Beer drinkers accuse Anheuser-Busch of watering down brews

By Stuart Pfeifer, Los Angeles Times

Beer drinkers in three U.S. states filed lawsuits accusing brewing giant Anheuser-Busch of watering down and mislabeling Budweiser, Michelob and other brands to cut costs.

The lawsuits, filed in the last week in California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, said the brewing giant cheated consumers by listing a higher alcohol content than the beers actually contained.



Ten Anheuser-Busch products were named in the lawsuits: Budweiser, Michelob, Michelob Ultra, Bud Ice, Bud Light Platinum, Hurricane High Gravity Lager, King Cobra, Busch Ice, Natural Ice and Bud Light Lime.

Former employees at the company's 13 breweries – including some in high-level positions – are cooperating with the plaintiffs, said San Rafael lawyer Josh Boxer, the lead attorney in the case.

"Our information comes from former employees at Anheuser-Busch, who have informed us that as a matter of corporate practice, all of their products [mentioned in the lawsuit] are watered down," Boxer said, according to the *Associated Press*. "It's a simple cost-saving measure, and it's very significant."

The excess water is added just before bottling and cuts the

stated alcohol content by 3 to 8 percent, he said.

Anheuser-Busch InBev called the claims “groundless” and said its beers fully comply with labeling laws.

“Our beers are in full compliance with all alcohol labeling laws. We proudly adhere to the highest standards in brewing our beers, which have made them the best-selling in the U.S. and the world,” Peter Kraemer, vice president of brewing and supply, said in a statement.

Anheuser-Busch, based in St. Louis, Mo., merged with InBev in 2008 to form the world’s largest alcohol producer, headquartered in Belgium. In 2011, the company produced 22 billion gallons of alcoholic beverages, 3 billion of them in the U.S., and reported $22 billion in profits, the lawsuit said.

According to the lawsuit, the company has sophisticated equipment that measures the alcohol content throughout the brewing process and is accurate to within one-hundredth of a percent. But after the merger, the company increasingly chose to dilute its popular brands of beer, the lawsuit alleged.

“Following the merger, AB vigorously accelerated the deceptive practices … sacrificing the quality products once produced by Anheuser-Busch in order to reduce costs,” said the lead lawsuit, filed Friday in federal court in San Francisco.

Boxer told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the plaintiffs did not independently test the alcohol content in the beers. That was a significant omission, said Eric Shepard, executive editor of Beer Marketer’s Insights.

“Right now, I’m skeptical,” Shepard told the Post-Dispatch. “Brewers and other large companies are often the targets of class-action lawsuits, and A-B wouldn’t have had its vice president of brewing Peter Kraemer come out with their statement if they weren’t confident in their standing.”

More California wine being consumed throughout the world

By AP

SAN FRANCISCO – New figures show U.S. wine exports grew for the third consecutive year in 2012, setting a record of $1.43 billion in revenue, the San Francisco-based Wine Institute said this week.

Ninety percent of those exports were from California. Volume shipments reached 424.6 million liters or 112.2 million cases.

The European Union remained the top market for California wines, accounting for about 34 percent of all sales. The state's wineries also saw significant growth in Canada and Asia.



Sales in China reached $74 million in 2012, up 18 percent from the previous year. South Korea, at $16 million, was up 26 percent. And Vietnam, at $27 million, was up 22 percent.

Exports to Mexico also grew for a second consecutive year, to $20 million, an amount that was double the 2009 figure.

In Canada, the second-largest market for California wines, sales reached $434 million, up 14 percent.

The increase came despite a highly competitive global market, significant trade barriers and a recovering economy, according to institute president Robert P. Koch.

The institute, which serves as the administrator of an export-promotion program managed by the USDA, promotes California wines through a video campaign, website and social media campaigns across the globe.

California winemakers say they've seen increased demand from overseas but still face some barriers to exporting wine.

"We've seen a big demand," said David Gates, vice president of vineyard operations at Ridge Vineyards in Cupertino. "And as demand has picked up, we pushed a little harder into the more developing markets, the biggest one being China."

The winery exports 25 percent of its production, Gates said. Its top export destinations are Canada, United Kingdom, Japan, Mexico and China.

