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*The  
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Get the recipe  
on page 83.*

# Talk<sup>of</sup>the South

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO SOUTHERN CULTURE

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2014



## Do-It-Yourself Moon Pies

A homemade take on Mardi Gras's marshmallow treat

by KIM SEVERSON

**D**AVID GUAS, WHO MAKES HIS LIVING SELLING the food of Louisiana to the people of Virginia at his Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery in Arlington, developed a Moon Pie obsession early. While growing up in New Orleans, he'd sit like a tiny lifeguard atop the family Mardi Gras viewing ladder as the floats passed by, waiting for the krewes that threw mini versions of the marshmallow-filled convenience-store staple. His daddy would snag a few, and Guas and his sister would ration the chocolaty little sandwiches so they would last the day.

When Guas grew old enough to roam alone, he'd set ambitious Moon Pie-related parade goals. "I'm gonna catch me twenty this season," he'd say to himself. In high school, the sweet snack became his go-to sustenance for late-night carousing. "When I had a couple beers in me, we grabbed them to keep us on our feet."

Now that he's an adult, Guas still gets Moon Pie cravings. But instead of unwrapping a premade version, he hits the kitchen and whips up a fresh batch at home.

He starts with dough made from finely ground graham crackers to give the cookies their characteristic sandy texture. Then he sandwiches a dollop of honey-kissed marshmallow filling in between and dips the whole thing into a warmed mixture of bittersweet chocolate and oil. (The more cacao and the less fat, the harder the coating sets up.) These tiny nostalgia bombs are best the day you make them or perhaps a day or two after. Much longer and the cookies lose their snap.

It takes a little time to separately craft the cookies, marshmallow, and chocolate coating, so Guas recommends familiarizing yourself with the recipe and ingredients in advance. "Don't be afraid to prep for this unique treat," he says. "Set everything out first so you can visualize what you want to do, just like it's a cooking class." But you don't have to be a pastry chef to make Moon Pies at home. You just have to think like one. 🍪



MEET the CHEF:  
**DAVID GUAS**

**Current restaurant:** Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery, Arlington, VA

**Hometown:** New Orleans, LA

**Home state pride:** When he opened Bayou Bakery, he tattooed an early-1900s map of Louisiana on his arm.

**Favorite kitchen tool:** A propane torch ("It's a quick solve for lots of problems") and an industrial infrared laser thermometer

**Dish he prepared when his beloved Saints played the Dirty Birds, also known as the Atlanta Falcons:** A Jiye Turkey Sandwich



## Mardi Gras Moon Pies

(Makes approximately 12)

### Cookie Dough

#### INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz. unsalted butter
- ¼ cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- ¼ cup Steen's cane syrup
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ cups graham cracker crumbs, ground fine
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tbsp. whole milk

### PREPARATION

Cream butter, brown sugar, syrup, and vanilla in the bowl of an electric mixer, using the paddle attachment, for 1 minute. In a separate bowl, combine dry ingredients and mix with a fork. Add dry ingredients to butter mixture and mix on low speed; slowly stream in milk. Continue mixing until the dough comes together. Press dough flat, wrap it in plastic, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Turn out chilled dough onto a flour-dusted surface, then roll it until it is ¼ inch thick. Stamp out cookies using a 3-inch round cookie cutter. Place cookies on a parchment-lined baking sheet



bake 10 to 12 minutes. Remove sheet from oven, and while the cookies are cooling, prepare your marshmallow.

## Marshmallow

### INGREDIENTS

**1** tsp. powdered gelatin  
**1** cup water, ice cold, plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at room temperature  
**1** tbsp. light corn syrup  
**1** tbsp. honey (clover or wildflower)  
**1** cup granulated sugar  
**4** large grade-A egg whites

### PREPARATION

Soak gelatin over  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cold water, and set aside. Combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup room-temperature water, corn syrup,

honey, and sugar in a small pot, insert candy thermometer, and simmer until mixture reaches 240 degrees. When the thermometer reaches 200 degrees—but not before—place egg whites in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, and whip on high.

Once the sugar mixture hits 240, remove it from heat, and stir in the bloomed gelatin. Then, while egg whites are whipping, slowly drizzle the hot sugar mixture down the inside of the bowl to avoid splattering the hot syrup. Continue whipping for an additional 8 minutes, until the mixture stiffens. The pan will still feel warm to the touch but no longer hot.



Flip over half of the cooled cookies. Lightly coat a spoon with nonstick cooking spray, and spoon approximately a quarter cup of marshmallow onto each flipped cookie. Use the remaining cookies as tops; gently push down until you can see the marshmallow come just to the edge. While making the chocolate coating (see below), allow cookies to chill in refrigerator for at least 15 minutes.

## Chocolate Coating

### INGREDIENTS

- 1** lb. bittersweet chocolate (61%–70% cacao)
- 2** tbsp. vegetable oil or canola oil

### PREPARATION

Melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a small saucepan of simmering water. Stir until chocolate has melted, then remove bowl from heat and let it cool slightly. Once the chocolate is no longer hot, but warm, slowly whisk in oil in a steady stream. Allow chocolate to cool at room temperature for about 5 minutes before proceeding with assembly.

### ASSEMBLY

Submerge chilled cookies in the chocolate, using 2 forks to gently lift the sandwiches out of the bowl. Let stand until shell hardens.