

PA Milk Marketing Board
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I Think I Want Some Eggnog!

Those of you who are regular readers know I love ice cream and milkshakes, but I must tell you that eggnog is also one of my favorite things. Warm, cold, spiked, doesn't matter. I like the taste and the texture. And eggnog has a rich (no pun intended) and storied history as well.

Eggnog has its origins during British medieval times and culinary historians, even though they debate the exact time of invention, seem to agree that it started out as a beverage known as "posset." Posset was hot and milky, and drunk by monks in the 13th century with eggs and fruit. Since milk and eggs were found in homes of the wealthy, posset was used at gatherings to toast health and prosperity.

No one is sure where the name eggnog came from. Some think it derives from "nog," an English word that means strong beer. Others think it may have come from the word "noggin," which was a small cup used in the 1500s. At any rate, wherever the origin of the name, this creamy beverage's moniker was first seen in print in the US in the late 1700s when a Maryland friend of George Washington used it in a poem.

Starting out as a non-alcoholic beverage, it was served hot for many years into the early 1900s. American colonists were adding rum to their eggnog in the 1700s because it was not taxed as heavily as brandy and wine. The readily available supply of milk, eggs and rum in the colonies made eggnog something enjoyed by people of all classes.

The 1800s saw the advent of the holiday tradition of drinking eggnog, and the heretofore unknown (by me) Eggnog Riot of 1826. Yes, that was a real event.

The riot took place on December 24 and 25 at the US Military Academy at West Point, NY. The Superintendent had banned alcohol from the academy grounds earlier in the year because of past experiences with cadets, whiskey, and eggnog. Cadets ignored the rule and brought a lot of whiskey onto campus, mixed up eggnog and went "out of control," according to Smithsonian Magazine. They vandalized buildings, broke dishes and glassware, and assaulted police officers.

While at least 90 students participated, the worst offenders—19—were court-martialed, 11 of whom were expelled from school. Interesting fact here: One of the partiers who did not face a court-martial was Jefferson Davis, future president of the Confederacy.

Eggnog became somewhat of a "forbidden fruit" during Prohibition. Many news articles lamented that eggnog was the "most popular tree in the national nursery" and you can believe that it was served at private parties around the holidays. One of our presidents, Dwight Eisenhower, liked his eggnog on occasion, too, developing his own recipe which he generously shared with friends and colleagues.

It was sometime in the 1940s when non-alcoholic eggnog began to be commercially produced. By 1951, several large companies were producing it in large quantities, and it became a household staple during the holidays for family gatherings that included children.

Other countries have their own versions. For example, in Peru, eggnog is made with a special Peruvian brandy known as pisco. Jewish communities in Poland add optional ingredients such as marshmallows, raisins, cocoa, and nuts to their *kogel mogel*. And German *eierlikor* contains both vodka and brandy.

Many of our PA dairy processors produce their own version of eggnog for sale during the holiday period. In fact, I recently saw some in a grocery store. I would almost guarantee that our local, home grown products taste better than the national brands!

And if you are interested in making your own, here is George Washington's recipe:

One quart cream, one quart milk, one dozen tablespoons sugar, one pint brandy, 1/2 pint rye whiskey, 1/2 pint Jamaica rum, 1/4 pint sherry—mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture. Let set in cool place for several days. Taste frequently.

Note that he did not record the number of eggs to use, but I did read that local cooks in his area had recorded that a dozen would be a good number.

Enjoy!

PMMB is always available to respond to questions and concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarge@pa.gov.