As exports pick up, the main barrier for a smaller winery is production, Gates said. The company has to allocate its wine carefully in order to meet demand from the growing export market.

Another barrier is price, said Skylar Stuck, general manager at Halter Ranch in Paso Robles. Land and labor in places such as Chile and Australia are cheaper than in the Napa or Sonoma valleys. Even French and Italian wines can cost less to make, he said. The result is that iconic California wines that have cachet sell well at high prices, but lesser-known wineries have a harder time competing.

Despite the barriers, Stuck said, California winemakers are focusing on overseas markets to bring more exposure to their growing region.

The best way to promote California wines?

"I've traveled a lot, going store by store, doing tastings," Stuck said.

More antioxidants may not mean better health

By Nancy Shute, NPR

Antioxidants in foods are good for you, so more should be better, right?

Evidently not.

In a new study, people who ate more antioxidants overall didn't lower their risk of stroke and dementia in old age. That flies in the face of earlier research that found that the antioxidants in fruits and vegetables reduce stroke and dementia risk.



"We're seeing strong and clear benefits with specific antioxidants, but not overall," says Elizabeth Devore, an epidemiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital who led the new study, which was published online in the journal Neurology.

Last year, Devore found that eating lots of berries delayed cognitive decline among women in the big, ongoing Nurses Health Study. Berries have lots of chemicals called flavonoids, which researchers think probably have protective powers much like those of better-known antioxidants like beta-carotene, vitamin C and vitamin E.

Before that, Devore had looked at data from a long-term study of more than 5,000 people ages 55 and older in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The people were followed for about 14 years. She found that people who ate foods with more vitamin E were less

likely to suffer dementia, and people who ate foods with more vitamin C were less likely to have a stroke.

But now she's looking at the same people, and finds that having lots of antioxidants in the diet overall don't help with stroke and dementia. What gives?

Devore tells NPR that she re-ran the numbers from the earlier Rotterdam study, just to make sure she hadn't made a mistake, and it still showed that vitamins C and E were doing good things for the brain.

In the new study, the people with the highest levels of antioxidant intake were getting most of those antioxidants from coffee and tea. Evidently, the Dutch drink a lot of coffee!

Coffee and tea are "actually chock-full of antioxidants," Devore says, in the form of flavonoids.

And other studies on people in Europe have found that drinking a lot of coffee, say five cups a day, does help protect against Alzheimer's. But similar benefits didn't appear in the coffee-loving Dutch group in Devore's study, which leads her to suspect that total levels of antioxidant intake isn't the whole story. "It's nuance," she says.

An Italian study from 2011 also showed less stroke risk in people who had a high-antioxidant diet overall. But in that case, the people were getting their antioxidants from wine, fruits and vegetables, Devore says. That's very different than the diet of the Dutch study participants, who ate a lot of meat and dairy, and fewer vegetables and fruit.

Scientists have just started to really dig into the relationship between flavonoids and health, thanks to a big new USDA database on the still largely mysterious chemicals.

That should help resolve the confusion over the merits of

antioxidants, Devore says. “As we’re able to move into these more nontraditional antioxidant foods, we’ll be able to tease out more specific information for people.”

Locally sourced food hard for restaurants in winter

By Dan Saltzstein, New York Times

Locally grown. Market-sourced. Farm to table: These phrases have become the mantras of the American menu, promising ingredients that are supremely fresh, in season and produced within a tight radius of the restaurant.

But what can they possibly mean in the dead of winter, in northerly climes where farms are battened down and the earth is as hard as a raw cabbage?

In some restaurant kitchens, they mean a larder full of root vegetables, grains, dried beans and cellared fruits, as well as a lot of curing, pickling and preserving. Other, more ambitious restaurants turn to greenhouses or new vegetable hybrids.



Farmers markets are seasonal in Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

And many inevitably resort to a certain amount of well-intentioned cheating.

“At some point, you’re inherently a hypocrite,” said Marc Meyer, the chef at Cookshop, in New York City. “You can’t make a menu of turnips, rutabagas and potatoes.”

Even chefs like him who are devoted to local and seasonal foods have to make exceptions, including the occasional FedEx package. Meyer’s winter menus include dishes that straddle the indigenous and the imported, like line-caught Long Island swordfish with cauliflower (also from Long Island) and chicory (from Florida), dressed with Meyer lemon (California) and topped with wedges of blood orange (California again).

