



Journey through Thyme

Jodi Schneider
Columnist

The history of traditional holiday treats

'Tis the season for holiday sweets, treats and indulgences. Seasonal goodies are everywhere, they have found their way on to grocery store shelves, taken center stage in bakery display cases, and are filling our homes with heavenly aromas.

How did some of these traditional festive flavored holiday treats come to be?

Here are the origins behind a few of our favorite holiday foods that have been around for decades — even centuries!

Candy canes seem to be everywhere during the holiday

season, appearing in holiday home décor to the flavoring in your morning mocha to the crunchy crumbles on peppermint bark. But where did candy canes come from?

The Christmas candy cane originated in Germany about 250 years ago. They started as straight white sugar sticks.

One story says that a choir-master, in 1670, was worried about the children sitting quietly all through the long Christmas nativity service. So, he gave them something to eat to keep them quiet. He wanted to remind the children of Christmas, so he made the candies into a “J” shape like a shepherd’s crook, to remind them of the shepherds that visited the baby Jesus at the first Christmas.

Sometime around 1900 the red stripes were added, and they were flavored with peppermint or wintergreen. Around 1920, Bob McCormack, from Georgia, started making canes for his friends and family. They became more and more popular, and he started his own business called Bob’s Candies. McCormack’s brother-in-law, Gregory Harding Keller, who was a Catholic priest, invented the “Keller Machine” that turned straight candy sticks into curved candy canes automatically. In 2005, Bob’s Candies was bought by Farley

Favorite Old-fashioned Gingerbread

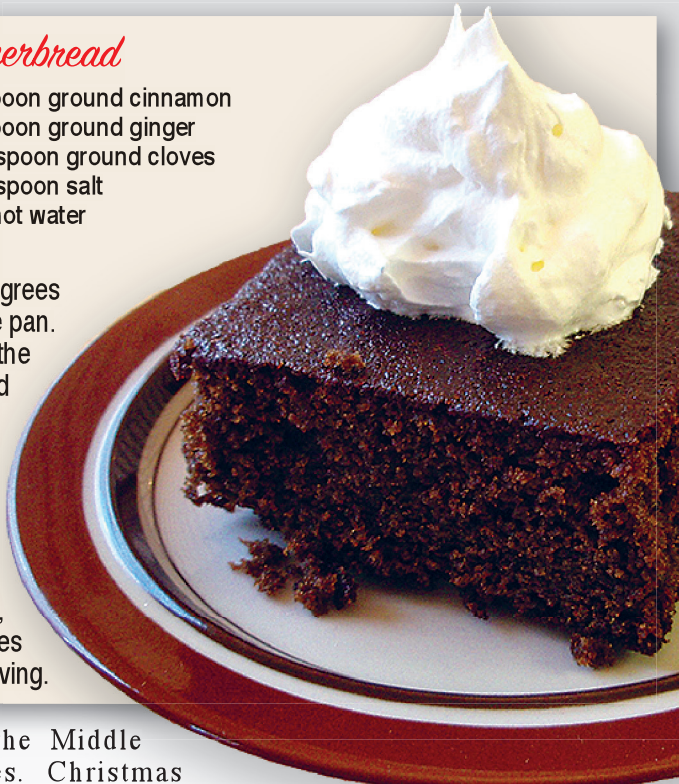
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| 1/2 cup white sugar | 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 1/2 cup butter | 1 teaspoon ground ginger |
| 1 egg | 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves |
| 1 cup molasses | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour | 1 cup hot water |
| 1-1/2 teaspoons baking soda | |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour a nine-inch square pan.

In a large bowl, cream together the sugar and butter. Beat in the egg and mix in the molasses.

In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. Blend into the creamed mixture. Stir in the hot water. Pour into the prepared pan.

Bake 1 hour in the preheated oven, until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool in pan before serving.



and Sathers, but they still make candy canes.

This time of the year, cooks around the country take to their kitchens to bake cookies. Whether you prefer gingerbread men, crispy sugar cookies or crunchy biscotti, chances are you’ll enjoy some fresh-baked Christmas cookies this holiday season. Like many Christmas traditions the origin of this delicious custom lies ages ago.

Ancient cooks prepared sweet baked goods to mark certain occasions. Many of these recipes and ingredients (cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, almonds, dried fruits etc.) were introduced to Europe

in the Middle Ages. Christmas cookies, as we know them today, trace their roots to these medieval European recipes. Dutch and German settlers introduced cookies, cookie-cutters and festive holiday decorations to America in the 17th century.

No treat symbolizes the holidays quite like gingerbread, from edible houses to candy-studded gingerbread men to spiced loaves of cake-like bread, gingerbread comes in many forms. In medieval England, the term gingerbread simply meant “preserved ginger” and wasn’t applied to the desserts we are familiar with

until the 15th century. The term is now broadly used to describe any type of sweet treat that combines ginger with honey, sugar or molasses.

During the Middle Ages it was favored as a spice for its ability to disguise the taste of preserved meats. Henry VIII is said to have used a ginger concoction in hopes of building a resistance to the plague. Even today we use ginger as an effective remedy for nausea and other stomach

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