

Holiday Flavors





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Wassail

Though it sounds like a German word, wassail is a punch from the U.K. It comes from the Old English *waes hael*, or *be hale*, referring effects of a cup of the warm, fortifying mulled cider. It's made famous by the carol "Here We Come A Wassailing".

HISTORY

The earliest versions of wassail were made from sweet mead warmed and combined with toasted crabapples that boiled in the mead until they burst. This drink, called *lambswool*, was traditionally consumed around *Lammas Day*, the first harvest festival of the year.

That drink evolved into a mulled wine, cider or fruit juice concoction,

spiced and sweetened. Modern recipes frequently start with fruit juices instead of wine; mulled wine is a separate but similar warming holiday drink.

WASSAIL BOWLS

Wassail bowls, according to craftsman and researcher Stuart King, were traditionally made of *lignum vitae* or *guayacan*, a hard and durable wood

from South America. They were huge goblets, essentially, usually ornate and perched on a thick stem. Today, we can sub out a good punch bowl or, to keep the drink warm and toasty, the slow cooker.

WASSAIL

2 quarts apple cider
2 cups orange juice
½ cup pineapple juice

1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon brown sugar
2-3 cinnamon sticks
Dash of ground cinnamon
Dash of ground cloves, or to taste

1. Combine all the ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove the cinnamon sticks and transfer to a slow-cooker on low for party service. For a toasty adult beverage, add a tot of rum or bourbon to the cup.



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Gingerbread Cake

Catch up to a holiday tradition with toasty fresh-baked gingerbread. Gingerbread refers to a variety of baked goods with a prominent flavor of ginger and sweetened with brown sugar, molasses or honey. They can be fluffy like a cake or crisp like a thin cookie. This makes gingerbread the perfect versatile holiday treat.

Whip up this fluffy gingerbread cake, warm up a cup of tea and watch the snow fall for an afternoon.

GINGERBREAD

(recipe by King Arthur flour)

2 ¼ cups whole wheat flour or 2 cups all-purpose flour
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 ½ teaspoons ground ginger or 3 tablespoons fresh grated ginger

1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cloves
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup unsalted butter, melted
¾ cup molasses
¼ cup water
1 egg
1 cup buttermilk
½ cup diced crystallized ginger (optional)

1. Grease and flour a 9-inch square pan. Preheat the oven to 350

degrees.

2. Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. Add the molasses to the melted butter, then to the dry ingredients, mixing to moisten. Add the water and stir to combine.

3. Whisk together the egg and buttermilk, then stir into the batter. Add the crystallized ginger, if using. Pour the batter into the pan and bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the sides just begin to pull away from the pan.

4. Remove from the oven and cool for 15 minutes before slicing. It's best served warm.

Gingerbread Men

The term gingerbread originally referred to preserved ginger and then to a candy made with honey and spices.

Now, we remember it most from the folktale “The Gingerbread Man” and from the ornate gingerbread houses we construct around the holidays.

Start any of your holiday constructions with this crisp ginger cookie and a good set of cookie cutters. Pipe them with store-bought tubes of colored frosting from your grocer for a convenient, fun and beautiful holiday memory.

GINGERBREAD COOKIES

(recipe by King Arthur Flour)

- ¾ cup unsalted butter
- ¾ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¾ cup molasses
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon allspice or cloves
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 3 ½ cups all-purpose flour

1. Melt the butter, then stir in the brown sugar, molasses, salt and spices. Transfer the mixture to a medium-sized bowl and let it cool before beating in the egg.

2. Whisk together the baking powder, baking soda and flour, then add to

the molasses mixture.

3. Divide the dough into two thick rectangles, wrap and refrigerate for one hour. Make sure the dough is thoroughly chilled before rolling it out or it

will be sticky.

4. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Flour a work surface.

5. Roll the chilled dough to ⅛ to ¼

of an inch thick — the thinner the dough, the crisper the cookie. Flour the top and bottom of the dough if it starts to stick or use parchment paper or plastic wrap.

6. Cut shapes with a floured cookie cutter and transfer the cookies onto the baking sheets. Bake for 8-12 minutes or until they’re set. Let cool completely before decorating.



Making Hard Candy

While the expression refers to a Christmas so poor the only presents are hard candy, with a little know-how, some science and a lot of sugar, you can make your own hard candy holiday one that shines.

HARDWARE

To make your own hard candy, you'll get a large, stout pot that holds heat well. Look for a thick bottom and tall sides. Also grab a spoon or spatula that you're comfortable holding. You might be there a while. Additionally, head to your local grocery or kitchen goods store and pick up a candy thermometer and make sure it fits well on the sides of your pan without the bulb hitting the bottom.

