



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Oregon grape: Our state flower, and much more

Oregon grape (*Mahonia*, Berberidaceae) is an evergreen shrub related to barberry (*Berberis*) and described under that name by some botanists. It's easily grown, and good looking all year. Leaves are divided into leaflets that usually have spiny teeth on edges. Yellow flowers in dense, rounded to spikelike clusters, followed by blue black (sometimes red), berrylike fruit. Generally disease resistant, though sometimes disfigured by small looper caterpillar. All types are drought tolerant and attract birds.

Varieties include:

- *Mahonia aquifolium*. Native from British Columbia to Northern California. State flower of Oregon. Grows to 6 feet tall or more with a tall, erect habit; spreads by underground stems. Leaves are 4 to 10 inches long with 5 to 9 very spiny-toothed oval-long leaflets that are glossy green in some forms, dull green in others.

Young growth is ruddy or bronzy; purplish or bronzy leaves in winter, especially in cold-winter areas or where it is grown in full sun. Flowers in 2- to 3-inch-long clusters March to May. Edible blue black fruit with gray bloom (makes good jelly).

The variety "compacta" averages about 2 feet tall and spreads freely to make broad colonies. Plant in masses as foundation planting, in woodlands, in tubs as a low screen or garden barrier. Resistant to oak root fungus and especially valuable where gardens are heavily infested by it.

- *Leatherleaf mahonia* (*M. bealei*). Grows in all zones. Up to 12 feet tall with a strong pattern of vertical stems, horizontal leaves. Leaves are over a foot long, divided into 7 to 15 broad leaflets. Flowers very early then has powdery blue berries. Plant in rich soil. It is very distinguished against stone, brick, wood, or glass.

- *Desert mahonia* (*M. fremontii*). Grows in zones 8-24. Native to deserts of the Southwest, it has gray-green to yellow-green leaves with 3 to 5 thick, 1-inch-long leaflets; edges have sharp, tough spines. Flowers May-June, dark blue to brown fruit. Plant in full sun or light shade.

- *California holly grape* (*M. pinnata*). Grows in zones 7-9, and native Southern Oregon to Southern California.

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Uncommonly Good



Laurie Skrivan/St. Louis Post-Dispatch/TNS

Japanese souffle pancake

SOUFFLE PANCAKES: DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE

By **Daniel Neman**
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A friend from out of town casually mentioned that he had eaten Japanese souffle pancakes, and then he went on talking as if nothing had changed.

Didn't he notice that the Earth had stopped turning? Didn't he see the hole that was burned through the fabric of our existence? Did he not realize that life as we had lived it up to this point had forever changed?

Three words was all it took for the world to turn upside down: Japanese souffle pancakes. And if you want to be technical, it was really only the "souffle pancakes" part. "Japanese" is just an intriguing modifier.

How had I not heard of Japanese souffle pancakes before? My entire life was a lie,

and I did not even realize it.

Obviously, these were something I had to try. And because they do not serve them at Uncle Bill's Pancake House, I knew I was going to have to make them myself.

Make them I did, but first I had to buy a set of ring molds. These are like large napkin rings somewhere along the lines of 3 inches wide and 2½ inches high. You can get them in many different sizes, but that's a good one for our purposes, or maybe a bit wider.

I bought mine at a restaurant supply store, but you can order them online. Or here's a cheaper alternative: Find a can of tuna fish that is about the right size, cut off the top, eat the tuna, cut off the bottom and clean it thoroughly. Voila — instant ring mold, plus you got to enjoy a nutritious

lunch.

The ring molds were the easy part. The actual making of the souffle pancakes was a bit of a hassle, but only because something kept going wrong. I added essentially room-temperature melted butter into essentially room-temperature milk, and the butter immediately hardened into a raft of butter globules.

So I tried it the second time, and the same thing happened. That's when I reminded myself that, despite what you may see on the internet, Albert Einstein never actually said "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

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Cookies chock full of chocolatey goodness

By **Genevieve Ko**
Los Angeles Times

Last year, pan-slammed chocolate chip cookies were declared Best. Cookies. Ever. by social media tinkerbells. The technique involves slamming a pan of half-baked or just-baked cookies against the counter so that the air bubbles from baking soda and beaten eggs that lift the dough pop, flattening the cookies. Their tops then ripple like waves on a lake when a stone hits the surface. A dramatic look for mouthwatering photos.

But do they taste good? Well, of course. Because they're chocolate chip cookies, which all taste good to some degree. When deflated, pan-slammed centers become dense like a cross between raw cookie dough and chocolate truffles. Extra buttery, sugary and chocolaty, they're designed to be devoured quickly. They're as in-

dulgent as the act of posting pictures of them.

Those ooh-look-at-me cookies are an easy pleasure, a hard sugar high fast and fleeting. But sometimes you need a cookie with substance, something you have to chew that reveals its depth and complexity with each bite. Something that makes you feel you can handle anything.

That's what these cookies do. Chunky with crunchy walnuts, chewy with oats, fudgy with chocolate, these bake into thick, craggy disks with crisp edges and tender centers. They're not technically chocolate chip cookies because they're filled with chopped chocolate, but they deliver the same nostalgic comfort.

Chopping the chocolate by hand gives you the obvious joy of big, melty chunks, but, as important, slivers as thin as splinters that season the

dough throughout. Untoasted whole walnuts have a tannic edge to their nuttiness that balances chocolate's richness while highlighting its bitter-sweet side. And oats — lots of them — add a nuanced natural earthy sweetness to the white-and-brown-sugar base. Each bite gives you everything at once and also something new. You might hit a mother lode of chocolate or a walnut's crackle, but always with the foundational oatmeal chew of a nicely salted, buttery cookie.

It's not that these are the best cookies ever. They're the best cookies right now. Because chocolate chip cookie trends are a reflection of our times in America. We need fortitude heading into 2020 and, so, these hearty, nutty chocolate

chunk cookies.

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