

Mary Lee Bossert's
Lowell House Tea
Recipes



Lowell House co-Master Mary Lee Bossert in the Lowell House kitchen.



May 1998

Dear Reader:

This cookbook contains a few recipes for the more popular treats that Mary Lee Bossert has prepared for Lowell House teas over the past twenty-four years. In addition, I have added two recipes that may be unfamiliar to undergraduates: recipes for Mary Lee's cold poached salmon and for the (in)famous Lowell House punch. Several members of the Senior Common Room recommend both salmon and punch highly and have urged me to include them. If I have missed your favorite recipe, please accept my sincere apologies.

On behalf of everyone who has been to a House tea, I wish to thank both Bill and Mary Lee Bossert for continuing the tradition of Lowell House teas with such style. In particular, I want to thank Mary Lee for making all the food for twenty-four years' worth of wonderful teas. I also wish to thank her for clearing time in her busy schedule to conduct the cooking tutorials that made this booklet possible. Thanks also go to Lina Fine for giving me the idea for this cookbook, to Pavninder Singh for recording Mary Lee's recipes and to Nailah Robinson and Nozomi Nishimura for helping me prepare the pictures.

Bon appetit!

Ann Schiff '98



Lowell House Punch

The traditional Lowell House punch is served at the buffet supper following the opening night of the House Opera, at the reception on the day before commencement for seniors and their families and at other festive occasions. The recipe is actually a very old one, known as "The Duke of Burgundy's Punch."

Ingredients:

4 bottles red wine (Mary Lee uses a California burgundy, usually Almaden)
1 bottle Port (real Port works best, but a California Port is OK)
1/2 bottle Kirsh (a dry cherry schnapps, this is the killer!)
2 cups orange juice
1/4 cup lemon juice (bottle is OK)
1/4 to 1/2 cup sugar to taste (the punch should be tart, NOT SWEET)

Directions:

Mix the ingredients together in three or four liter jugs. Shake thoroughly to get the sugar off the bottom. The punch will keep unrefrigerated for over a year. In fact, it tastes better if mixed at least two weeks prior to use. Opera reception punch made in March is great by commencement, if there is any left over.

The punch should be served cold. It can be lightened up and made a little more festive by mixing one liter of seltzer water to a gallon of punch as it is put into the punch bowl.

Mary Lee talks about punch:

"There are many fun stories about Lowell House punch, mostly embellished with the disregard for fact that characterizes most folk history. It was a favorite of the distinguished historian, Myron Gilmore, who was not only very fond of the punch recipe but also very supportive of story-telling exaggerations. He told us: "one should never let historical fact ruin a good story." Most of the tales are based on the property of the punch to be extremely alcoholic, yet taste like a blend of fruit juices. It is very refreshing on a hot day, and this has led a number to over-partake on warm days and nights. One story, which is true: At an afternoon parents' reception in the early 80's, a grandmother, who seemed happy that we did not have a lot of 'liquor' at the reception, consumed, by a rough estimate of bystanders, between 10 and 15 punch cups of Lowell House Punch in about 30 minutes. She complained about being 'a little light headed.' After adequate medical consultation (there are never fewer than 50 physicians at such events) we and her family (they seemed to get a kick out of it) carried her upstairs to a guest bedroom to sleep it off. She had a mild headache for commencement day, but otherwise came through it well. We don't think she ever knew what happened."

Basic Chocolate Cupcakes

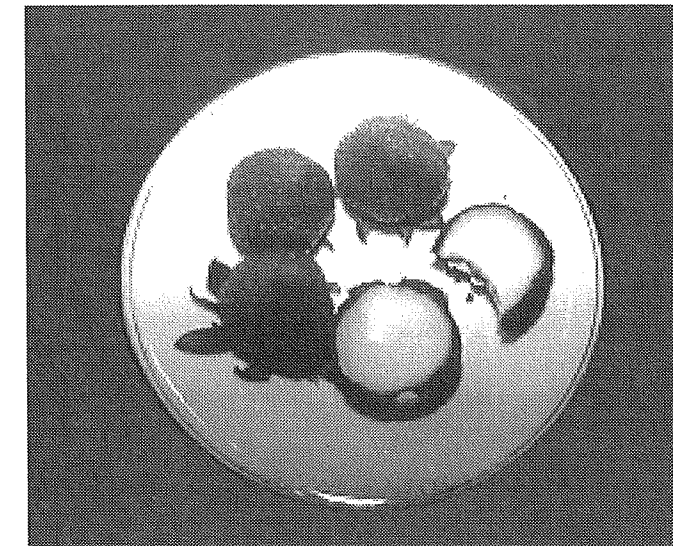
This recipe makes plain (and yummy!) chocolate cupcakes. At Lowell House teas, you may have seen them frosted with the chocolate frosting described below and topped with either a fresh raspberry or a tiny swirl of chocolate.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups flour	1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda	1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder	
1 cup cold water	1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla	1 teaspoon white vinegar

