

Egg nog season . . .

'Tis the season for age-old holiday traditions. But oh what fun it is to add the red, white and blue to our celebrations with some All-American traditions and creations.

Yes, Virginia and all, there is a Santa Claus, thanks to some native soil citizens. Although based on St. Nicholas, our western hemisphere gift-giver received a new name, new suit and new shape in the New World. In the old countries, he was tall, slender and arrived in early December. But in 1809, Washington Irving described a stout, jolly man who rode over treetops and filled children's stockings with presents. Then, in the 1823 poem which begins "Twas the night before Christmas," the jolly man wears a suit trimmed with white fur and rides a sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer. And Thomas Nast, an American cartoonist, completed the present-day image with a series of drawings between 1863 and 1886. Since then, our wondering eyes can behold a jolly old man in a red suit who visits on Christmas eve.

Rudolph with his nose so bright joined Santa's reindeer team in 1939. He was created by catalog copywriter, Robert L. May, as an illustrated poem given by a large department store to children who visited Santa Claus.

Many "yuletide carols being sung by choirs" everywhere were born here. In 1946, Mel Torme and Robert Wells gave us the above lyric and more in "The Christmas Song." "Jingle Bells" dashed through in an 1857 Boston Sunday school performance and in 1942 Hollywood gave us Bing Crosby and "White Christmas."

Everybody knows that turkey and other special foods help to make the season bright. And turkey is indeed the native bird that Benjamin Franklin wanted to become the American symbol, but instead became the American main dish.

Inspired by these all-American salutes to the holidays, here are New World translations of the customary Christmas cocktail—egg nog. Although originated on other shores, egg nog has become our most popular holiday drink. Try the following recipe to convert it to a truly American specialty by using an authentic homebred "spirit," Southern Comfort, instead of rum or brandy. It's easy. Just beat together eggs, milk, cream—and what should appear but a rich and frothy treat.

Good old American ingenuity also was at work in transforming the newly naturalized egg nog into two new holiday delicacies. Looking a lot like Christmas bells are the tempting round morsels called Comfort Egg Noggets. And guaranteed to put sugarplums to shame are ice cream puff transformations titled Comfort Egg Nog Puffs.

The two start with the satisfying taste of egg nog and spirits. And for true holiday ease, both can be made ahead of time. Make a new tradition of these American spirited specialties that your family and friends will likely look forward to year after year.

HOME-MADE EGG NOG

- 6 eggs, separated
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 cups whipped whipping cream
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups rum, brandy or Southern Comfort
- nutmeg

Beat egg whites until stiff and shiny. Beat egg yolks until thick and fluffy; gradually beat in sugar. Add to the yolk mixture the whipped cream, cream and milk, stirring well. Add, still stirring, the alcoholic spirits. Fold in beaten egg whites. Chill in refrigerator until ready to serve. Dust with nutmeg. Makes 10 5-oz. servings. (Recipe can be doubled.)

EGG NOGGETS

- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup light cream or half-and-half (or substitute heavy cream or whole milk)
- 1/2 cup rum, brandy, or Southern Comfort
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 cups all purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Fat for deep frying
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup rum, brandy or Southern Comfort

Beat eggs until thick and foamy. Gradually beat in sugar. Stir in cream, Southern Comfort and oil. Sift together all dry ingredients into large bowl. Add egg mixture and stir quickly until well mixed. Chill dough for 10 minutes. On very lightly floured surface roll or pat dough to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut out 1 1/2- or 2-inch rounds; let stand for 10 minutes. Deep fry a few rounds at a time in fat at 360° to 370°F., turning to brown each side. (Takes about 3 minutes.) Drain on paper towels.

Warm corn syrup in small saucepan. Remove from heat and stir in alcoholic spirits. Dunk each nogget in syrup, coating all sides. Place on tray or in shallow casserole. Drizzle any remaining syrup over noggets. Serve warm, if desired, and sprinkle with confectioners' sugar. Or cover with plastic wrap and let stand a few hours or overnight to let flavors mellow. Makes about 24.

Note: Dough may be made ahead of time, wrapped in plastic wrap and kept in the refrigerator for up to (Please turn to page 3 column 2)



Eggnog as a cold drink or in noggets is welcome snack.



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