THE EARLY QUARTER OF THE 20th CENTURY, IMMIGRANTS ENTERING ELLIS ISLAND IN NEW YORK CITY WERE SERVED JELL-O TO WELCOME THEM TO AMERICA.

1934 – CHOCOLATE-FLAVORED JELL-O WAS REINVENTED AS PUDDING.

1942 – COLA FLAVOR WAS INTRODUCED AND DISCONTINUED.

1950s – AN AD CAMPAIGN INTRODUCED NATIONAL JELL-O-WITH-FRUIT-TO-BOOT WEEK.

2000 – WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING?

- adapted from the timeline at web.kraftfoods.com/jello

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and set again. Do the same with the next color until it sets.

What you get is this fabulous angled sort of spiral-stripe of different colors of Jell-O. Very impressive. I think it might work (can't remember) to also add a thin layer of whipped cream between the Jell-O colors too. Looks sort of candy-stripey.

- C., Mar Vista, Calif.

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Jell-O Shots

1 small package of any flavor you like
3 cups water
1 cup vodka
16 small Dixie cups

Stir the gelatin into 3 cups of boiling water and wait for all of it to dissolve. Then stir in 1 cup of vodka. Once mixed together, arrange Dixie cups on a cookie sheet and fill to ¾ full. Chill tray of Jell-O shots for about 4 hours until set.

These are actually great for parties and aren't too strong at the 3:1 ratio. For more potent shots, you can do the 2:2 ratio.

We had them on the 4th [of July] and they were a big hit! For those on low-carb diets, you can also use the sugar-free Jell-O with no difference in taste.

- B., Issaquah, Wash.

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Wish I had a good Jell-O story. I do remember my family had a 3-layer Jell-O salad we made for Thanksgiving or Christmas, very complicated, with each layer having to jell before the next could go on. Now I make a fluffy Jell-O salad so simple it will make you cry.

Mandarin Orange Salad

1 small package orange Jell-O
1 pint cottage cheese
1 can mandarin oranges
1 medium can crushed pineapple
8 oz. Cool Whip
½ cup coconut

Spread cottage cheese in a large Pyrex baking pan and sprinkle with Jell-O. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Drain juice from cans of fruit and use for something else. Add oranges, pineapple, coconut and Cool Whip to cottage cheese. Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving.

- R., Bisbee, Ariz.

Applesauce Gelatin Salad

2 small packages lemon Jell-O
2 cups boiling water
½ cup red hot cinnamon candies
2 cups unsweetened applesauce
6 oz. cream cheese
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons cream

Pour boiling water over Jell-O, and add red hots. Stir until dissolved. Add unsweetened applesauce.

Refrigerate until Jell-O is partially set. Mix together cream cheese, mayonnaise and cream. Swirl it into the partially set Jell-O and refrigerate.

- M., Seattle, Wash.



Apple Cinnamon Salad

1 package cherry Jell-O
1 cup hot water
¼ cup cinnamon candies
½ cup boiling water
1 cup chopped apples
1 cup chopped celery
½ cup nuts

Dissolve gelatin in hot water; dissolve candies in boiling water. When candies are dissolved, add enough water to measure 1 cup. Add to Jell-O mixture and chill until partially set. Add apples, celery and nuts; pour into mold.

For a Christmas salad, a layer of lime gelatin may be added after the above is firm.

Strawberry-Nut Salad

2 packages strawberry Jell-O
1 cup boiling water
2 10-oz. packages frozen sliced strawberries, thawed
1 1-lb. 4-oz. can crushed pineapple
3 medium bananas, mashed
1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
1 12X8X2-inch baking dish
1 pint commercial sour cream

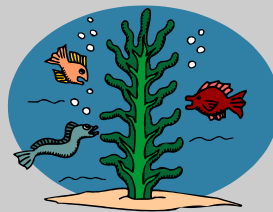
Day before:

In large kettle, combine gelatin with boiling water, stirring until gelatin is dissolved. Then fold in, all at once, strawberries with juice, drained pineapple, bananas and walnuts.

Vegetarian Alternative

Agar-Agar, a gelatinizing agent derived from seaweed, is a refreshing vegetarian substitute for Jell-O. My mother's recipe: Add agar-agar and sprigs of lemon verbena to boiling water. After boiling, discard the sprigs, add a can of fruit cocktail, and let it gel. This has a very light texture, unlike the heavier Jell-O.

- Z., Seattle, Wash.



Finding agar-agar

You can buy agar-agar at any fine store that sells seaweeds ready to eat.

If you haven't seen any where you shop, and the store manager is reluctant to order it for you, try the PCC (Puget Consumers Co-op) at any of several Puget Sound locations. Call (206) 547-1222 for store locations and hours.

The knowledgeable folks at PCC can also tell you more about how to prepare agar-agar. Be sure to ask for their schedule of cooking classes to learn about other tasty delights.

Turn half of strawberry mixture into 12X8X2-inch baking dish as first layer. Refrigerate until firm – about an hour and a half – then evenly spread top with sour cream. Gently spoon on rest of strawberry mixture; refrigerate.

