

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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## The cookie that founded a family

It was the summer of 1978 and I had just been laid off from my job as a waitress at the Boca Raton Hotel and Club. I had enough money to last a couple of months, but when I saw a notice for a job opening at a local book store, the English major in me jumped at a chance to leave the food service world behind.

Not knowing Boca Raton very well, I went to the bookstore in the Mall only to find out they had not placed the ad. But the clerk told me he was getting ready to hand in his resignation, so he handed me an application and told me to sit in the mall and wait for his signal that he had resigned.

Looking over my application, the manager asked me to name the last book I had read. My answer of *The Once and Future King*, by T.H.White, thrilled her since it was her favorite book. She hired me on the spot. I started working a day or two later, but the person designated to train me, the Assistant Manager, was on vacation and would start my training the following week.

As my training progressed, we had a lot of fun and it became apparent that my trainer was becoming a really good friend. The idea that our relationship might become even more occurred to me, but he had a girlfriend who managed another bookstore. Since we enjoyed talking together and hanging out as friends, I did what I would do to cement any friendship—I gave him a Tupperware bowl filled to the top with cookies.

These were no store-bought slice-and-bake, but a homemade cookie that I had been baking for more than half my life. A Girl Scout field trip to the Florida Power and Light demonstration kitchen was a pivotal point in my childhood. One of the recipes we learned that day was a simple Peanut Butter Cookie, with the familiar criss-cross indentations on top. They sent us home with a thin book of recipes and, to be honest, I don't remember ever making any other recipes from that cookbook.

Right through college, while my friends were making Tollhouse Cookies using the recipe on the back of the package, I made my specialty, from memory. The recipe never made less than six or seven dozen, so I always had more than enough to share! When I filled up that 2 1/2 quart Tupperware bowl, my new friend had enough cookies to last a while.

Now, I did not witness the next part of this story, but it was relayed by a reliable source. Apparently my friend had an argument with his girlfriend while they were at his home. To shut her up, he popped a cookie in her mouth. Well, she knew who had made those cookies and the argument turned into a breakup.

So there I was, his good friend, right there. Needless to say, that friend is now my husband and still my friend. We've been married almost 35 years, raised our three sons here in Gainesville and we are thoroughly enjoying fun times with our five grandchildren. And to think, it all started with that homemade cookie I learned to make as a Girl Scout!

# Hogtown HomeGrown Public Demo Schedule

CANNING PEAR JELLY AND PEAR BUTTER Saturday, August 16, 930am 441 Farmers Market

COOKING: BETTER THAN THE BLUE BOX County Libraries July 17, 2pm Library Partnership; August 2, 3pm Tower Road

## What's Fresh Right Now?

**Beans**—green, wax, roma, purple/  
green long, dragon tongue

**Blackberries**

**Blueberries**

**Cabbage**—green/red

**Citrus**—juices

**Corn**

**Cucumbers**—mini seedless, kirby,  
slicers

**Eggplant**

**Fennel**

**Garlic**—chives

**Greens**—arugula, callaloo, malabar  
spinach, collard, mustard

**Herbs**—stevia, italian/opal/lemon basil,  
parsley, cilantro, thai lime, dill, sage,  
rosemary, oregano, assorted mint

**Honey**

**Kohlrabi**—purple/green

**Leeks**

**Melons**—watermelon, honeydew,  
crenshaw

**Mushrooms**—chanterelles

**Nectarines**

**Okra**

**Onions**—green, yellow, red

**Peanuts**—green in-shell, dried without  
shells

**Peas**—snow, white acre, creamer, purple  
hull, black-eye, zipper cream

**Peppers**—red/green sweet bell,  
cubanelle, poblano, jalapeno, variety hot

**Plums**

**Potatoes**—small red

**Shoots, Sprouts and Microgreens**

**Squash**—summer, green/yellow  
zucchini, acorn, butternut, pattypan,  
kabocha, pumpkin

**Strawberries**

**Tomatoes**—grape, cherry, yellow,  
green, red beefsteak, heirloom, cluster

## Local and Fresh—

### Peanuts

Starting now, right through the end of the year, peanuts are being harvested throughout the South. Green peanuts, ready for boiling or roasting, can be found at local markets.