SOFTWARE

Grab some bags of sugar while you're at the grocery and some light corn syrup. These will form the backbone of your candy. Also grab extracts and food coloring to flavor and color your confection. Your finished product will also need a dusting of confectioners sugar, and you'll need wax paper and airtight containers for storing and gifting, if that's your pleasure.

HARD CANDY

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white sugar
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups light corn syrup
1 cup water
1 tablespoon flavored extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon food coloring
Confectioners sugar, for dusting



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1. Stir together the white sugar, corn syrup and water in your pot. Cook over medium heat, stirring all the while,

until the sugar dissolves. Then bring to a boil. Without stirring, heat to 300-310 degrees according to your thermome-

ter. If you don't have a thermometer, drop a small amount of syrup into cold water. Look for hard, brittle threads to

form when it's ready.

2. Remove the candy from the heat and stir in flavors and colors. Pour onto

a greased cookie sheet and dust with confectioners sugar. Let cool, then break into pieces.

Cola De Mono

The name of this Chilean holiday drink literally translates into “tail of the monkey.” It’s become so popular, though, that it’s usually shortened to colemono.

It contains aguardiente — literally fire water — strong, clear alcohol distilled from whatever local ingredients are handy.

Aguardiente is mixed with milk, sugar, coffee and cloves to create a drink similar to a white Russian.

NOMENCLATURE

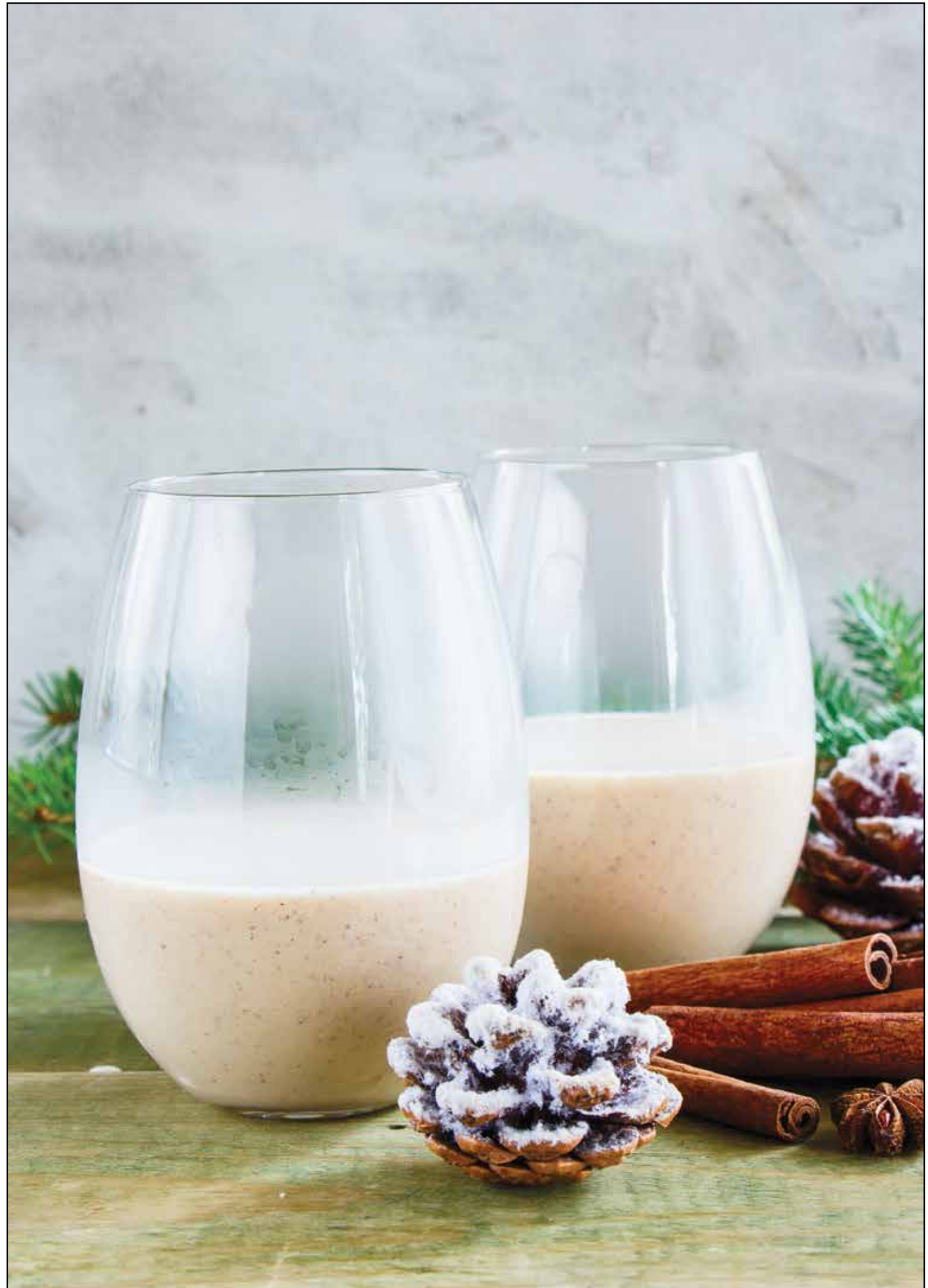
Theories abound as to how the drink got its name, but a popular story involves Chilean President Pedro Montt, who served from 1906-1910. He was nicknamed El Mono (Monkey) Montt. He was trying to take an early departure from a holiday party and asked for the return of his Colt revolver, but was convinced to linger. The guests eventually drank up all the wine and mixed up the first cola de monos, which were quickly dubbed Colt de Montts and evolved to cola de mono. Or so the story goes.

