

# Whatever happened to jello molds?



**Flotsam and Jetsam**

By Donna Drago

When I was younger, much younger, every cook seemed to have a few favorite recipes that involved gelatin. Usually, these recipes were trotted out when there were dinner guests, or when it was a holiday. Around our house, jello was always on the table during special occasions.

One of my grandmothers always made a "jello salad" that included shredded carrots and crushed pineapple suspended in orange gelatin. There was a topping that went with this dish; it was a sauce made of mayonnaise and juice from the jar of maraschino cherries, which was something that grandmothers always seemed to have on hand. Everybody seemed to love this lively, fluorescent-colored salad. This grandmother also loved "coffee jello." This was a solid form of iced coffee that was surprisingly good. It can be made by mixing plain gelatin with black coffee and some sugar. Once set, it is served in a bowl, with a drizzle of half and half.

My other grandmother had a million jello recipes. At every family meal, there was always a molded jello salad that included many colorful layers. Some of the layers included fruit and nuts; some were mixed with sour cream. For Thanksgiving, the mold usually included cranberries. This grandmother always used a ring-shaped mold for her salads and there were always a few moments of suspense when, just before dinner, she would go through several steps to get the jello to slide out of the mold. First, she would dip the whole mold into warm water, then she would loosen around the edges with a knife. Then, she would invert the mold onto a plate and wait for a sucking sound, followed by a gentle plop. If this

didn't happen, she'd have to start the process over again. Sometimes the mold refused to come out in one piece and we'd eat the broken, shivering mess anyway.

Jello used to be on the menu in restaurants. In many family establishments, especially those with a lighted, revolving pie case, there was always a tray of red jello. It was almost always cut in perfect cubes and served in a footed glass dish with whipped cream on top. In a Chinese restaurant I used to frequent as a kid, the red jello sat in the case forever—the jello was always pulled away from the edges of the dish and probably had the texture of thousand-year-old eggs.

Like everybody else, my mother got in on the jello kick for a while. This would have been in the 1970s. A few times she made what was called a "jello poke cake." This delicacy involved baking a one-layer yellow cake from a boxed mix. Once the cake was cooled, she punched holes all over the top of the cake and poured jello, still in its liquid state, over the top. This would set in the refrigerator and when sliced, would create colorful streaks of jello all through the cake. During the Cool Whip years, she made a recipe that involved whipping jello and Cool Whip together to form a sort of low-end chiffon, which went into a graham cracker pie shell.

I haven't eaten jello in years. That's probably because I don't

have grandmothers anymore and I don't have the patience to make something that has to "set." However, I have a lot of old cookbooks and have counted dozens, if not a hundred, ways to use Jello in recipes.

For anyone inspired to create with jello, the website [www.jellorecipes.net](http://www.jellorecipes.net) has many fun ideas.

Here are some actual recipes I'd recommend not using:

Horseradish Mold, from the 1947 Woonsocket Hebrew Ladies' Aid and Sisterhood Cookbook, might be one of the worst culinary ideas I have ever encountered. It involves one can each of crushed pineapple and beets, lemon gelatin and an entire six-ounce bottle of horseradish. This is molded and served with fish or fowl. Yikes!

The Holiday Salad, from the 1941 New American Cookbook, is even worse. This is a red and green layered Christmas mold with the first layer containing lemon gelatin and tomato soup and the second layer containing lime gelatin, beef broth and peppermint extract. If anyone ever offers to make this for your holiday gathering—run!

Here's one that would be perfect for an upcoming family July 4 get-together: Barbecue Bean Mold. This is a suspension of canned baked beans, celery and onions in a gelatin that is flavored with tomato juice, brown sugar and mustard. This recipe comes from the 1978 All-Time Favorite Salad Recipes book. I'd be happy to share the full text of these recipes with anyone who has either lost their sense of taste, or has to bring a dish to the home of a relative they just don't like. Bon appétit!

## Wellness screenings at Baker's Pharmacy

Visiting Nurse Services of Newport and Bristol Counties will hold wellness screenings at Baker's Pharmacy on the first Tuesday of every month, from 10 to 11 a.m.

The next screening will be Tuesday, July 7.

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