Before boiling or roasting, give them a good wash, using several changes of water, to remove any clinging dirt. They are perishable, so use or freeze green peanuts as soon as possible.

Dried raw peanuts, with or without shells, can be found in bulk bins and in packages. The shelled nuts are often blanched to remove the skins and they can also be boiled, just like dried beans.

Try boiling shelled, blanched peanuts without salt. Add to stews, soups or curries or use in Boiled Peanut Hummus (you may need to add 1/2 teaspoon of salt to hummus, if desired).

## Boiled Peanuts

### INGREDIENTS

4 cups green peanuts in the shell  
2 gallons hot water  
1 cup salt

### DIRECTIONS

Thoroughly wash peanuts, using several changes of water. Place in a 3-4 quart pot.

Stir salt into hot water until dissolved. Pour salt water into the pot to cover peanuts by an inch. Set remaining salt water aside.

Bring salt water and peanuts to a boil, cover, reduce heat and cook one hour. Test doneness by breaking open and tasting a slightly-cooled nut.

Cook to desired firmness - 1-3 hours for freshly-picked peanuts and 8-12 hours for dried nuts. Add salt water as needed to cover.

Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate.

# Boiled Peanut Hummus

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup shelled boiled peanuts
- 2 Tablespoon tahini (sesame paste)
- 1 Tablespoon natural peanut butter (no added sugar, salt or oils)
- 1-2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- a pinch of ground cumin (optional)
- 1/4 cup water (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients, except the water, in a food processor. Puree to desired consistency. Add water if you want a looser, dip-type hummus. Cover and refrigerate.

Serve chilled. It tastes best if made a day ahead to allow the flavors to mellow.

# Peanut Butter Cookies

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup lightly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups natural peanut butter
- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 2 2/3 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

## DIRECTIONS

Cream butter and sugars. Beat in peanut butter, then eggs and 1 teaspoon vanilla.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, soda and salt. Add to wet ingredients and stir until almost completely combined. Add remaining vanilla and stir until completely combined. Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line cookie sheets with parchment.

Roll dough into walnut-sized balls. Place on parchment and use a fork dipped in hot water to flatten and imprint with criss-cross design.

Bake 7-10 minutes, until edges are golden brown. Cool on paper bags. Store covered.

## Tricks and Tips

Hugh Acheson, chef and owner of several restaurants specializing in seasonal food, created the first boiled peanut hummus I ever tasted. My addition of peanut butter to his recipe enhances the peanut flavor.

Cumin is a personal preference, so if you like it, by all means add a pinch. Boiling peanuts yourself helps to control the amount of salt, but you can always use peanuts from your favorite roadside stand or buy a can at the grocery store.

## COOKIE RECIPE NOTE

Since the original recipe called for shortening, processed peanut butter, white flour and 50% more sugar, this is a new and improved Peanut Butter Cookie. In case you were wondering, I only used Peter Pan creamy peanut butter in the original—the other brands were too sweet or oily.

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## Tricks and Tips

Peach Melba was a popular recipe in cookbooks when I was a child. The rosy color of the combined peaches and raspberries enticed me, but I have always preferred my berries whole. Instead of the Peach Melba's berry puree over peach halves, the blackberries in the Peach Mable are served whole, while the peaches melt into the background.

## Peach Mable

### INGREDIENTS

6 peaches, peeled and pitted  
1 Tablespoon lemon juice  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
3 cups blackberries

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an 8 X 8 pan.

In a deep saucepan over medium heat, smash peaches with a potato masher until slightly chunky and juicy. Stir in lemon juice, reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes. Add brown sugar and bring to a boil, stirring constantly to prevent sticking. Reduce heat and simmer at least 5 minutes to thicken. When the peach mixture is thick, remove from heat and stir in the blackberries. Pour into prepared pan.

Cover with foil and bake about 30 minutes, until bubbly.

Serve hot or at room temperature. Good with ice cream or whipped cream.

**VARIATION** Top with a crumble topping before baking instead of covering with foil.