

The Norwegian Fairy Tale - The Good Wife

by Lynne Belluscio

There is no Jell-O in Norway, although there is flavored gelatin "GELE" packaged by Freia, which (if you read the fine print) is owned by Kraft Foods.

While I was in Laerdal, Norway two weeks ago, we went into the grocery store to look around and I found orange, lemon, strawberry, raspberry, kiwi and cola flavored GELE. I brought home some cola and kiwi and hope to make it just to see what it tastes like. (At one time Jell-O offered cola flavored gelatin.)

The store also carried ready-made gelatin which is sold in a quart-sized box that looks like a milk carton. I was told that the gelatin could be unrolled and cut into shapes like Jell-O Jigglers. I was going to bring a box of the pre-made gelatin home, and then figured I'd never get it through security. It would show up as a possible explosive.

The grocery store also sold molded gelatin salad with shrimp, whole hard-boiled eggs and a variety of vegetables. I took a photograph, but chose not to buy it and eat it. It certainly was an example of a "congealed salad" that is part of our Southern food traditions.

I also discovered that cheesecake in Norway is often topped

with a layer of flavored gelatin. I ordered a slice of peach cheesecake at the West Telemark Museum. Although the gelatin topping was a little like a Jell-O Jiggler, it was pretty good cheesecake. (The museum has a wonderful outdoor working model of the nearby canal, complete with working flights of locks. Someone in New York State near the Erie Canal needs to build one of these! The kids can rent boats to put through the canal and there are booms of logs that need to be floated through the canal from one end to the other).

In the 1920s, boxes of Jell-O included a small recipe leaflet. They were printed in sets of 12. One set was a collection of foreign fairy tales. The first in this set was a Norwegian fairy tale, "A Good Woman." "Farmer Gudbrand lived with his wife in a lonely farmhouse. Everything Gudbrand did, his wife thought perfect. One evening the wife said to her husband, 'You ought to take the cow to town and sell it.' Gulbrand took the cow to town, but no one would buy it. 'I shall take my cow home again,' said Gudbrand. Returning, he began to feel tired, when he met a man leading a horse. 'I shall never get my cow home,' thought

Gudbrand. So he stopped and exchanged his cow for the horse. He soon regretted his decision, for the horse was skittish. So on the way home, he exchanged the horse for a pig and the pig for a goat and a goat for a goose. Then the goose for a rooster. But after a while he was hungry and he traded the rooster for a meal. As he approached his house, he stopped in at his neighbor's house. His neighbor chided him, and said that Gudbrand's wife would not receive the news happily. "Right or wrong," Gudbrand said, "My wife is so good that she will not say a word." So the neighbor followed the farmer home.

As Farmer Gudbrand recited his trading, his wife received the news happily. When she heard about the rooster, she said "You are wiser than I. A rooster will crow every morning at time to

rise." "I have not brought the bird home," said Gudbrand, "For I felt so hungry that I sold it to buy a meal, otherwise I should have died of hunger." "Heaven be praised, you had it to sell. You are here, and that makes me happy." Gudbrand opened the door and cried out, "Well neighbor, what do you say to that?" Gudbrand then kissed his old wife with as much pleasure as if she had still been twenty." And so ended the story of the Good Wife.



Cola GELE.



Cheesecake with peach gelatin layer.



Gelatin shrimp salad for sale in grocery store in Laerdal, Norway.