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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

November 2023

CHOCOLATE AND COFFEE – WONDERFUL DISCOVERIES:

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It has always been believed that in about 450 BC the Olmec of ancient Mesoamerica were the first to turn the indigenous cacao plant into a bitter beverage which was called *xocolātl* (*xococ*, meaning bitter and *atl* meaning water and drink) but recent evidence suggests that the Mesoamericans acquaintance with a fermented, and therefore alcoholic, beverage made from the pods of the cacao plant may date from as early as 1400 BC. Brought back to Europe by the Spanish and Portuguese explorers, reception of the bitter beverage was far from enthusiastic. First of all, it wasn't gold and expectations by their royal financiers was for wealth. Secondly, it didn't taste good. Once someone added sugar, chocolate became much more than a curiosity. In my December 2021 column I discussed at length the journey of cacao from a bitter alcoholic liquid to a luscious, sweet chocolate liqueur, an irony not to be ignored. [*see recipe archives – December 2021*]

Chocolate and coffee both had to cross the Atlantic Ocean, albeit in opposite directions, in order to achieve their present form and success. Another irony in this connection is that the Western Hemisphere was the origin of a beverage made from cacao but it took the addition of sugar and refinement by Europeans to turn it into the colossally successful pleasure it is today. Today cacao is grown commercially in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon. These four African nations are among the five major producers of cocoa worldwide owing much of their GDP to that production. Brazil is now the major producer of coffee while the discovery that coffee beans could produce a stimulating beverage when soaked in water can be traced to Africa.

Coffee's global appeal has a global story. The fact that coffee beans could be used to make a stimulating beverage is believed to have been first observed by Ethiopians in the ninth century, about 850 AD. As early as 1100 AD coffee beans were being cultivated on the Arabian Peninsula. Grinding beans was a step in the enjoyment of coffee which was not taken until about 1400 AD releasing, as it did, the fragrance and oils. Coffee has been used as a stimulant in the Middle East and Africa but it was not until somewhere around 1475 AD that the first coffeehouse was established in Constantinople. The concept spread quickly with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Europe. Coffee beans were first introduced into Europe in the late 1500s via the active trade route between the Venetians and the Muslims of North Africa. Once the stimulating beverage was deemed acceptable by Pope Clement VIII in 1600 AD, the coffee bean and the beverage, without

which most in the Western world cannot begin the day, began a remarkable march across the planet arriving with Captain John Smith in the New World in 1607 AD.

Coffeeshouses began to appear in Italy in 1645 AD. After the Battle of Vienna, supplies of coffee left behind by the retreating Turks were discovered. This sparked the opening of the first coffeeshouse in Austria in 1683 AD and Austrians adopted coffee with enthusiasm as they did so many other foods introduced to them by the Turks. The Austrians are also credited with the habit of adding milk or cream and sugar. Sweetening the bitter liquid contributed greatly to coffee's acceptance just had been the case with chocolate.

In 1652, some thirty years earlier, the first coffeeshouse was opened in London by an Armenian refugee. By 1675 AD it is said that there were more 3,000 coffeeshouses in England. Coffeeshouses and coffee shops continued to be a draw for socializing right through the 1960s where the deep thoughts of philosophers, would-be philosophers, poets, graduate students, and everyday hippies adopted the Viennese habit but invited the ladies who were, for the most part, banned from the coffeeshouses of the 1600s. If coffee is your morning brew, if coffee ice cream brings happiness to your day, then you, no doubt, appreciate this discovery and continue to celebrate it.

I've talked here at length about brewed coffee but instant coffee products are also part of the enormous popularity of the beverage. Britain was the first to manufacture the powdered coffee product in 1771. The British adopted powdered instant coffee early and completely, a fact which puzzles me since there was an early exposure to the brewed beverage in coffeeshouses in Britain. The first instant coffee in the United States didn't come along until 1851 but never took hold to the extent it did in England. The advent of the granular freeze-dried coffee process produced a greatly improved instant coffee taste but still not flavorful enough for an American cup of coffee. However, I have found several rich, dark brands of



freeze-dried coffee that give me the flavor and the convenience I want for custards and ice creams. Admittedly, however, none of the freeze-dried products I have used for cooking has had a flavor release that would satisfy the coffee drinker in our family.

Alone or together, chocolate and coffee have and will influence our daily need to refuel our personal engines in very personal ways. I think you will agree that these were indeed wonderful discoveries. Thank you, whoever you were!!