COLA DE MONO

Makes a party-sized portion, but leave your revolvers at home.

- 20 whole cloves
- 5 cinnamon sticks
- 1 cup water
- 1 gallon cold milk
- ¼ cup instant coffee granules
- 1 cup white sugar, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon vanilla, or to taste
- 1 cup white rum or brandy

1. Simmer the spices in water until reduced by half. Add a cup of the milk, return to simmer, then add the sugar and coffee. Stir until dissolved.
2. Strain the mixture into the remaining milk. Add vanilla and alcohol. Store in the fridge and serve chilled. To make a non-alcoholic beverage, just omit the booze.



A Holiday Meal for Every Diet

Planning holiday celebrations around people with special diets can seem intimidating. But it doesn't have to be.

Keep reading for tips on keeping the dietary drama on low for your holiday feasts.

COMMUNICATE

Most people with special diets are used to either accommodating themselves or helping others to accommodate them. You can't help the occasional attitude, but what you can do is thoughtfully ask your guest what their preferences are. If it's a potluck, invite them to make a dish for everyone; you might be surprised how good it is. Never say that someone will never know meat, dairy or wheat are in a dish. Sneaking in certain foods can make a guest very ill.

VEGETARIANS

Vegetarians, simply put, don't eat meat. Some people may be pescatarians, in which they eat fish or shellfish. When cooking for vegetarians, be careful what you use for flavoring dishes. For instance, don't add bacon to a largely vegetable side dish, and avoid using chicken or beef broths in their food. Instead, substitute spices or vegetable broth for a punch of flavor your guests can stomach.



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VEGANS

Vegans don't eat any foods derived from animals. This includes milk, butter and eggs, staples of holiday baking and cooking. The good news is there are substitutions for many of these products; ask your local grocery store for suggestions. Plan

plenty of vegetable dishes and choose salads and dressings without cheese or cream.

GLUTEN-FREE

Gluten is a mixture of two proteins found in some grains. It's what makes bread dough stretchy. But it's not just bread you have to watch

for. Gluten hides in a variety of foods like soups, pasta, cereals, sauces, rouxs, salad dressings, malt, food coloring and beer.

Your local grocery probably has a gluten-free aisle or section where you can buy one-for-one flour mixtures, gluten-free crackers and cookies,

pastas, and other items to round out your menu. Also remember to avoid cross-contamination.

Don't prepare gluten-free dishes around grain-based dishes that have gluten, and provide separate utensils for the gluten-free versions of any dish.



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German Glühwein

Germans often toast the holiday with a traditional cup of mulled wine, or in German, glühwein.

There are many variations on this drink, but the basics are usually hot red wine mixed with spices and fruits, probably citrus.

There's even a version called feuerzangtasse, or fire cup, featuring a flaming

cone of sugar on top.

You can make your own mulling spices or look for ready-made packets and mixes in your local grocery or liquor store near the wine. Serve your mulled wine in cups or mugs rather than your stemware.

GLÜWHEIN

¾ cup water
¾ cup sugar
1 cinnamon stick
10 cloves
½ cup orange juice

1 orange, sliced into thin rounds
1 750mL bottle of red wine

1. Mix the water, sugar, spices and juice together in a saucepan. Allow to simmer for 30 minutes or until syrupy.
2. Add the wine and cook until warmed through. Serve in warm mugs with rounds of orange.

NOTE: This is a basic recipe. Feel free to adjust to your tastes by lessening or adding sugar, adding other spices (ginger, star anise), other flavors (vanilla), or fruits (lemon, apples).