

Collecting Jell-O Package Inserts

by Lynne Belluscio

In the 1920s, Jell-O included small inserts in the packages of Jell-O. The insert had recipes and usually a little story. Each year there was a different theme and a different booklet each month. When I first came to the Historical Society I think we had three or four of the booklets and since then, I have tried to collect more of them.

This past week there were quite a few of them on Ebay and I couldn't remember which ones we had in the collection, so I had to make an inventory. We have five complete sets that include "The Jell-O Girl Visits . . ."; "The Jell-O Year"; "Foreign Fairy Tales" and the series of stories that includes The Dove Princess and "The Mothers of Whatsis Declare Their Independence. The story of the Mothers of Whatsis tells about the village of Whatsis where everyone is getting ready for the Fourth of July. "Fathers set off big salutes while boys and girls lit little crackers. Mothers of course were getting sandwiches ready." The day after the celebration, the mothers in town got together and "declared their independence" because they didn't want to make fancy layer cakes and doughnuts. "I spent most of yesterday baking pies. Let's strike!" So the fathers got together and read magazines, and talked to doctors and chefs and culinary experts and came



to the conclusion that their wives should make Jell-O."

All the other stories in the series are similar. The story of Robinson Caruso tells of a ship wreck that washes a box of Jell-O to the beach and Robinson Caruso and Friday enjoy Jell-O. The Hungry King orders a new dessert every day and the chef's daughter has to tell him that her father has run out of desserts, but she will search the world over for a "dish of which you will never tire." Her fairy godmother shows her how to make Jell-O and the king is so impressed that he marries the chef's daughter so she can make Jell-O for him every day. (I think she needs to talk with the Mothers of Whatsis.)

Some of the series are incomplete. I am missing #1

from the series "The Easy Way" that has the word Jell-O in red print. I am missing four from the series that has the word Jell-O in black print and five from the blue print series.

In 1927 General Foods reprinted the illustrations by Marion Powers and I only have eleven and I suspect there were twelve but they aren't numbered so I don't know which one I'm missing. Ebay has #5 in the 1923 Nursery Rhyme series that I am missing. I just put in a bid, but I need # 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10 to finish that series. I need # 6 in the Jell-O Girl in America series. And two are missing in the 1925 series "The Jell-O Girl in Foreign Lands - # 2 and #12.

There is a set that has several pages and are stapled. These seem

to be the most difficult to find. I think the rarest one we have in the collection is for coffee Jell-O - "the new Jell-O flavor." "The new coffee flavor is making a great hit in families that like the best things to eat . . ." The recipes for coffee Jell-O includes nut frappe which was made with beaten egg whites and whipped cream and nuts. Walnut coffee Jell-O includes English walnuts and cut up figs. Ambrosia coffee Jell-O was made by molding Jell-O in a custard cup and then inverting it on a dish and pouring sweetened cream or whipped cream over the top. It was to be served with cake. Prune soufflé was made with coffee Jell-O stewed prune pulp and cinnamon and served with whipped cream. (I would name it geriatric Jell-O.) Waldorf Jell-O was made with coffee Jell-O and whipped eggs. If you wanted to make coffee flavored Jell-O today, you'd have to use unflavored Knox gelatin with hot coffee.

Perhaps if I have time, I might put together a small exhibit about the package inserts for the Jell-O Gallery this summer. We have a few on exhibit now because we have the original oil paintings that were used to illustrate the inserts, but we've never included an exhibit that shows all the different series.

WHAT'S THE OCCASION

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- ✓WELCOME HOME
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- ✓RETIREMENT
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