COFFEE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

Kaffe Buttercreme

TPT - 20 minutes

Coffee has influenced the food and social life of Austria since the first coffeehouse opened in 1683 AD. Austrians assumed the custom of taking coffee with pastry mid-morning and again with pastry mid-afternoon, a custom still observed. Coffee seemed to have been incorporated into the Austrian cuisine with joyful abandon as the indices of old Austrian cookbooks demonstrate.

Because buttercream frosting is so easy to make and the result is so luscious, I can never understand why anyone would buy a can of frosting full of artificial ingredients and stabilizers. This is one of my oldest buttercream icing variations and it is just perfect for any chocolate cake or cookie.

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter—softened to room temperature

1 cup confectioners' sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

3 1/2 teaspoons freeze-dried instant coffee granules

2 teaspoons boiling water

3-4 tablespoons skimmed milk

About 2 cups confectioners' sugar

Using an electric mixer, or food processor fitted with steel knife, or by hand, cream butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat the 1 cupful confectioners' sugar into the creamed butter. Continue beating until smooth. Add vanilla extract. Mix well.

In a small dish, dissolve coffee granules in the *boiling* water. Add to ingredients in mixer bowl *drop by drop, while continuing to beat*. Continue beating until smooth.

Beat in the remaining 2 cupfuls confectioners' sugar gradually alternating with milk, adding more of each until a smooth, spreadable consistency is achieved.

Use to frost cakes or cookies.*

Yields enough to frost two 9-inch cake layers or about 24-30 cupcakes

Notes: *The consistency of this may readily be altered to produce a buttercream filling for pastries, tortes, and cakes or a substitute for fondant in making *petits fours*.

Prepared frosting freezes well.

This recipe may be doubled, when required. It should, however, be noted that if this is being prepared by hand, a double batch is unwieldy.



1/16 SERVING (i. e., that which would be used on a two-layer slice of cake exclusive of the cake) –

PROTEIN = 0.1 g.; FAT = 5.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.9 g.;
CALORIES = 152; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

1/24 SERVING (i. e., that which would be used on a cupcake or cookie exclusive of the base) –

PROTEIN = 0.07 g.; FAT = 3.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 1.9 g.;
CALORIES = 101; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

1/32 SERVING (i. e., that which would be used as the icing on top of a single slice of a one-layer torte exclusive of the cake) –

PROTEIN = 0.05 g.; FAT = 2.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 1.5 g.;
CALORIES = 76; CALORIES FROM FAT = 34%

INDIVIDUAL SOUTH AFRICAN COFFEE REFRIGERATOR TARTS WITH MARIA BISCUITS

TPT - 1 hour and 30 minutes;
1 hour = setting period

I remember the confusion that I experienced the first time I found a recipe that listed Maria biscuits as an ingredient. I searched and discovered that I had packages of this cookie in my own pantry which we had always referred to as “Spanish digestives,” since they reminded us of the digestives and tea biscuits we had eaten in Great Britain. My brain had never recorded the name Maria on the package. Maria (or Marie) biscuits have a long history, dating to 1874 AD when they were first baked by the English baker Peek Freans in London to honor the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh to Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrova of Russia. They are similar to English tea biscuits or digestives and are a delicious alternative to arrowroot cookies for a child’s “first cookie.” This unusual, unbaked egg dessert is filled with biscuit pieces instead of being poured into a baked tart crust. The biscuit pieces absorb the liquid and give the dessert substance.



1 1/4 teaspoons freeze-dried coffee powder
2 teaspoons hot water

2 tablespoons butter—softened to room temperature

1/4 cup confectioners’ sugar

2 tablespoons fat-free pasteurized eggs*
3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

9 Marie (Maria) biscuits or English digestives
—broken into small pieces but not crushed**

3 tablespoons heavy whipping cream

In a small dish, combine the instant coffee powder and *hot* water. Stir well to dissolve the coffee. Set aside until required.

Using the electric mixer fitted with mixing paddle, cream softened butter until light and fluffy. *Scrape down the sides of the mixing bowl.*

Gradually add confectioners’ sugar and beat until again light and fluffy. *Scrape down the sides of the mixing bowl as necessary.*

While mixer is running at *MEDIUM* speed, *tablespoonful by tablespoonful*, beat the pasteurized eggs and the vanilla extract into the butter–sugar mixture. *Again, scrape down the sides of the mixing bowl as necessary.*

Then, again while mixer is running, add the dissolved coffee and beat well. *Continue to scrape down the sides of the bowl as you go along.*

Add the cookie pieces and *hand fold* to integrate quite thoroughly. Using a rubber spatula, divide the dessert mixture between **two 5 x 1-inch ceramic crème brulee ceramic ramekins** spreading the mixture to the edges of the pan. Using a spreader knife, smooth the top of tart mixture. Refrigerate.



Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *clean, chilled* bowl until stiff peaks form.

Remove the ramekins from the refrigerator. Divide the whipped cream between the ramekins and spread the whipped cream evenly over the chilled coffee mixture. Return to the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.

Place ramekins on two serving plates.

Serve chilled.

Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: *Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

**Maria biscuits are available in the United States under the Goya label. British digestives are available under the McVitie's label. McVitie's markets a coffee-flavored digestive which, admittedly, I prefer for this recipe.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.9 g.; FAT = 21.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 30.0 g.;
CALORIES = 328; CALORIES FROM FAT = 60%

IRISH CREAM

TPT - 4 minutes

If you have had Irish cream, it was probably well-infused with Irish whiskey. This version, sans alcohol, can be a tiny dessert treat with cookies or a slice of panettone during the holidays. I make the Irish cream, bottle it in a decanter or in a decorative condiment bottle, and refrigerate it. It is ready should a neighbor drop by.

1/4 cup skimmed milk
2 teaspoons freeze-dried coffee granules--crushed

3/4 cup fat-free sweetened condensed milk
1 cup light cream or half and half
1/4 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons chocolate syrup
1 tablespoon almond syrup

In the container of the electric blender, combine skimmed milk and coffee granules. Blend until coffee granules are completely dissolved.

Add sweetened condensed milk, cream, chocolate syrup, and almond syrup. Blend until thoroughly combined. Pour into a pitcher, decanter, or decorative condiment bottle. Seal tightly and refrigerate for up to a week.

Pour into liqueur glasses, small glasses, or tiny *demitasse* cups to serve.

Yields about 2 1/3 cupfuls



1/13 SERVING (i. e., 3 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 2.0 g.; FAT = 3.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 15.3 g.;
CALORIES = 101; CALORIES FROM FAT = 28%

MARVELOUS MOCHA

TPT - 2 minutes

Back in the 1960s I evolved this for my dad. I can remember sitting on the fireplace hearth after dinner enjoying this with Mom and Dad. Unlike Montezuma who stored his cacao in golden jugs and drank his chocolate in very large quantities from golden goblets, we drank from mugs and served it as dessert with fresh fruit, slices of cake, and a basket of nuts. It was a beautiful evening; a beautiful memory.

3/4 cup half and half

2 tablespoons HOT COCOA MIX

[see recipe which follows]

or commercially-available sweetened cocoa mix, containing non-fat dry milk

1 1/2 cups freshly brewed hot coffee

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat half and half to just below the boiling point. Using a wire whisk, stir cocoa mix into hot cream. Whisk until thoroughly integrated. Pour into a warmed chocolate pot or coffee pot.

Add *hot* coffee. Using a long handled spoon, stir to combine.

Serve in small *demitasse* cups or tea cups, as preferred.

Yields four 1/2-cup servings



Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.6 g.; FAT = 4.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 3.3 g.;
CALORIES = 59; CALORIES FROM FAT = 66%



HOT COCOA MIX

TPT - 2 minutes

In 1894 Hershey Food Corporation of Hershey, Pennsylvania, introduced hot cocoa mix—a mixture of unsweetened cocoa powder and sugar to be stirred into hot milk. Over 100 years later, the Hershey product is still a must on staple shelves in the winter all over the world, not just in Pennsylvania. The addition of dry milk powder in this version eliminates the need for fresh milk when hiking or camping, or when you are “snowed in.”

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

1 1/4 cups non-fat dry milk powder

1 teaspoon corn starch

Vanilla bean

In a mixing bowl, combine cocoa powder, sugar, dry milk powder, and corn starch. Stir to combine thoroughly. Pour into a clean, dry glass jar; a canning jar is perfect.

Tuck the vanilla bean* down into the mixture. Seal tightly and store until required.

Two tablespoonfuls of mixture makes a most satisfactory cup of hot cocoa when mixed with hot milk or water. A mixture of half milk and half water might be preferred.

Yields 34 tablespoonfuls
adequate for 17 servings

Notes: *A vanilla bean can be used over and over. Just tuck it into the next batch.

This mix can be halved, doubled or tripled, for convenience.

