

TASTE OF TRUMAN

— with Grace Bueckendorf —

The butter brickle candy that changed my life

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Let me tell you the story about how a recipe made me a classroom celebrity, the family dessert expert and allowed me to experience the thrills of arson for the first time. This is the story of how former Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's Butter Brickle Candy recipe changed my life.

My fourth grade teacher, an interesting woman with a temper almost as short as she was, assigned all of us a project to research a state and complete a 5-minute presentation. Honestly, I wanted to do a presentation about Wyoming or West Virginia or somewhere more exotic. But — just my luck — I got stuck with Louisiana, a state so oddly shaped and obscure I had never heard of it.

However, determined to get an A and blow the rest of my class away, I got to work. Rather than simply conducting a Google search — because that type of tomfoolery was for third graders — I decided to construct a carefully worded and slightly desperate handwritten plea for information to the then-governor of Louisiana, Kathleen Blanco.

I expected her to send me a whole list of facts and nonsense about Louisiana — which she did — but the coolest part of the package was this recipe.

I thought it was odd that she would send me a recipe when all I really wanted was a list of state facts, but I decided to go with it. I made it for the first time that day, and my life has never been the same.

When I brought the perfectly sweet and salty snack to



Katey Stoetzel/Index

my peers, it became an instant sensation, as did I. From that day forward, my culinary prowess was in constant demand and I hardly could keep up with the sheer number of birthday treat requests I was receiving. From that day, I was no longer Grace Bueckendorf the Fourth Grader — I was Grace Bueckendorf the Dessert God.

This reputation followed me into all facets of my life, and soon I was spending all my free time making this recipe. I was a slave to the lure of the butter brickle. My siblings were fighting over the buttery treat and we soon grew chubby from over-consumption.

I, Grace Bueckendorf the Dessert God, soon grew power-hungry. Blinded by the high I felt pleasing those around me with sugary treats, I devoted much of my free time to learning new dessert recipes to give my peers and family. I began making apple cakes, experimenting with cookie recipes and decorating fluffy cakes, but no treat could live up to the butter brickle candy.

There came a point when I was making so many desserts at once that my kitchen began to look less like a household kitchen and more like a dessert factory, with sugar and flour spilled all over the granite countertop,

and my apron covered with baking ingredients.

Once, during a fit of baking and cooking, I was making this candy and turned to take a tray of cookies out of the kitchen. I absent mindedly tried to turn off the stovetop, but accidentally turned it on high heat. After setting the tray of cookies down on the countertop, thinking the stovetop had ample time to cool, I set my oven mitt on the stove. A couple of minutes later, I smelled smoke and saw a gray cloud buffeting up from the mitt. I tried to move the mitt, but it was too late. The oven mitt was on fire.

Without thinking, I filled the bowl with the cookie dough to the brim with water and dumped it over the flames. The fire was out, but sitting there, defeated, looking at the hot, crusty dough on the stove, I contemplated where my life had gone off the tracks. All thoughts led back to when I first held that innocent white sheet of paper with this recipe in my hands. I realized the power of the candy, and have not touched it since then until I wrote this cooking column.

So if you make this recipe for your friends, have fun with it, but most importantly, be careful. Your life might never be the same.

Former Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's Butter Brickle Candy Recipe

This recipe makes about 1 pound of butter brickle candy.

Ingredients

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 cup Louisiana cane sugar
- 6 oz. packet of semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup of sliced almonds
- Wax paper

Directions

1. Place almonds on a cookie sheet in a 300-degree oven for about 10 minutes or until the almonds begin to look golden brown — crunchy, but not overdone. Let the almonds cool.
2. Line a 15 x 10 inch shallow pan with wax paper.
3. In a 2-quart saucepan, combine sugar and margarine. Cook over low heat for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cook to 300 degrees Fahrenheit with a candy thermometer, or test by dropping a very small amount into ice water to form brittle strands (done when strands are crunchy but do not stick to one's teeth).
4. Pour the hot candy evenly into the lined pan.
5. Let sit 1-2 minutes, then sprinkle chocolate chips over hot candy.
6. Let sit 2-3 minutes as chocolate chips soften. With a spatula, spread softened chocolate evenly over candy.
7. Sprinkle toasted almonds over the melted chocolate.
8. Let the candy cool completely by putting it into the freezer for about 30 minutes. Break the candy into pieces, and store in tins.

Total time needed:
1 hour, 10 minutes

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