

Watch It Wiggle. See It Jiggle.

by Lynne Belluscio

The call came in last Friday morning. The Marketing Department for Kraft Foods had decided that they would do a media blitz about the 20th Anniversary of Jell-O Jigglers. "Is it possible to hand out free Jigglers at the Festival?" "I guess so." "Do you have people who can make them?" "I guess so. But you have to realize that everyone in LeRoy is tied up with the Oatka Festival." "Well, we have some media interested in coming to LeRoy to pick up on the Jiggler Anniversary." "Oh really? Usually they only come to LeRoy when there's a car accident or a fire. We haven't been able to get anyone interested in coming out for anything recently. In fact I've given up. LeRoy might as well be in Ohio. So maybe, it would be good for the Festival to get a little coverage."

I hung up and then started thinking. "How in the world am I going to get thousands of Jigglers made in twelve hours." Not only that, but we didn't have enough Jell-O on hand to make that many Jigglers and everyone's refrigerators were already crammed full of food for the weekend. The cheapest price for Jell-O is at Walmart - (Oh if they had built the Walmart on West Main!) So I took the truck over to Batavia and filled the shopping cart with Jell-O - 24 packages each of peach, cranberry, berry blue, island pineapple, apricot, raspberry and watermelon. (The watermelon turned out to be a real hit!)

I also decided that I needed to get aluminum pans with plastic covers and cans of Pam spray. So when I got back to Trigon Park to meet the Festival committee and the volunteers from the Historical Society, everyone was encouraged to take some Jell-O, some pans and a can of Pam. I'm not really sure who made all the Jigglers. I know I ran into Mary Ann Lee at Tops and she took some with her and I saw Teresa McMullen at the Little League Field and she took some. Shelly Stein, Sue Doemling, Ellen Harris, Lee DeFazio - I'm sure I forgot someone. But thank you to all of you!!! Saturday morning

there were nearly forty pans of Jigglers sitting in the refrigerated truck.

In this situation, we needed a nice banner - which wasn't provided by Kraft, so I called David Grayson Friday afternoon at the *Pennysaver* - - actually I think he was home working in the yard when I got him on the phone. "David - I need a big favor. Can you generate an 8 foot banner about the 20th Anniversary of Jigglers? Can it be ready by 10 am Saturday morning?" "No problem." "David you are a life saver. I couldn't imagine using a handmade sign. It would really look tacky." So we were off and running.

We handed out over 2500 Jigglers. I was so sticky at the end of each day, if it had been warmer, I would have attracted bees! Ellen Harris and Jim Newkirk helped hand out the wiggly stuff and everyone enjoyed their Jigglers. We watched a few babies have their first taste of Jell-O. They were delighted and wanted more. A few folks shared their stories about Jigglers. A couple of folks did admit, they couldn't stand the stuff, but then there were a few kids that kept coming back for more and probably ate a full pan before they left.

A special thank you to Lewis Bano, the manager of McDonald's, who was on the PA on Sunday. "Folks - I've just stopped by the Jell-O Jiggler tent and tried some peach Jigglers, and you've got to stop by and try some!" "The cranberry Jigglers are great! Don't forget to stop by and get some free Jell-O Jigglers."

And so, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Jell-O Jigglers. It's kind of funny, because I'm not sure Jigglers are actually 20 years old. The information I have from Kraft Foods indicates that they might have been introduced as early as 1988, but it wasn't until 1989 that they really began promoting the new Jell-O finger-food. Before Jigglers, there were Knox Blocks, but they weren't that easy to make. With Jigglers,



all you need is 4 boxes of Jell-O and 2 ½ cups of boiling water - and remember to stir until the Jell-O is dissolved.

Bill Cosby did the first television ad for Jigglers. He's wearing a tuxedo and a bunch of kids are sitting at the table very prim and proper, when Bill picks up a Jell-O Jiggler and encourages the kids to eat the Jell-O with their hands. (You can watch that ad here at the Museum).

Jell-O first introduced Jiggler cut-outs in the shape of letters of the alphabet and sent the cutters to teachers - encouraging an educational activity. The egg molds were introduced in 1995 and are still available. There were *Jurassic Park* cutters, *Power Rangers*, NASCAR, football helmets, Halloween and Christmas.

When the test kitchens first introduced the Jell-O finger-food, no one had a name for them. When the name Jigglers was suggested, many people thought the name was too suggestive, so they did a survey with some of the office staff and none of them objected to the name and so Kraft Foods trademarked Jigglers.

I was surprised at the number of people who volunteered to make Jigglers for this last weekend who had never made them before, but now that they see how easy it is, maybe there will be a surge of Jell-O Jigglers. I'll have to admit, that after two days of dishing out Jigglers, I was ready for a few made with something more than water!