Total purity, Meyer said, is a nice idea, yet all but impossible: “What about chocolate? What about olive oil? Spices?”

“Go for it if you can,” he added. “I just can’t with a 100-seat restaurant.”

At Rouge Tomate, an Upper East Side shrine to fresh local produce, the executive chef, Jeremy Bearman, admits to using the occasional nonlocal winter ingredient, particularly tropical fruits (bananas, mangoes, pineapples) in desserts. “I don’t think you can be one of those restaurants here in the Northeast saying, only things from 50 miles away,” he said.

Certainly, there are outliers who go to extreme lengths to keep the faith. At Willows Inn, on Lummi Island in Washington state, Blaine Wetzel uses only ingredients grown on the restaurant’s farm and surrounding farms.

“We are as purist as it gets,” Wetzel said. This means that

“if I want lemon juice in something, I have to find an alternative” — underripe gooseberries are a common solution — “or maybe it’s not the right dish to be on the menu.” He forages for wild winter mushrooms and stores hundreds of onions bought from a neighboring farm. Yet despite the relatively moderate winter microclimate, in a shallow bay protected from cold ocean winds by the Olympic Mountains, Wetzel shuts down his restaurant in December and January. “We close when we can’t do what we do,” he said.

Dan Barber’s kitchen at Blue Hill at Stone Barns, in Pocantico Hills, N.Y., buys many of its ingredients from the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, an independent nonprofit organization on the same grounds that operates 80 acres of farmland (6.5 of them for vegetables), a 22,000-square-foot greenhouse and outdoor rows of plants shielded by a protective covering.

In addition, he and his team (as well as a full-time vegetable farm manager, Jack Algiere, and his crew) work with agricultural scientists at Cornell University on breeding winter-friendly vegetables, including a small, intensely sweet butternut squash they call the honeynut.

Barber pointed out that many of the strategies that chefs employ in winter, like fermentation or cold storage, are nothing new. “A lot of these techniques are ancient and brilliant, and evolved out of desperation,” he said.

Perhaps buoyed by the more modern technologies involved in breeding, he said that in some ways he preferred cooking in the winter months. “At what point can I make the greatest impression?” he said. “People’s expectations are lower, and it’s easier to exceed them.”

Barber isn’t the only chef who welcomes the cold-weather challenge. “We sort of look at winter the way an old-school chef looks at frugality,” said Jonathon Sawyer of the

Greenhouse Tavern, in Cleveland. “We take more time with dishes because we have less to put on the plate.”

Sawyer, whose restaurant’s website includes a manifesto on “Sustainability Initiatives,” bottles his own line of vinegars, including ones made from craft beer and rosé wine, and has a running stock of preserved items. He said relationships with local farmers become all the more important in winter, for securing ingredients like grains (in particular, farro, an Ohio specialty), shelled beans and legumes.

But even the word “local” can fall prey to some fudging.

“There’s a very famous farmer who, when I met him years ago, had a 20-mile radius” of restaurants he’d sell to, Barber said. “And last year when I talked to him, he said he was delivering to a restaurant 28 miles away.”

What happened to 20? “All purists have their negotiables,” Barber said.

Iliana Regan, whose Chicago restaurant, Elizabeth, has won attention for its emphasis on local ingredients, many of them foraged by Regan, has a somewhat broader definition. Almost everything on her menu “is Midwestern, though perhaps out of state lines,” she said. “We’re probably breaking the 200-mile rule.”

Whence 200? “I believe I read it somewhere,” Regan said.

Thanks in part to her restaurant’s small scale (there are three set seatings for eight people each), Regan can quickly adapt whatever ingredients come her way. Raccoon from a Wisconsin hunter became a pâté, which she paired with pickled cranberries. Mushrooms foraged on her cousin’s Indiana farm were partly frozen, and thus unsuitable for serving conventionally, so she dehydrated them and made a tea.

But Regan has her limits: she supplements her menu with items from Whole Foods – “everything from squash to parsnips to dairy,” she said, adding, “at least that way I can see if it’s organic and where it’s from.” And like many chefs, she imports specialty items from around the world, like matsutake mushrooms from Japan and truffles from Europe.

