

# eggnog

**H**oliday parties hold certain truths. The chime-laden music will eventually drive you bonkers, and the gift exchange will feature at least one item in extremely poor taste (from the pro, of course).

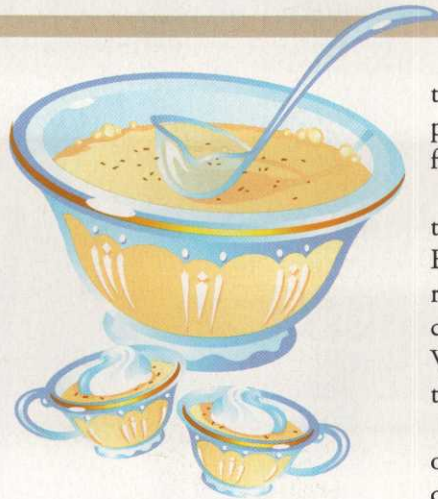
Despite swearing they will attempt to mingle, superintendents and their staffs will eventually wind up together and talk shop. These occurrences are as inevitable as the changing seasons.

The other, and far more pleasurable yuletide constant, is eggnog. The unmistakable bouquet of nutmeg fills the air, slowly overpowering the funky smell of fruitcake and the piney aromas of real Christmas trees. In the corner in a glass serving bowl, said nutmeg will dance atop creamy swirls of milk, egg, sugar and — take your pick — rum, brandy or bourbon.

For many, eggnog is the sweet nectar of the gods, associated primarily with the merriment of holidays and possessing a nascent nod to the spirit of laughter and goodwill. As you down the smooth concoction, though, make sure to offer a toast for your ancestors. By sipping eggnog, you are drinking a vibrant history that spans nearly 400 years.

Eggnog was quite popular with the British upper class as early as the 17th century, but it was in the 1800s

THIS HOLIDAY STANDARD IS A SIMPLE CONCOCTION LOADED WITH A STORIED HISTORY **BY MARK LUCE**



when imbibers in the United States made it their own. The name stems from a confluence of words — egg, grog (slang for rum) and noggin (a small wooden cup). Perhaps revelers found saying “egg and grog in a noggin” a little tough and shortened the name. The three major ingredients, too, have colorful histories.

**Eggs:** We still haven’t been able to determine which came first, but we do know that ducks and geese laid eggs in China in 4000 B.C. What we know as “laying hens” showed up around 2000 B.C. in India and made their way West around the fifth century.

**Rum:** An integral corner of the “Triangular Trade” in the 17th cen-

tury, rum came into popularity and profit because of massive sugar cane farms in the West Indies.

The cane would be burned down to molasses, then shipped to New England, where it was set in oak barrels with water and yeast. The colonies sold the rum for slaves in West Africa, which were then sold to the West Indies for molasses.

**Nutmeg:** Originally only available on the tiny island of Run near Indonesia, the rare spice caused countless battles and brutalities. Because the profit from the spice was so high, the English and Dutch grappled militarily over the island for decades in the late 16th and early 17th century. Eventually, the Dutch succeeded in capturing the land, but at the cost of compromise — they ceded the British the island of Manhattan. Nice swap.

Enjoy the eggnog, but do so more smartly and with the appropriate reverence for this historic holiday drink.

*Mark Luce, a free-lance writer in Kansas City, Mo., once had his granddad slip him some spiked eggnog when he was a teenager.*

DYNAMIC GRAPHICS

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