

National Jell-O Week?

by Lynne Belluscio

The phone started ringing about a month ago. "Is there anyone at the Jell-O Gallery who can give us a talk about Jell-O?" "Well, yes I guess I can. When do you want me to give the talk?" "During National Jell-O Week." "Oh - Where did you learn about National Jell-O Week?" "I think it was on a calendar -- or maybe I saw it on the internet."

So I booked several Jell-O talks for this month, during the unofficial National Jell-O Week. You see, there is no official National Jell-O Week -- at least as far as Kraft Foods is concerned. I did call Jell-O's marketing group in New York to check and they confirmed my suspicions. Jell-O isn't promoting an official National Jell-O Week.

The story can be traced back to 2001 when the State of Utah declared Jell-O to be the official State Snack. The next year, during the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah once again celebrated their love for Jell-O and Kraft Foods had a Jell-O exhibit in Salt Lake City. I flew out to Salt Lake City for the event and helped Bill Cosby open the exhibit. I met the Lt. Governor of Utah, Olene Walker and she presented me with an official honorary Utah Citizenship. I presented her with a mammoth spoon that used to be on a Jell-O sign in Times Square in New York City. One of the Olympic pins from Salt Lake City was a bowl of Jell-O. (We have several in the collection.)

Actually there's a little "wiggly room" for the dates of Jell-O week. It can be the second full week in February or it can be from the middle of the second week to the middle of the third week. I've checked the internet and discovered a lot of schools and libraries are celebrating National Jell-O Week. Maybe we ought to start celebrating National Jell-O Week here in LeRoy. Maybe next year we can have the Mayor declare National Jell-O Week and we can offer some Jell-O activities at the Woodward Library - after all the Woodwards were big into Jell-O. It would be great to have the fourth grades perform their great Jell-O song and maybe we could

have something like a Jell-O bake off.

Two weeks ago, we had something like a Jell-O bake off. A group of folks who are into historic foods, met for lunch at LeRoy House and they brought twenty different prepared Jell-O dishes - including Monticello Jell-O, prune whip, horseradish Jell-O, corned beef salad in Jell-O, chicken salad in Jell-O and a myriad of other Jell-O "favorites". It was a sight to behold - the buffet table filled with Jell-O. I even contributed two boxes of white sparkling white grape Jell-O from the Centennial celebration in 1997 and served it with mandarin oranges and strawberries. (Yes, even after 12 years, the Jell-O set up.) I've always pictured card tables set up with Jell-O, a dish in the center and place settings from each decade - that Jell-O has been around. Or maybe a contest for Jell-O salads and another for desserts.

How about an unmolding contest - how many Jell-Os can you unmold in three minutes. Or a creative - artistic Jell-O creation - not for eating. An art gallery on the West Coast has an annual event for Jell-O art. One year a woman designed a dress constructed of slabs of Jell-O encased in plastic baggies.

Many years ago, I participated in a Jell-O event at the Smithsonian Institution on April 1, where papers were given about "faux" Jell-O history. It was wonderful

and everyone had a great story to tell. I was there to give the true Jell-O history. So give it some thought, LeRoy. How about national Jell-O Week in 2010? After all, it's our birthright. Who

else can claim to be the birthplace of Jell-O!





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