



Eggnog

By Chef
Cary (Clark)
Gilbert



One of my earliest holiday memories is of the carton of eggnog in the refrigerator (I believe I was around kindergarten age, but I don't have a great perspective on timelines.) Even then I loved eggnog – minus any alcohol, of course. I'm not sure why it's only a holiday drink, since it is refreshing. I suppose, though, it's like candy corn at Halloween, or jelly beans at Easter...it's something special to look forward to.

"Possets" (hot milk, ale or wine or brandy, with sugar and spices) and "syllabubs" (milk, wine and lemon juice or other type of acidic food) were already well-known in England before the early 18th Century, when some think that "milk punch" was introduced by the East India Company.

I found a website offering a scanned copy of a letter written by Benjamin Franklin dated October 11, 1763, offering a copy of his recipe for "Milk Punche" to a friend. The previous November, Franklin had returned from spending five years in England, and it's probable he had tasted "milk punche" there for the first time.

As is often true in England of that time, especially in London, the aristocrats were the only ones able to afford such ingredients as fresh eggs and milk. The poor certainly wouldn't waste what little food they could obtain on

making unnecessary dairy beverages.

Americans replaced the wine with rum (brandy and wine were heavily taxed, but rum was easily obtained through trade with the Caribbean) and called it "grog". Since most people at that time had to farm anyway, the colonists would have had an abundance of fresh dairy ingredients available.

I've always thought that someone, somewhere, had to find a use for all the eggs and milk kept for making ice creams in the summer months. Surely, during the colder months, frugal maids, housekeepers or wives wouldn't tolerate any waste. And who wouldn't go for a rich, spicy alcoholic drink?

One theory for the name "eggnog" comes from "egg and grog" becoming slurred to "egg 'n' grog", and so on. However others feel it may have come from the "noggin", a name for a small wooden carved mug commonly holding drinks to be served at the table.

In the 1820's, Pierce Egan wrote "Life of London: or Days and Nights of Jerry Hawthorne and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom". (Author's note – Wow! What a title!) It's said that to publicize his work, Mr. Egan created a variation of eggnog by adding brandy to the basic recipe. You might recognize this as a "Tom and Jerry". (I had assumed the cute little cartoon mouse and cat were the inspiration...)

Other countries outside of England and the United States have similar beverages based on an egg and milk mixture. Gogl-Mogl, a

Jewish dessert made after the biblical 'milk and honey', is a mixture of egg yolks, sugar, chocolate and vodka, and was popular in the 17th century as a remedy for a sore throat. There is a similar beverage served in Vietnam, using sweetened condensed milk, egg yolk and club soda. Advocaat, from Denmark and Belgium, is made with eggs, sugar, cream and brandy, and is combined with black coffee and whiskey and served as Bombardino, in Italian ski areas. Coquito, made with coconut cream and coconut milk, is a Christmas tradition in Puerto Rico, and Eierpunsch (egg punch) is popular in Germany and Austria, and usually made with white wine.

These similar recipes prove that it's worth remembering that we're all intermingled in faith, hope, dreams and love. I wish you a joyous holiday season, whatever your heritage!

Using Raw Eggs: Current estimates show that there is a 1 in 10,000 chance that the eggs in your nog could contain harmful bacteria. To avoid the possibility of food poisoning, the Center for Science in the Public Interest recommends that you gently heat the eggs to 160°F before using.

Another way to tell if the eggs are ready is if they coat a metal spoon. So when you whip up a batch of eggnog, play it safe and heat your eggs before using.

Eggnog found in grocery stores is usually pasteurized, which means that the harmful bacteria have been eliminated through a heating process. It generally is also without alcohol, so if you buy from

the dairy section, you will need to add your own "finishing touches."

Eggnog

Serves 8

"Traditional" American eggnog.

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 eggs, separated
- 6 cups milk
- 2 cups heavy or thickened cream
- 2 cups bourbon
- 1½ cups sugar
- ¾ cup brandy
- 2 tsp ground nutmeg

DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, with a mixer, beat the egg yolks together with the sugar for approximately 10 minutes (The mixture should be firm, and the color of butter). Very slowly, add the bourbon and brandy – just a little at a time. After the alcohol has been added, allow the mixture to cool in the refrigerator. Depending on how long before your party you're making the eggnog, it can set in the fridge for up to 6 hours.

30 minutes before your guests arrive, stir the milk into the chilled yolk mixture. Stir in 1½ teaspoons ground nutmeg.

In a separate bowl, beat the cream with a mixer on high speed until the cream forms stiff peaks.

In yet another bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.

Gently fold the egg white mixture into the egg yolk mixture. Gently fold the cream into the egg mixture.

After ladling into cups, garnish with the remainder of the ground nutmeg.

"Safe" Eggnog

No raw eggs are used!

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 cups milk
- 3 oz package of French Vanilla instant pudding
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg

DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, mix the pudding with 1 cup milk. When pudding is thickened, add the remaining ingredients and mix very well. Chill, and serve.

"Tom and Jerry"

This is a very easy version.

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 eggs, separated
- 3 Tbsp powdered sugar
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp cloves
- Brandy
- Dark Rum
- Hot milk
- Grated nutmeg (garnish)

DIRECTIONS:

Beat egg whites to a stiff froth.

In a separate bowl, beat egg yolks until light in color. Gradually add the powdered sugar and spices. Fold yolk mixture into whites.

Divide the egg mixture between four 8-oz. mugs. Add ½ shot brandy and 1 shot rum to each mug; fill with hot milk. Stir well, and top with nutmeg.



Wine



Melissa's Wine Picks



By Melissa Verhoff

December is here once again ...

'Tis the season to: 1) spend too much, 2) eat too much, and 3) enjoy wine!

But joking aside, I love the holidays, even though they can be excessive.

Sparkling wines are the most popular at this time of year, so let's look at some of

these celebratory wines, and see how we can save a couple bucks.

I always like to start with the most expensive, and work my way to the least expensive. That way, by the end of the article, the best buys are fresh in your mind.

Dom Perignon, from France, is pretty much the mother of expensive champagnes, with a price tag of \$170. I don't know about you, but with this recession, I wouldn't dream of spending that kind of dough! But, if you have money to burn, be my guest!

Two very nice champagnes that still are not exactly cheap, but comparable – and do cost considerably less – are **Veuve Cliquot** (my favorite) and **Moët Imperial**. Both of these are from France, and on sale at Bassett's (Port Clinton location) for \$50. These are both worth the price tag to me, but I still won't be spending that amount on one bottle this year.

A much more reasonably priced, yet still delicious, sparkling wine comes from California ... **Chandon**. This one is on sale right now for \$18. It is ideal for

those of you who really enjoy dry sparkling wines or champagnes, but don't consider yourself a connoisseur.

However, being that we live in Ohio, home of Concords, Niagras, and sweet wines, I can't very well ignore the sweet side of the spectrum, can I?

I grew up toasting the New Year with **Martini & Rossi Asti Spumante**. This sparkling wine is made from the Moscato grape, which is very sweet. If this is your preferred style of sparkling wine, you don't have to pay

the \$14 price tag. **Ballatore**, from California, is equally delicious, but half the cost, at only \$7 a bottle.

I hope this helps ease the tension on your wallets, while leaving you satisfied with your wine selection, and ready to celebrate. I want to wish you all a happy holiday, and cheers to the New Year. See you in 2010!

Melissa Verhoff is the Wine Steward for Bassett's Market, which has locations in Bellevue and Port Clinton, Ohio. Call her at (419) 734-6506.



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