If there’s one thing about winter cooking that chefs seem to agree on, it’s that the toughest time isn’t the middle of the season, but the end. “For me, the hardest months are March and April,” Barber said. “Storage starts to run out and you’re sick of the root vegetables.”

The result, for some, is chef-envy. “I went down to San Francisco a couple of weeks ago,” Wetzel said. “It was making me jealous. Things I don’t see until June or May, they have on their plates in December.”

For Bearman of Rouge Tomate, flying in an item or two is particularly tempting in late winter, when customers expect early-spring all-stars like ramps and asparagus. “There’s definitely times where, if we see great fava beans or great peas coming out of Iacopi Farm in California, we probably cheat a little bit,” he said. “But then we switch when it comes into season here.”

By some measures, circumstances for Northern chefs are improving. Meyer noted the increased vibrancy of farmers’ markets, including the Greenmarket initiative in New York. “A few years ago, there was no radicchio, no treviso,” he said. “You’re seeing more variety.”

Others even see a benefit from global warming. “I hate to say it, but it’s true,” Sawyer said. “We got artichokes in Ohio all the way into November this year. Maybe December.”

Then again, restraints are sometimes a good thing. Bearman said the bounty of late summer could be overwhelming: “You find yourself thinking, ‘What am I going to do on my menu?’”

Fast food chains turning their attention to coffee

By Justin Bachman, Bloomberg Businessweek

Guess what? Americans really like coffee. In a show of how true this is, Burger King has upgraded its standard, rather uninspired brew with a new line from Seattle's Best Coffee, part of the Starbucks empire.

This follows a similar effort by McDonald's in 2007 to serve a better cup of coffee. Two years later, the company went all-in with its McCafe line of premium coffee drinks, for which the company credited a 25 percent jump in its 2009 coffee sales. In 2011, Wendy's followed the coffee-upgrade trend with its Redhead Roasters brand.



Burger King is clearly playing catch-up in the espresso battles, but recent history shows there are plenty of coffee guzzlers to go around.

All of this new, purportedly improved coffee at the fast-food chains was spurred, in part, by Americans' highly public love affair with Starbucks, Peet's, Caribou, Tim Hortons, Tully's, Coffee Beanery, Stumptown and thousands of other shops big and small across the land. (Blue Bottle, anyone?)

If every corner once had a mailbox or pay phone, it now has a coffee retailer peddling caffeine.

And we love it. Each day, 65 percent of Americans drink at

least one cup of coffee, a figure well ahead of soft drinks, the National Coffee Association reported last year. Consumption of gourmet coffee grew from 37 percent of all cups in 2011 to nearly half (46 percent) in 2012.

Much of this coffee is being drunk at home: 293.7 million cups per day, up from 280.5 million in 2009, according to Experian Marketing Service, a global marketing firm. (We're also more revved up – the amount of decaf has dropped in the past four years, Experian says.)

More to the point for Burger King: Eighteen percent of the chain's customers drink espresso or cappuccino, compared with 16 percent of all U.S. adults, Experian researchers have found.

Thus, Burger King has introduced 10 coffee drinks, including lattes, iced brew and a regular that starts at $1. The new blend is lighter than the old, designed to pair equally well with sweet and salty menu items, said Eric Hirschhorn, Burger King's vice president of global innovation.

"Over the past several years the American coffee drinker has become more and more sophisticated, and the demand for delicious coffee is growing," he said.

All of which raises the question: As we evolve into drinking better coffee that's sold everywhere, is there any limit on coffee demand?

Peruse the voluminous risk factors in Starbucks' 2012 annual report and nowhere will one find anything along the lines of, "Americans could decide one morning to just kick the coffee habit or to drink a whole lot less." Nope. Instead the Seattle behemoth warns investors about the price of arabica beans, the vagaries of consumer discretionary spending, and how the Affordable Care Act could boost its labor costs.

