

A Mold For Every Occasion

by Lynne Belluscio

We're making some changes at the Jell-O Gallery, and for two weeks, I've been arranging the new "mold" exhibit. It's been a little frustrating, because the wall is made from a laminate and I've tried drilling holes and the drill just doesn't want to go in. And so I've been using a nail and it's like trying to pound a nail into a counter top! I still have a few more molds to go into this exhibit, and eventually there will be more than 100 on this wall. I've always wanted to put this mold exhibit together, ever since I saw the photographs of the "Jell-O Mold building" in Seattle.

The building was built in 1908 and in 1992, artist Diane Sukovathy added 400 Jell-O molds to the outside. The building stood on the corner of Western Avenue and Wall Street and was declared historically significant but unfortunately it was torn down in 1997 – the same year we opened the Jell-O Gallery. The molds, supposedly were put into storage, and I haven't been able to verify that. But I just loved the look of the building with all the molds.

All the molds on the wall are metal. Some are copper, others are tinned lined copper. There are aluminum molds and copper colored aluminum molds. Some of the molds are soldered tin. It's pretty obvious, that some of the molds were used only for decoration and were never used.

One of my favorite molds is a tin soldered design of asparagus clusters in a circle. I have never used the mold, but I think you would take short spears of asparagus and "tie" them with a strip of pimento, place them in the mold and then pour in a savory gelatin or aspic.

One of the melon molds could be used for a dessert that I have made. First you fill the mold with green lime Jell-O and let it set until firm. Then you scoop out the inside and fill it with cooled watermelon flavored Jell-O and when it has set, you punch raisins into the watermelon Jell-O. When you cut slices of this Jell-O and place it on a white plate, it looks like a slice of watermelon.

In 1997, when we opened the



Jell-O Gallery, we had our annual Dinner Auction at LeRoy House and we used a couple of these molds to make centerpieces. I added only enough hot water to dissolve the Jell-O and then filled the molds. When I turned out the Jell-O it was quite hard. You could pick up the Jell-O and put it on a different plate and some of them lasted three months before we had to throw them away. We never ate any of them. I suspect they would have been pretty chewy,

Making a molded Jell-O can be tricky. First the mold has to be greased so the Jell-O will release. A spray salad oil is handy, but if you over spray, it can get a little messy. It is advisable not to use as much water in the recipe for a molded Jell-O. Also, fresh

pineapple or kiwi should not be used, or the gelatin will not gel. Enzymes in these fruits prevent the gelatin molecules from trapping the water molecules.

When it is time to unmold the Jell-O, dip the mold in warm water -- not hot. Then use a sharp knife to go around the edge of the mold. Then wipe the mold of any water and place the plate on top of the mold and invert everything together. At this point, I usually discover that I have not centered the Jell-O on the plate, and try to reposition it. And then when the mold is lifted, it is the moment of truth. Will the Jell-O stay together or will it split or break apart.

When I was in New York City for an appearance on morning television for the opening of the Jell-O Gallery, I remember that

they were going to demonstrate unmolding an American flag mold. The food technicians had ten molds ready, just in case there were problems. I remember thinking, that means that when we make a molded Jell-O it makes sense to make several, just in case the first ones don't work.

One of my favorite paintings in the Jell-O Gallery, shows a woman unmolding a Jell-O and it's caption is "Look, how simple and easy." I think it should be "the moment of truth!"

We are still looking for unusual molds to put on the wall, so when you are out at a garage sale, or cleaning out your mother-in-law's pantry, keep us in mind. The mold just might become part of the exhibit!

SEND
FOR
MOLDS!

