



LINDA WYNER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Each year, I vow that I will not let creamy, dreamy eggnog pass over my lips. And every year, I can barely make it a week after Halloween before the supermarket eggnog sirens wear down my resistance. When I discovered Land O' Lakes eggnog at Costco, I was a goner.

When I was growing up, eggnog was a Christmas comfort food. Fresh-made from eggs, cream and a dash of nutmeg, it was like a warm crackling fire and a hug from grandma all rolled into one.

Eggnog had more practical origins. It most likely came from milk punches during Renaissance Europe. Because there was no refrigeration, eggs and milk had to be consumed or cooked before they spoiled. However, someone discovered that if you added brandy, Madeira or sherry, the shelf life of these perishables extended considerably.

A similar British drink called posset was popular some centuries ago; it was made with eggs, milk and ale or wine and served warm.

The origins of the word eggnog are far from clear. The word literally means eggs inside a small cup. Nog comes from noggin, which was a wood mug taverns used for their beverages. It's possible that some barfly decided that if you put an egg drink in a noggin, you get eggnog.

No one seems to know why eggnog consumption is limited to the Christmas holidays. By the 1800s, it was common to toast one's good health with eggnog on Christmas Day.

Warm up the treadmill – it's eggnog time

British households would make eggnog in huge quantities for holiday parties. One English visitor in 1866 noted: "Christmas is not properly observed unless you brew egg nogg for all comers; everybody calls on everybody else, and each call is celebrated by a solemn egg-nogging. ... It is made cold and is drunk cold and is to be commended."

In the 1800s in Baltimore, young men would go from house to house to drink eggnog with friends on New Year's Day.

Eggnog was first reported in America by Capt. John Smith, who observed the Jamestown settlers making eggnog in 1607. Rum from the Caribbean was far less expensive than imported European spirits, so it became standard in many recipes.

George Washington was particularly fond of eggnog, but it's not clear how much egg was in his version. It contained vast amounts of rye whiskey, rum and sherry. I'm not what significance should be drawn from the fact that most early American cookbooks listed eggnog recipes in sections for the sick and infirm.

Variations on the drink abound. Bourbon is a popular ingredient in the South. Elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, Puerto Ricans make rum-based coquito while Mexican eggnog, rompopo, is liberally

doused with cinnamon and rum or grain alcohol. Peruvians enjoy biblio con pisco, an egg drink laced with pomace brandy. Meanwhile, Germans make their Biersuppe with beer.

One of my favorite Food Network celebrities is Alton Brown. His 2005 recipe for eggnog ranks up there with the best. Enjoy his recipe and while you're up, please pour me



another cup of eggnog.

Be aware that uncooked and partially cooked egg, such as in this recipe, may expose you to serious bacterial infections.

ALTON BROWN'S EGGNOG

- 4 egg yolks
- 1/3 c. sugar, plus 1 T.
- 2 c. whole milk
- 1 c. heavy cream
- 3 oz. bourbon
- 1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 4 egg whites

In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat the egg yolks until they lighten in color. Gradually add the 1/3 cup sugar and continue to beat until it is dissolved. Add the milk, cream, bourbon and nutmeg and stir to combine. (Omit the bourbon if you prefer a non-alcoholic version.)

Place the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer and beat to soft peaks. With the mixer still running, gradually add the 1 T. sugar and beat until stiff peaks form. Whisk the egg whites into the mixture. Chill and serve.

So, what do you do if you just can't drink another drop of eggnog? Try ice cream with the

above recipe. Omit the egg whites and freeze in an ice cream compressor per manufacturer's instructions.

Or try your hand at this quick bread.

EGGNOG BREAD

- 3 c. flour
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 4 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 beaten egg
- 1 1/4 c. dairy eggnog
- 1/2 c. vegetable oil
- 1/2 c. toasted pecans
- 1/2 c. golden raisins

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine the wet and dry ingredients in separate bowls. Add wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Add nuts and raisins.

Bake in a greased and floured loaf pan or cake pan for one hour. Cover with foil if bread browns too quickly.

Linda Wyner, a local attorney and foodie, owns Pans on Fire, a gourmet cookware store and cooking school in Pleasanton.

Direct your suggestions or questions to lwyner@claytonpioneer.com

Plan ahead for a Roth IRA

If you have been unable to switch your traditional IRA to a Roth IRA because your income was too high (over \$100,000), you may want to plan ahead for a rule change that will occur in 2010. That's when the income limit for converting a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA will end, and higher-income taxpayers will have access to a Roth. The conversion will be taxable, but qualified withdrawals from the Roth will be tax-free. For guidance in this area, give us a call.



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Cheer, from page B7

seat vehicle to bring family and friends to the Warriors. "Then we went backstage to a practice gym," Madi said. "We had to practice our routine and stretch."

"You have to stretch to avoid pulling muscles," Michaela noted.

"Then they made an announcement," Madi said.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," Michaela mimicked. "Let's hear

it for the ..."

"And we ran out," Madi said.

"There were enough people there to be overwhelming," Heather said. "We were screaming and cheering. Luckily we found some seats in the 10th row – people let us sit there – otherwise we were up in the nosebleed section."

Then, the 10 cheerleaders in their group began the routine.

"The music started," Madi

said. "Britney Spears' 'Crazy,' " Michaela said.

"Each squad got to do a halftime performance and then waited," Heather added.

"We weren't nervous," Michaela said, "we just did it."

"I jumped on my seat," said Ashley Jackett, Madi's younger sister.

"Then they took all the cheerleaders back to the stands and the older cheerleaders took the younger ones to get nachos and ice cream," Heather said.

"People kept saying, 'Awesome Cobras. We're big fans,'" Madi said.

Then it was over. At 11 in the evening, they wrapped up to go home.

"It was very cool," Heather said. "I'm proud of them."

"My teacher saw me on television and told me I did a really good job," Madi said.

"Mine saw me as well," Michaela responded.

Both girls plan to return to the Cobras next year.

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