

More Smores For a Most Scrumptious Purim Treat

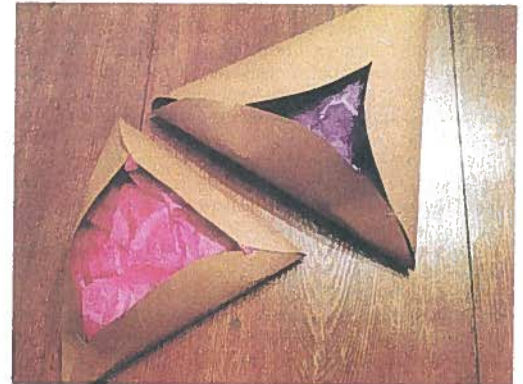
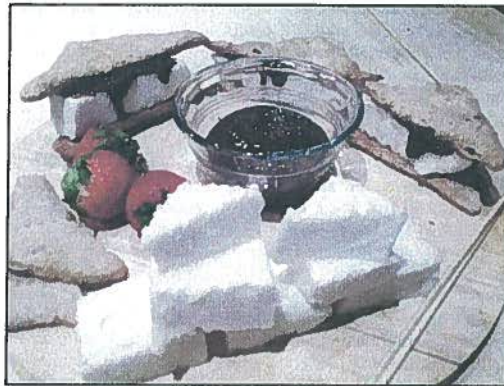
Themed Mishloach Manot Help Celebrants Give Goodies in Creative Way

RACHEL HARKHAM

Purim is a holiday that has something for just about everyone. For those who enjoy a great cliffhanger, the megillah provides plenty of drama and nail-biting twist and turns, where the good guys prevail in the end and the villain receives his come-uppance. For those who can't resist the opportunity to dress up, Purim is your made-to-measure holiday. And who doesn't love a day where making noise in synagogue is actually encouraged? But the jam on the hamantaschen during this day of revelry and fun is the gifts of food that are received and given on Purim.

Mishloach Manot, Shlach Manos, Purim Packages — these gifts must contain two ready to eat items and should be given to at least one other person to fulfill the mitzvah. Mishloach Manot is usually the Purim tradition that holds a special place in the hearts of bakers, cooks and the crafty among us. It's also for all those smarty-pants who can't bypass a clever theme. A brief review of the Mishloach Manot highlights through the years: Milk 'n Cookies: homemade chocolate chip cookies presented in a cookie jar and accompanied with a small carton of milk. Salad Days: Delivered in a big plastic salad bowl, with a bag of lettuce, a fresh tomato, cucumber, a container of homemade sourdough croutons, and a cruet of homemade dressing. Red-y for Purim: a can of Coke, a bottle of red-hot sauce, a packet of big red gum, and red velvet cupcakes were found in a red beach bucket.

In the shadow of all these great ideas and impressive projects, a theme for this Purim had to be hatched. The Hiker's Pack was explored, complete with homemade trail mix, water bottles, and handmade fruit leather, but was passed up because buying 20 backpacks was just not in the budget. A triangular DIY smores motif was then settled on: DIY angle 'Smores. It includes light and fluffy homemade three-cornered marshmallows, golden home-baked graham crackers (also cut in the shape most associated with Purim), and an easy and completely luscious chocolate ganache sauce that holds it all together. The idea is that each item is packaged separately, and are delicious and ready to eat on their own, but when combined are a truly special treat. All together it is a scrumptious cookie sandwich. Or a chocolate fondue dip with delicious



dunkers. Include a banana or a strawberries for a fresh bite, and extra color.

To transport the 'smores components, place the graham crackers in a plastic bag or in cling wrap. The chocolate ganache sauce should be kept in a small plastic or cleaned out jam jar. The marshmallows can be wrapped in wax paper. Labels are helpful to explain the components and the theme of the Purim package.

The large hamantasch that the goodies are packaged in is taken from the book, "Crafting Jewish" by Rivky Koenig (Artscoil). It's a craft project that doesn't take too much time or effort. Start by placing a 12" pizza pan, or, a dinner plate (for a smaller package) on a large sheet of brown craft foam or a large sheet of brown construction paper. Trace and cut out the circle. Place the Purim goodies in the center of the circle. Lift up two sides of the circle and staple together on top, where the two sides meet. Lift up the remaining side and staple to each side. Cut out a square of cellophane or tissue paper, and stuff into the hamantasch opening to cover the food.

Purim. Of course there are those that really enjoy every aspect it, from the colorful costumes to the sanctioned rowdiness. They get into the making of the fun food packages to deliver, and then delight in the samplings from the mishloach manots received. These people are usually called "kids."

Graham Crackers

(Adapted from *Better Home and Gardens*)

½ cup milk
¼ cup honey
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup whole-wheat flour
1 cup packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup butter

In a small bowl combine milk, honey, and vanilla. Set aside.

In a large bowl whisk together all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, brown sugar, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Cut in butter using a pastry blender or a fork until the mixture resembles pea sized-crumbs.

Add milk mixture and stir until just combined. Knead dough gently to form a ball. Divide dough into quarters. Wrap each portion in plastic. Chill for about an hour or until firm enough to handle.

Preheat oven to 350F. On a floured surface, roll out one portion of dough at a time until it is ¼-inch thick. With a pizza cutter or pastry wheel cut dough into desired shape (square, rectangle, or triangle for Purim). Place on ungreased cookie sheets. Poke cutouts with tines of a fork.

Bake for 18-20 minutes or until light golden brown.

Makes 25 to 30 graham crackers

Marshmallows

About ¼ cup powdered sugar
2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin powder (kolatin works well)
¾ cup cold water
2 cups sugar
½ cup hot water
¾ cup light corn syrup
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Cover the bottom of a 13 x 9-inch pan with

powdered sugar. With the back of a spoon spread the powdered sugar across the sides of the pan. Make sure the bottom and ½-inch up the sides of the pan is completely covered.

In a bowl sprinkle gelatin over the cold water. Set aside.

In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the sugar, hot water, corn syrup, and salt to a boil. Stirring until sugar dissolves. Let it boil rapidly for 1 minute without stirring.

Remove from stove top. Stir into the gelatin mixture add vanilla extract. Using a standing mixer or a high powered hand mixer, beat the mixture on high speed for 11-12 minutes. It will get frothy, glossy, light, and will eventually hold its shape.

Pour the marshmallow mixture in the prepared pan, and refrigerate until firm. Using a sharp knife dipped in hot water cut marshmallow into desired shape. Coat each marshmallow in powdered sugar.

Makes approximately 35 to 45 marshmallows

Chocolate Ganache Sauce

½ cup half-and-half
1 cup chocolate chips
(milk, dark, semi-sweet or a combination)

In a medium saucepan heat half-and-half over medium-high heat, until it bubbles around the edges. Add chocolate chips to half-and-half and stir until chocolate becomes smooth and glossy.

Recipe can be doubled or tripled.

Rachel Harkham is a Rockland County mother of three who has an upcoming cookbook and runs a chocolate business.