Directions:

Mix all dry ingredients. Add water, oil, vanilla and vinegar and mix until smooth. Fill miniature cupcake pan 2/3rds full. Bake in preheated oven for 12 minutes at 350°. Let cupcakes cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan with spatula. Recipe makes about 48 miniature cupcakes.



Chocolate Frosting for Cupcakes

Ingredients:

12 ounce package of chocolate chips
1 cup heavy cream

Directions:

Mix ingredients in saucepan. Melt chocolate over low heat, stirring continuously. Spread mixture over cupcakes.

Cupcakes with Cream Centers

These cupcakes win many votes for favorite tea pastry. For variety, try adding chocolate chip morsels to the cream cheese mixture before adding it into the cupcake.

Ingredients for chocolate cupcakes plus:

1 8 oz package of cream cheese 1/4 cup sugar
1 large egg

Directions:

Mix basic chocolate cupcake batter (recipe given on preceding page). In a separate bowl, beat together cream cheese and sugar. Add egg and beat until smooth. Fill miniature cupcake pan 1/2 full with chocolate batter. Add about 1 teaspoon of cream cheese mixture on top of the chocolate, using finger to scoop it off the spoon. Bake cupcakes in preheated oven for 12 minutes at 350°. Cool cupcakes for 5 minutes before removing from pan with spatula.

Butter Pecan Turtle Cookies

The original recipe for this cookies came from a Land O'Lakes butter package many years ago.

Warning -- These fudgy, buttery, nutty cookies are extremely sweet!

Crust Ingredients:

2 cups flour 1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup butter 8 oz pecans (slightly over 1 cup)

Directions:

Soften butter and mix together flour, butter and sugar. Pat dough into a 9 x 13 greased pan. Sprinkle/cover dough with pecan halves.

Caramel Ingredients:

2/3 cup butter (if unsalted, add pinch of salt)
1/2 cup brown sugar 2 large bars of milk chocolate

Directions:

Cook butter and sugar over high heat with continuous stirring until mixture is bubbling hot with the texture of heavy cream. Spoon evenly over pecan crust — the caramel doesn't spread on its own.

Bake for 20-25 minutes at 350°. Top should be shiny when done. Immediately after taking pan out of oven, put 2 large Hershey bars on top and allow them to melt. Once melted, spread the chocolate evenly. Then stick pan into refrigerator until chocolate hardens. To serve, turn cookies out of pan, let soften slightly, then cut.

Mary Lee explains the significance of this salmon:

"Each year at commencement, the Senior Common Room is served cold poached salmon at luncheon in the Masters' Residence between the morning ceremony and the award of degrees in the House courtyard. The practice stems from an old Harvard tradition of serving salmon to ALL participants and guests on commencement day. That practice disappeared a long time ago, but a group of tutors in Lowell House, led by Steve Harrison and others, began to poach salmon and make mayonnaise sauce in the Masters' kitchen to serve to the SCR. Now, a group of tutors and alumni/ae meet in the Masters' Residence on the Tuesday evening of commencement week to continue the tradition, while drinking enormous quantities of wine."

Mary Lee's Mayonnaise advice:

"Home made mayonnaise is FAR SUPERIOR to that in jars and is really easy to make in a blender or food processor. We use the classic recipe adapted for blender by Julia Child and Simone Beck in their book, Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Book One. We do recommend reducing the salt in that recipe by 1/2 or more and increasing the mustard by about 1/4. We also use a mixture of 1/2 olive oil and 1/2 safflower or other vegetable oil. Use only freshly squeezed lemon juice. While the fish may be decorated in plain mayonnaise, we recommend serving dill mayonnaise separately with the fish. Follow the Child-Beck recipe and when 2/3 of the oil has been taken up, add 1/4 cup finely minced dill for a standard recipe amount. We make mayonnaise in quadruple recipes."



