

The Return of Jell-O Salads

It may be hard to imagine now that a refrigerator was once seen as a luxury item. They showcased upward mobility for newly working moms during the 1950s and these busy women needed a quick dessert or snack for the family/household. Thus, creative culinary expressions in the form of Jell-O® salads became a staple on American dining tables. Although they fell out of favor for a few decades, they have returned. Explore these updated recipes to create new memories/indulge in a taste of nostalgia.

Strawberry Pretzel Salad

Blending sweet and salty, this dessert salad is perfect as a summer treat and a great dish for potlucks.

Gather two cups of crushed pretzels, 1 1/3 cup of sugar, 3/4 cup melted butter, one 8-ounce package of softened cream cheese, one 8-ounce container of whipped cream, two 10-ounce packages of frozen strawberries in syrup, two 3-ounce packages of strawberry-flavored Jell-O and two cups of water. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Combine crushed pretzels, 1/3 cup of sugar and the melted butter. Pour into a 13x9-inch baking pan and press down to make an even crust. Bake for 10 minutes and refrigerate for up to four hours to cool.

Then beat cream cheese and 1 cup of sugar with an electric mixer in a large bowl. Spread the whipped cream over the mixture. Combine strawberries, Jell-O and 2 cups of boiling water in a separate bowl, and stir for two minutes. Once the Jell-O is dissolved, pour the mixture over the cream cheese layer. Refrigerate overnight. Spread over the crust. There should be four layers in total: the crust, the cream cheese, the whipped cream and the Jell-O.

Holiday Salad

Bring a retro-fabulous dish to your next festive gathering. Filled with cucumbers, green onions and celery, this dish is a crowd pleaser.

Prepare 1/2 cup cold water, two envelopes of plain Jell-O, 1 cup room temperature water, 1/2 cup white vinegar, 1 cup granulated sugar, one teaspoon kosher salt, three cups peeled and seeded cucumbers cut into 1/4-inch pieces, 1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions and 1/2 celery stalk chopped into 1/4-inch pieces. Pour the 1/2 cup of cold water into a large bowl and add the unflavored Jell-O. Allow to set for 10 minutes. Combine the remaining water, vinegar, sugar and salt in a non-reactive saucepan. Stir over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Turn off the heat and add the Jell-O mixture. Mix until dissolved, then transfer to a large bowl. Place the bowl in the refrigerator or put ice under it to chill and thicken for 20 minutes. Stir in the cucumbers, green onions and celery, and pour the mixture into a 6-to 8-cup non-reactive mold. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate overnight.

Creamy Cranberry Salad

Jell-O salads can incorporate cheese and nuts for a unique taste/creamy dish that's ready in just minutes.

Gather two envelopes of unflavored Jell-O, one 8-ounce package of cream cheese, one 12-ounce carton of frozen cranberry-strawberry fruit puree and ¼ cup chopped pecans. In a small measuring glass, stir together ½ cup of water and the Jell-O; let stand for five minutes. Meanwhile, beat the cream cheese with an electric mixer in a medium bowl. Once smooth, fold in the fruit and pecans. Set aside. Add one inch of water to a medium saucepan and set the measuring glass containing the Jell-O into the water. Heat slowly, stirring the Jell-O constantly until it dissolves. Remove from heat and stir into the cranberry mixture. Place in a 3 ½ or 4-cup mold. Refrigerate overnight. Serve with sugared cranberries for garnish.

Get the conversation started at every gathering with these updated Jell-O salad recipes inspired by the April 1962 issue of Better Homes & Gardens magazine.