Just before serving the next day:

Cut the strawberry salad into 12 squares.

-D., Seattle, Wash.



Jell-O Jigglers

This makes a snack the kids can eat with their fingers. Or throw at each other.

4 envelopes Knox unflavored gelatin
3 3-oz. packages any flavor Jell-O
4 cups boiling water

Combine unflavored gelatin and flavored Jell-O, add the boiling water, stir until completely dissolved.

Pour into a large shallow baking pan (cookie sheet with a rim) and chill until firm. (Make sure you have cleared a space in the fridge beforehand.) Cut into squares and store in the fridge.

Jell-O Poke Cake

The best way to lose that gelatin feel ("Ack! I'm not eating that – it's not dead yet!!") is to put Jell-O in a cake.

1 package cake mix (white or yellow)
1 small box Jell-O, any flavor

Mix cake according to package directions and bake in a 9X13-inch glass baking dish.

While the cake is baking, dissolve the Jell-O in ¾ cup hot water, then add ½ cup cold water.

When the cake is done, let it cool just a bit, then poke holes all over it (with a skewer or fork or chopstick), then slowly pour the cooled, but still liquid, Jell-O mixture over the cake. Refrigerate until the Jell-O is firm. Serve with the ever-popular Cool Whip.

For Christmas, you can use ½ package each lime and your favorite red Jell-O! Or for July 4th, use blue and red Jell-O!!

- L., Kirkland, Wash.

What should you tell your children about molded salads?

According to current thinking, when they're old enough to ask intelligent questions, they're old enough to get straight answers. So you'll simply have to explain to them that in spite of the vast numbers of molded salads made daily, not so many people enjoy them as the children might think (because of the children's own fondness for banana slices in bright pink gelatin).

...

Yet, you keep seeing so many molded salads around!

Well, it took me a long time to realize that the reason you do is that *the molded salad is the easiest to cook*. Only consider, for a moment, its advantages:

1. If you choose the right recipe, it's about as easy as a mud pie.
 2. It's easy to carry somewhere else.
 3. You can make it the day before. ...
 4. One molded salad serves many people, because they seldom go back for seconds.
 5. If the mold and salad are pretty, and if you garnish it with something attractive, it will look as though you'd worked on it.
- from "Appendix to the I Hate to Cook Book," by Peg Bracken (1966)



Play With Your Food!

Alton Brown, host of the TV show "Good Eats," showed viewers how to make scary Halloween treats with gelatin in the episode, "Deep Space Slime."

Demonstrations and recipes included:

- Sparkling Gingered Face
- Cinnamon Cherry Heart
- Panna Cotta Brain with Cherry Glaze
- Spooky Edible Eyes

If you get a chance to see this, do! Meanwhile, you can get recipes at www.foodnetwork.com and more fun information at www.altonbrown.com.

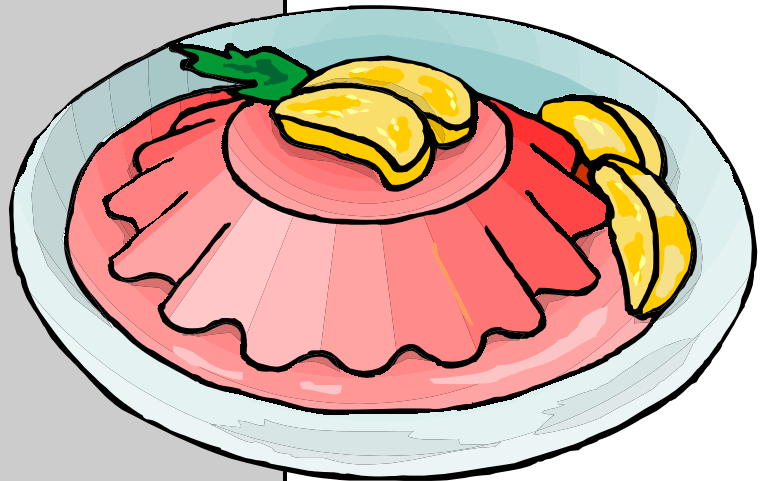
UK Students' Faves Include Gelatin

BBC News online reported that although awful school lunches continue to haunt British adults, students do have some favorites.

Listed as the "top five favourite school dinners": fish and chips, ice cream, sponge pudding, jam roly poly and jelly.

Translation:
Jelly = Gelatin dessert

- August 7, 2003
news.bbc.co.uk



Did you know?

When hooked up to an EEG machine, lime-flavored **Jell-O** demonstrates movements identical to the brain waves of a healthy adult.



You said it!

I hate the stuff. Never have liked it. When I was a kid, if Jell-O was the only thing for dessert, I'd go without dessert. Way too sweet, and the mouthfeel makes me gag. Ugh.

- M., Woodinville, Wash.

I'm willing to try some chocolate-covered garlic, odd though it sounds. I draw the line at eating flavored boiled connective tissue, however. I'm such a food snob!

- M., Seattle, Wash.



About YUMMY NORTHWEST

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas and submissions are all most welcome.
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