Recipe for Lowell House Cold Poached Salmon

Ingredients:

1 six-pound salmon (serves 8 people)	2 carrots
1 large onion	2 stalks celery
1 bunch parsley	1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper	2 bay leaves

optional:

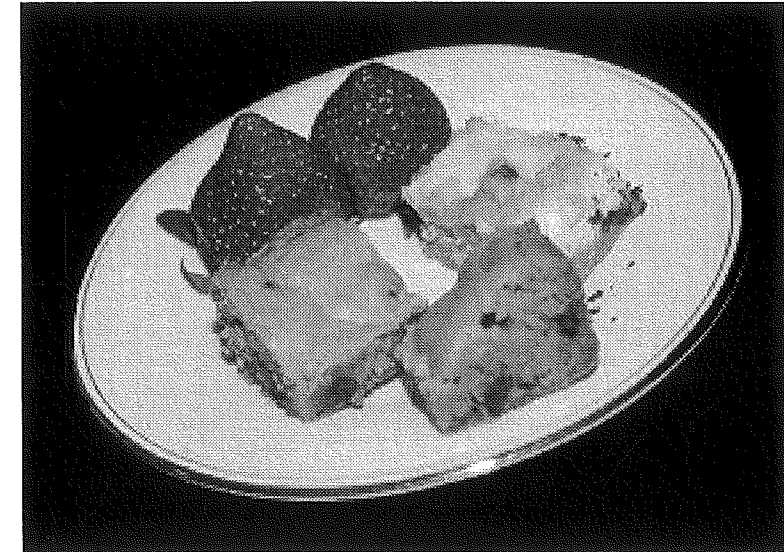
1 cucumber and sprigs of dill for garnish

Directions:

If at all possible, the fish should be gutted and scaled and poached whole, with the head and tail intact. This takes a very large, deep roasting pan with a cover. A 6 or 7 pound salmon will fill the typical turkey roasting pan. You should avoid bending it too much to fit the pan. The very pretty fish poaching pans available at Williams-Sonoma and other high-end kitchen supply stores are only good for a 3 or 4 pounder. Lowell House has a 32" long by 10" wide by 8" deep aluminum poacher that we had custom made. In it, we can do two 12 pound fish at one time. We usually cook four 12 pounders for a luncheon party of about 120 at which sautéed chicken breast, pasta salad, fruit salad, and bread are also served. You should figure on a 6 pound fish serving 8 people as a main course.

The fish should be completely and securely wrapped in a double layer of cheesecloth. This is essential to keeping the fish together when you are getting it out of the pan when warm. If you are using a fish poacher, it will have a wire basket in which you can place the wrapped fish. That is a great help in handling it later. If not, you should put three or four strips of cheesecloth cross-ways under the wrapped fish, long enough to stick out over the sides of the pan, which you can use to lift it out when done.

The fish should be placed in the pan and covered with water. If possible, the pan should cover two stove burners to provide as uniform heat over the length of the pan as possible. Coarsely chop the carrots, onions, celery and parsley and distribute them around the fish. Add spices. Cover the pan and bring the water to a simmer (steam and small bubbles, but no active boiling). After the water begins to simmer, cook for 10 minutes per inch of fish thickness (about 30 minutes for a 4 pound fish and 50 minutes for a 10 pounder). Remove the fish from the water and let it cool for about 30 minutes. It is very fragile at this point, so be careful with it. Then put it in the refrigerator to cool with its cheesecloth wrappings still on for at least six hours. It will keep up to two days in this state. The cooking liquid makes a fantastic fish stock. Strain out the vegetables and boil it until it is halved in volume. If you like, you might add 1/4 cup of dry vermouth, or other white wine, to two quarts of the stock. The stock can be frozen and kept for several months to be used in fish soups and chowders. After six hours in the refrigerator, the fish will have firmed up and you can unwrap it. It is easiest to cut the cheesecloth lengthwise and lift the fish to pull it out from underneath. Be careful not to break the head and tail off (if you have kept them so far). You should, however, remove the top skin of the fish. It will usually come off with the cheesecloth. The fish should be decorated by covering it with mayonnaise, with details of sliced cucumber and sprigs of dill.



Chocolate Chip Brownies

Ingredients:

1 cup softened butter	1 cup white sugar
1 cup brown sugar	1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon baking powder	3 large eggs
1 tablespoon water	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 1/4 cups flour	12 oz package of chocolate chips

Directions:

Mix butter, sugars, salt and baking powder until well blended. Add 3 eggs, 1 at a time, while beating. Add water and vanilla. Beat well. Add flour and beat well. Add package of chocolate chips. Divide batter between 9 x 13 and 6 x 9 greased pans. Spread to corners. Bake in preheated oven for 20-25 minutes at 350°. Check after 20 minutes, remove from oven when lightly brown.

