

Peanut Butter Anyone?

If you have ever watched the concentration on the face of a hungry 4-year-old as they create that first PBJ then you would know that peanut butter is not a food to be taken lightly. As we move into summer I would wager that there will be those moments when it will provide the perfect snack and an opportunity for a busy Mom or Dad to bring a smile to the face of a hungry, fussy and very tired child.

George Washington Carver was the intellect behind peanut butter and 300 other inventions he created from the lowly "goober." It was probably first enjoyed sometime around 1900 and like all but three of his thousands of inventions it was modestly passed on to humanity to enjoy without a patent. I would urge you to learn more about Mr. Carver and the incredible contributions he made to the world.

Today we're concentrating on his peanut butter (my pick is extra crunchy) and some of the tasty things we can do with it. I've found it to be really valuable in the kitchen over the years and started taking it seriously about the time I learned of that ultra decadent sandwich that Elvis used to enjoy on special occasions. Hey, if the King was chowing down on peanut butter with all of the great foods available in Memphis, what can you say?

The Elvis

(makes one sandwich)

2 ounces whole peanut butter
2 slices white bread (We use a good quality one like Pepperidge Farms.)
1 whole ripe banana
4 strips bacon, fried extra crispy
4 ounces whole butter

Spread peanut butter evenly on one side of each of your bread slices. Slice banana in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch slices and place on peanut butter on one of your bread slices. Place the 4 strips over the banana and add the last slice of bread, peanut butter down, on top.

Melt two ounces of butter in a medium heated sauté pan while you spread the remaining two ounces of butter on top of the sandwich. Place sandwich into pan buttered side up and brown for approximately 3 to 5 minutes or until golden brown. Flip sandwich and continue to brown the other side for 2 to 5 minutes or until golden brown and peanut butter is starting to melt. Cut diagonally and enjoy while hot!

This sandwich is really good but also really high in fat, as you can imagine. I've heard of people lowering the fat in the recipe but the results just are not the same. My recommendation would be to enjoy it like Elvis did but not quite as often!

Peanuts and peanut butter have long played into recipes from Thailand and other parts of Indonesia and here's another one that is great for enjoyment during the warm weather.

Chicken Strips With Spicy Peanut Sauce

(yields 6 to 8 servings)

Chicken:

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
4 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons chopped fresh ginger, or 1 teaspoon dried ginger

Peanut Sauce:

4 tablespoons chunky or smooth peanut butter
2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
Approximately ½ cup water
1 teaspoon chopped fresh ginger, or ½ teaspoon dried ginger
1 teaspoon sugar
Dash of hot-pepper sauce, or Chinese chile paste (optional)

Prepare your marinade for the chicken by combining 4 tablespoons of soy sauce, 1 teaspoon sesame oil and ginger in a bowl. Place your chicken breasts in a large Ziploc bag and add the marinade. Move your chicken around in the bag until all have been evenly coated. Let marinate for at least 10 minutes but it may be left to marinate overnight in the refrigerator for best results.

Preheat broiler. To prepare the Peanut Sauce stir the peanut butter in a small bowl to soften. Add the soy sauce, 4 tablespoons of water, the ginger, sugar, and hot pepper sauce, if desired, and stir until smooth. Add additional water if sauce is too thick. (Ideally, you want it thick enough to coat a spoon.) If it appears too thin you may need to chill it for ½ hour to increase thickness. Sauce should be served at room temperature, however.

Place your chicken in a shallow broiler pan and broil for 4 minutes, turn and continue for another 5 or 6 minutes, or until just turning golden brown and cooked through. (Your best way of determining if the chicken is cooked correctly will be by touch. It should be firm but not to the stage when it becomes hard and rubbery.) Remove chicken from the broiler and let it cool a tad.

Cut the chicken breasts into thin strips (about 1 inch wide) and serve with the dipping sauce. Now on to the grand finale:

Pappy's Peanut Butter Pie

(makes 2 pies)

This is an old recipe we have made some modern adjustments to. We've really enjoyed the results.

1 cup powdered sugar
1 (8 oz.) block cream cheese, softened
1 cup peanut butter
1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
1 (12 oz.) tub frozen whipped topping, thawed
2 9-inch ready made graham cracker shells

Combine powdered sugar, cream cheese and peanut butter in a large bowl and beat with a mixer at medium speed until smooth. Add condensed milk and continue beating until combined. Gently stir in the whipped topping. Divide the mixture evenly between the shells and chill 8 hours or until set. Pies should have a soft, fluffy texture.

Cut into wedges and serve. Some like to drizzle chocolate syrup over each piece. Also, this pie can be served frozen, which will give the pie a texture more like an ice cream pie.

I want to depart just a bit from wine recommendations this week to offer you a summer drink recipe that is really fun and gives you an opportunity to put some of your creative juices to good use. I was given this recipe in Miami for Limoncello, which is a traditional summer drink from Spain although versions of the same drink show up in Italy and elsewhere. It takes a while to make so you'll have to get at it soon if you want to enjoy it this season.

Limoncello

12 lemons (thick skin variety such as Meyer)
2 liters good quality, unflavored vodka
6 cups sugar
3 cups water

This drink can be made with any type of citrus but always be sure to get the best quality and freshest available. Put lemon peels or zest in a large glass container with a tight lid and add vodka. Place container aside and allow to stand for 4 weeks. Strain mixture to remove peels and place mixture into a decanter.

Mix sugar and water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3 minutes. Let cool before adding to the vodka mixture. Serve in small aperitif glasses or in highball glasses "over the rocks." Can be stored in the freezer for up to 1 year.

Be sure to let us know if you have any questions or comments. Call us at 888-288-0668 or visit us online at www.winedog.com. Cheers.