

Wine Jelly

After a hearty Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, you don't need a heavy dessert. Wine jelly is a simple but elegant end to a heavy meal: light, not very sweet, and seems to reduce that 'stuffed' feeling. The tradition of serving jelled wine on special occasions is centuries old and was a great favorite of Thomas Jefferson. George Washington served a Madeira molded wine jelly at the farewell banquet for his troops after the Revolution.

Though any wine may be used, fortified wines are more traditional and have more "presence". They were used extensively in colonial Virginia because they were substantial enough to survive the trip from Europe. The Jamestown settlers brought casks of sack (fortified wine from the Canary Islands), Thomas Jefferson was "most particularly attached" to a pale sherry from Spain and George Washington was partial to Madeira.

Traditional wine jelly is made with gelatin or refined collagen, the same stuff that makes barbecue taste good. Back in the old days, cooks had to make their own by boiling hooves, bones and hides and then straining the stock through cloth sacks. Mary Randolph describes how to make a savory jelly with white wine in The Virginia Housewife and Methodical Cook, published in 1860. We now use powdered gelatin in pre-measured packets. This recipe comes from a little booklet (still in my mothers recipe box) packaged with *Chalmers Gelatine* sometime in the 1940's:

2 Envelops CHALMERS Gelatine

1 cup cold water

1 cup boiling water

1 cup sugar

1 lemon (juice)

1 cup sherry, or port, or Madeira

Soak gelatin in cold water; dissolve sugar and soaked gelatin in boiling water; add wine and lemon juice; strain into molds; set on ice. Serve with thick cream after fine dinners.



Chalmers is long gone so we use *Knox unflavored Gelatine*. During the later years of Mother's life, my wife, Barbara, was responsible for making the wine jelly. She found it easier to mix the gelatin and sugar and then dissolve it with boiling water. We always served wine jelly in stemmed glass sherbet cups, but it can also be chilled in a bowl and cubed to serve.

Dusty Roads

Long before Sesame Street, when Howdy Doody and Kukla, Fran and Ollie were about the only children's programs on television, many stations tried producing their own low-budget shows. One Richmond station featured the Storybook Lady, an attractive motherly figure who read stories to *me* – and I loved her for it, as any six-year-old would. Back in those days, television was personal. The Storybook Lady did not last long, and my friend went off to New York to help produce the Howdy Doody Show.

Some years later, Elizabeth Harrison escaped from the big city, moved to Irvington and bought the King Carter Inn. She remodeled the large old building, previously Chesapeake Academy, and soon gained widespread recognition as an accomplished hostess. Sometime in the mid sixties, the Highway Department tore up the road in front of the Inn to repave it – a process that consumed most of the summer. Dust was everywhere. One evening Mrs. Harrison tried to serve vanilla ice cream but could not prevent fine dust settling on the surface. She tried to rinse it off with a little crème de cocoa, but that didn't work so she camouflaged it with a liberal sprinkling of cocoa powder and announced that she was serving a special treat called "Dusty Roads". It was an instant hit and became a featured dessert at the King Carter Inn. An unlikely combination; the sweetness of the ice cream is contrasted with the almost-harsh bite of liqueur and the dry bitterness of cocoa. Now, whenever we need to serve a special dessert which requires little advanced preparation, we make Dusty Roads.



My parents had several memorable meals at the King Carter Inn, all culminating with Dusty Roads for dessert, and discovered that Elizabeth Harrison was the Storybook Lady that I so fondly remembered. She is also fondly remembered in and around Irvington, where she was known to gather small children around her and read Dr. Seuss books to them. The old Inn has again been resurrected as the prestigious "Hope and Glory"