Marshmallow puffs (meringues)

Ingredients:

4 egg whites	1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup sugar	1/2 teaspoon vanilla
chocolate chip mini-morsels	

Directions:

Beat eggs with cream of tartar until thick and foamed. Gradually add 1 cup sugar. Beat until really stiff. Then add vanilla and some chocolate chip mini-morsels. Spoon 2 teaspoon blobs onto parchment paper-lined pan. Put in oven for 1 hour at 200-225°. Turn off oven without opening it. Let meringues sit in closed oven overnight to dry.

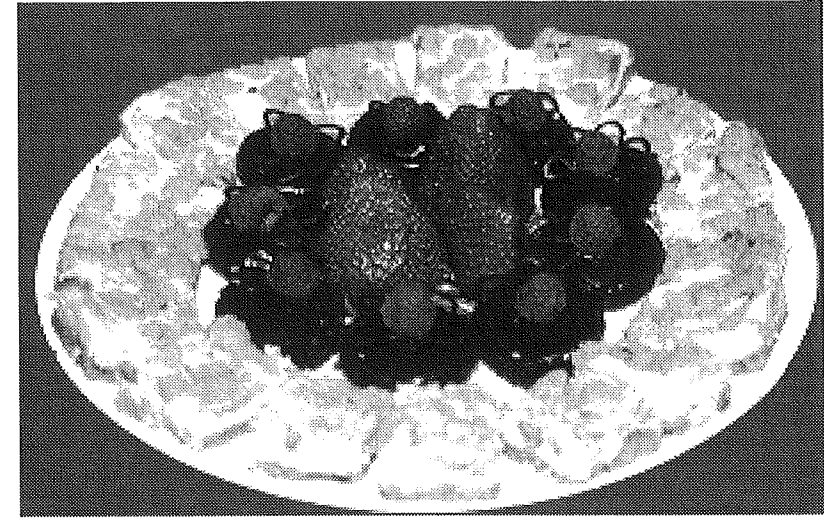
Normal Brownies

Ingredients:

1/2 cup margarine (not butter or spread)	2 oz unsweetened chocolate
2 large eggs	1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup chopped walnuts	

Directions:

Melt chocolate and margarine over low heat, stirring often. Let mixture sit for a couple of hours until it cools to room temperature. When mixture has cooled, take a separate bowl and beat 2 eggs. Gradually add in 1 cup sugar. Beat for a couple of minutes until a "ribbon" forms (until the batter becomes fairly thick). Mix the cooled chocolate mixture into the eggs. Add vanilla, flour and walnuts. Spread batter evenly in 9 x 9 greased pan. Bake in preheated oven for 20-25 minutes at 350°.



Cherry Dream Squares

Ingredients:

1 package Duncan Hines white cake mix	1 1/4 cups oatmeal (Mary Lee uses Quaker Oats)
1/2 cup softened butter (8 tablespoons)	1 large egg
1 21 oz can of cherry pie filling	1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/4 cup brown sugar	

Directions:

Combine cake mix, 6 tablespoons of butter and 1 cup oatmeal. Take out one cup of batter and save for topping. Add egg to the remaining batter and stir. Batter should remain firm. Pat into 9 x 13 greased pan.

Blend cherry pie filling in blender until it becomes paste. Then apply evenly over batter in pan.

Add 2 tablespoons butter, remaining sugar, oatmeal and nuts to reserved cup of batter. Mix and spread on top of cherries. Bake for 30-40 minutes at 350° until light brown.

Square Cheese Cake

Crust Ingredients:

1 cup flour	1/2 cup brown sugar
1/3 cup butter (5 1/3 tablespoons)	1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Crust Directions:

Stir ingredients together. Save 1/2 cup of batter for topping and pack the remainder into a 10 x 6 lightly greased pan. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes.

Topping Ingredients:

8 oz package of cream cheese	1/4 cup sugar
1 large egg	2 tablespoons milk
2 tablespoons lemon juice	1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping Directions:

Beat cream cheese with sugar. Add one egg and beat until smooth. Add milk and lemon juice. Add vanilla. Pour cream cheese mixture on top of cooked base. Sprinkle uncooked 1/2 cup of batter on top of cream cheese mixture. Cook for 25 minutes at 350°. Allow cheese cake to cool to room temperature. Before serving, put cheese cake in freezer for several minutes before cutting.