1/17 SERVING (i. e., 2 tablespoonfuls) –
PROTEIN = 2.6 g.; FAT = 0.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 12.4 g.;
CALORIES = 65; CALORIES FROM FAT = 8%

MASCARPONE DESSERT DIP

TPT - 8 minutes

Sometimes you are just looking for a different dessert, maybe a fun dessert, maybe a summer or autumn picnic. My favorite fruit choices to accompany this smooth chocolate dip are canned lychees, mango slices, pluot wedges, Fuya persimmon wedges, bananas, pears, Honeycrisp apples, and canned mandarin orange sections. Children will try any new fruit if this dip is on the table.



1/4 teaspoon freeze-dried coffee granules

4 ounces mascarpone cheese

2 tablespoons sugar

3 tablespoons heavy whipping cream

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon unsweetened dark cocoa powder

1/8 teaspoon unsweetened dark cocoa, to garnish

Using a **mortar and pestle** grind freeze-dried coffee granules to a fine powder.

In the bowl of the electric mixer fitted with the mixing paddle, combine *mascarpone* cheese, sugar, *heavy* cream, vanilla extract, 1/2 teaspoonful cocoa powder, and powdered coffee granules. Beat until you have a smooth mixture – about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as necessary. Using a rubber spatula, turn into a bowl suitable for dipping. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Dust with the remaining 1/8 teaspoonful cocoa powder. Serve with an assortment of fruits, of choice, and small cookies.

Yields about 3/4 cupful

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

Alternately, you can gussy up this presentation a bit for the dining room by serving the dip in tiny ramekins or Chinese condiment dishes surrounded by a fruit assortment. It makes a very nice individual dessert option.

1/12 SERVING (per tablespoonful exclusive of fruit) –
PROTEIN = 5.1 g.; FAT = 7.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.9 g.
CALORIES = 96; CALORIES FROM FAT = 68%

STOVE-TOP COFFEE CREAM CUSTARD

TPT - 1 hour and 21 minutes;
1 hour = chilling period

*Sometimes a simple custard in a ramekin is the perfect, sophisticated end to a meal.
Soft, smooth, rich . . . the perfect sauce for a slice of chocolate cake too.*

1/2 cup light cream or half and half
**1/2 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs—the equivalent
of 2 eggs**
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon freeze-dried coffee granules*

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

In a saucepan set over *LOW* heat or a double boiler over simmering water, combine cream, pasteurized eggs, sugar, and coffee granules. Cook, stirring constantly with a wire whisk, until thickened. Remove from heat.

Add vanilla extract. Stir well. Divide between **two 6-ounce custard cups or ramekins**. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.

Serve chilled.

Yields 2 individual servings

Notes: *We add 1 teaspoonful of the instant coffee. You may find more or less more to your taste.



This recipe is easily doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.7 g.; FAT = 5.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 33.6 g.;
CALORIES = 218; CALORIES FROM FAT = 23%

VIETNAMESE COCOA RICE DESSERT

TPT - 30 minutes

Back in the 1970s many Vietnamese settled on Long Island after the “Fall of Saigon.” A charming, energetic, self-described “boat boy” was part of our daughter’s crowd in high school. Another family settled in Lake Grove, Long Island, and opened a Vietnamese bakery. We stopped there often for coffee and a taste of their incredible, French-influenced creations. They could do things with chocolate that most Americans could not even imagine; their breads were fabulous. This rice dessert also reflects the influence that French colonization had on the cuisine and could almost be classified as a confection. If you are thinking that you might want to make this a vegan recipe by using all coconut milk, please note that the combination of cow’s milk and coconut milk gives this rice dessert a smooth, pleasant texture and a different taste than one finds in other coconut milk puddings from Southeast Asia.

**1/2 cup glutinous rice or Japanese short-
grained rice***
1/3 cup water

1/2 cup two-percent milk
1/2 cup sulfite-free light coconut milk

1/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons unsweetened dark cocoa powder

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Pinch or two freeze-dried coffee—crushed to a powder

Pinch or two *unsweetened dark cocoa powder*

Pinch or two coconut sugar**

In a non-stick-coated saucepan set over *LOW* heat, combine rice and water. Allow to come to the simmer. Cook for 5 minutes.

Add cow's milk and coconut milk. Cook, stirring frequently, for about 7 minutes.

In a small dish, combine sugar and cocoa powder. Stir well. Gradually, while stirring, add to cooking rice. Simmer, uncovered, until mixture thickens –about 15 minutes. Remove from heat.