Those of us who jones for java? We aren't going anywhere –

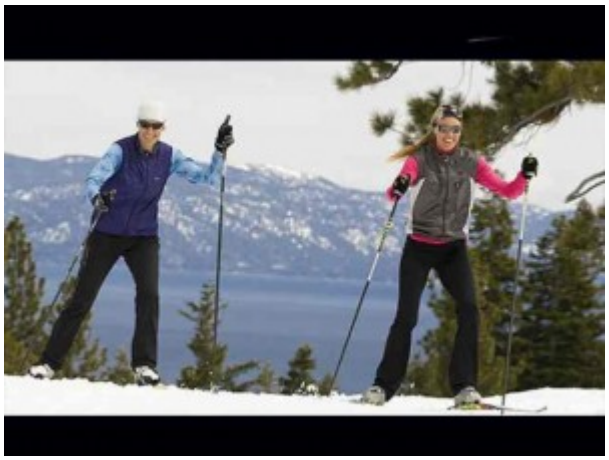
unless it’s trading one primo brand for another, such as Caribou for the new Burger King.

Starbucks does flag that possibility: “In the U.S., the ongoing focus by large competitors in the quick-service restaurant sector on selling high-quality specialty coffee beverages could adversely affect our sales and results of operations.”

Fundraiser blends skiing, eating

Glide, stride, or snowshoe through a gourmet on-snow wonderland at the 12th annual Gourmet Ski Tour on March 10.

A fundraiser for the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association, the epicurean event is at the Tahoe Cross Country Center in Tahoe City from 12:30-2:30pm.



Work up a hearty appetite and experience quilt free noshing before, during, or after touring some of the cross country center’s 65 kilometers of forested trails.

Outdoors enthusiasts and foodies will advance from one food station to the next all the while socializing with other participants. Don your most inventive hat creation for this year’s event theme, “The Mad Hatter’s Ski Party”, for a chance

to win a season pass to the Tahoe XC Center for most original hat.

Beginners may rent skis or snowshoes at the Tahoe Cross Country Center and move around at their leisure sampling tastes. The afternoon ends up with margaritas and live music by The Jelly Bread Band from 2:30-5pm.

Food and beverages will be provided by Sugar Pine Cakery, Uncorked, Tahoe House, Coffee Connexion, Christy Hill, Wolfdale's, Sunnyside, Lanza's, Mamasake, Jake's on the Lake, Brockway Bakery, Bridgetender, Ron Allen Personal Chef, Men Wielding Fire, and Uncommon Kitchen. Tickets are $35 (includes a free half day trail pass), $30 for season pass holders, and $25 for volunteers. A limited number of tickets are available – (530) 583.5475.

Winter is a perfectly good time for beer

By Rosie Schaap, New York Times

Maybe you also went through that phase. The one when you kept an eye on an ominous bucket in a dark corner of your kitchen until the time came to invite over friends, tap it and drink it. Maybe your friends also gulped it, smiled stiffly and said something like, "It's . . . interesting." And maybe they also grimaced as if they had just sucked down a rotten egg. I didn't blame them. The brown ale I concocted during my brief foray into home brewing was dreadful stuff – syrupy, unbalanced and weird.

I could accept that I had no inherent gifts in the beer-making department, but my failure put me off beer – at least the kind with flavor – for a long while. Sure, there's nothing like a cold beer on a hot summer day, but I don't want too much trouble. I want something light and pale and watery (and inexpensive) straight from a bottle: Corona or High Life or Rolling Rock suit me just fine. The same goes for when I eat Chinese or Mexican food, sausages and cabbage or anything Eastern European.

Brown Corduroy

For two cocktails:
1 oz. Bulleit Bourbon
2 dashes orange bitters
Krusovice Cerne beer to top
Grated nutmeg
Shake bourbon and bitters over ice. Strain into a highball over fresh ice. Top up with beer. Grate a little nutmeg on top.



But the bar where I work carries a great variety of beers, and so I've had to reacquaint myself in order to answer my customers' questions. And what I've discovered is that after a long absence, beer and I get along more than fine. My favorites – often from Central and Eastern Europe, where, for centuries, they've known a thing or two about the craft of beer – are characterized by depth but not burdened by difficulty. There's a warm, slightly sweet, nutty, toasty character that many of them share – flavors that make them naturals for drinking in the winter, even for drinkers who normally think of summer when we think beer.