Stir in vanilla extract. Turn into heated bowl.

In a small dish, combine freeze-dried coffee, just a pinch or two of unsweetened cocoa powder, and coconut sugar. Sprinkle over cocoa rice.

Serve warm with cream.



Yields 4 servings



Notes: *Glutinous rice is high in amylopectin, a starch that makes the grains stick together. It is popular in Asian cuisines, especially for desserts and is wonderful for making rice balls. You may find it marketed simply as sticky rice or sweet rice.

**Coconut sugar is available online and in natural food stores.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of cream) –
PROTEIN = 3.3 g.; FAT = 2.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 44.3 g.;
CALORIES =195; CALORIES FROM FAT = 9%

WHITE CHOCOLATE CHIP SKILLET COOKIE

TPT - 1 hour and 24 minutes;
25 minutes = in-pan cooling period

What is white chocolate? After World War I the Swiss firm Nestle tried to profitably use up the excess powdered milk that remained in their warehouses. Finally, in 1936, they hit upon the formula for a white confection which they called white chocolate. Some of the products labeled “white chocolate” today are no more related to chocolate than is a fondant mint, which incidentally is made from a recipe that differs little. Legitimate white chocolate contains cocoa butter, the only cacao ingredient it contains, its only connection to true chocolate. As a result, it lacks antioxidants and only traces of thiamine, riboflavin, and phenylethylamine. In 2004, regulations went into effect in the United States which placed restrictions on manufacturers that labeled their product “white chocolate.” In order to be labeled white chocolate, the product must contain 20% cocoa butter, 14% total milk solids, 3.5% milk fat, and no more than 55% sugar or other sweeteners.



I was amazed when I saw giant cookies available in the bakery for birthdays. Decorated, they could really make a child happy. I was still unconvinced that it could replace a birthday cake but they could certainly celebrate a good report card or the completion of long writing project. I played around with the idea using French two-piece tart pans and cake pans but the idea of baking the cookie in a skillet really seemed like a novel idea. A big cast iron skillet is perfect for a big “party-sized cake” but we do not have a ten-inch cast iron skillet; downsizing presented a dilemma. Most of the stone-lined or ceramic-coated non-stick skillets available now are oven-proof and will work well for this recipe. Once you have the pan you will have to venture out for a package of instant pudding mix and you will, no doubt, muse as to whether I have recently lost my mind at this suggestion . . .

This can also be made with traditional chocolate morsels and, if you really want a different cookie, try chocolate pudding and chocolate morsels.

- 3/4 cup unbleached white flour**
- 3 tablespoons *finely ground* almond flour**
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda**

- 1/2 cup butter—*softened to room temperature***

- 5 tablespoons *light* brown sugar**
- 1 tablespoon granulated white sugar**

- 3 1/2 tablespoons *instant* white chocolate pudding mix**
- 1/4 cup *fat-free* pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)**
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

- 1 cup *white* chocolate chips**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a **10-inch non-stick-coated, oven-proof skillet** by coating further with non-stick lecithin spray coating for baking.

In a small mixing bowl, combine white flour, almond flour, and baking soda. Stir and set aside briefly.

Using the electric mixer fitted with paddle, cream butter until light and fluffy.

Add brown and white sugar and continue beating until again light and fluffy.

Add instant pudding mix, pasteurized eggs and vanilla extract. Beat until well-combined.

Add flour–baking soda mixture. Beat until integrated. *Remove from mixer.*

Add white chocolate chips and stir into the batter. Turn into prepared skillet.* Using a table knife or a metal frosting knife, spread the batter to the edge of the skillet. Bake in preheated 350-degree F. for 40 minutes. Cookie will be springy when pressed and golden brown around the edge. Remove from oven. Allow to cool in the pan for 25 minutes.

Cut into wedges to serve. Serve with a scoop of ice cream, if desired.

Yields 10 wedges

Note: *Be sure your pan and its handle are oven-proof. Wrap your pan handle with aluminum foil if necessary.

1/10 SERVING – PROTEIN = 2.7 g.; FAT = 14.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 23.5 g.;
CALORIES = 233; CALORIES FROM FAT = 56%



*I've always taken advantage of do-ahead preparation when I can.
Dishes that can save time are the treasures of the culinary world to all of us.
Whenever a recipe can be pre-prepped or frozen,
I have tried to alert my readers to the possibilities.
Next month, I'll dig out more of these gems to help with your holiday schedule.
Do drop by, we'll get through it together,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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