It takes a lot to force me to forgo whiskey around this time of year, but some very special specimens, like Innis & Gunn's Oak-Aged Rum Cask Beer (strong stuff but reminiscent of cream soda), Allagash Black (a yeasty, Maine-made alternative to my

usual Guinness) and those shown here, can make me do just that. Even an excellent, not-too-aggressive I.P.A., while not dark, has enough going on to win me over. These bottles aren't for chugging; they're for sipping, and the first one is satisfying enough to savor after dinner, with fruit and chocolate and good, sharp cheese. Beer has a place in mixed drinks, too, which – kicked up with spirits and laced with spice – can make for surprising and warming cocktails, like a Brown Corduroy.

In July, sure, pass me a Corona. But a deep, dark beer on a cold winter's day? That's pretty refreshing, too.

Full moon snowshoe benefits Winter Discovery Program

Tahoe Cross Country's last full moon yurt dinner of the season is Feb. 22.

Chef Doug Baehr of Uncommon Kitchen will be doing the cooking.



The evening adventure starts with a moonlit ski or snowshoe from the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area to the trailside warming hut on Yellow trail where there will be fireside hot drinks. Dinner is served in the yurt.

Cost is $65 per person. It includes a three-course meal, tax, two beverages, and trail pass. Ski or snowshoe equipment is available for rent.

This is an evening for adults.

All money raised benefits the Winter Discovery Program at Tahoe Cross Country.

Snowshoers should expect to leave the parking lot by 5:30pm and skiers should leave no later than 6pm. Headlamps are available upon request. If you are dining only and not skiing or snowshoeing, the yurt will be open for mingling at 7pm.

Reservations are being taken. Seating is limited – (530) 583.5475.

The center is at 925 Country Club Drive, Tahoe City.

Tahoe Trail Bar goes gluten free, vegan

By Kathryn Reed

Eating one won't necessarily have you skiing like Julia Mancuso, climbing like Todd Offenbacher, or even paddling the circumference of Lake Tahoe in a day, or setting cycling records on the Flume Trail – but it could give you a little more oomph to finish the athletic endeavor you set out on.

Offenbacher, Tahoe's legendary climbing guru, was munching on Tahoe Trail Bars on several expeditions last year.

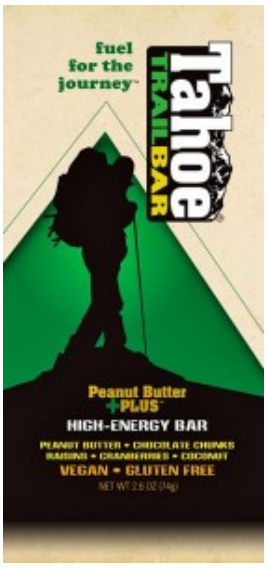
“Why I do what I do is so people will have food they enjoy while enjoying the outdoors,” Wes King told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But the Tahoe Trail Bar isn’t just for athletic types. King, who owns the company, says they are ideal to throw into kids’ lunches or have for an afternoon pick-me-up.

And they are bigger than most bars. The Tahoe Trail Bar is almost 4 ounces, while a Clif Bar is a little more than 2 ounces. (And the price is not double.)

While the brand has been around for 10 years, King has owned the company for the last three years. On Friday, he debuted a revamped bar that is now gluten free and vegan. Plus, the packaging is all new.

“I tried as much as I could to maintain the profile flavor,” King said of the change to the recipe. “Everyone who has tasted it says it tastes better. Most people think it’s not as dry as a lot of bars.”



Tahoe Trail Bar's package as of Feb. 15.

One thing he uses that other bars don't is brown rice syrup. This, King says, means energy levels will not spike. The milk chocolate was replaced with dark chocolate to make it vegan.

The high caloric value – about 400 – is designed to keep people active. But these are the good calories compared to eating just chocolate, which would be the bad calories.

The bars are manufactured in Northern California – but beyond that, King would not reveal specifics.

The Mylar paper the bar is in will allow it to have a longer shelf life. This in turn means the big grocery stores will entertain carrying it. The goal is for the bar to be sold outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

With the packaging behind him, now it's time to focus on growing distribution and creating more flavors.

Within two months he anticipates Whole Foods and Raley's will carry the Tahoe Trail Bar. Right now the only flavor is peanut butter.

More info about the Tahoe Trail Bar may be found online.

K’s Kitchen: Grasshopper pie keeps you jumping for more

By Kathryn Reed

I’m not sure if it’s good or bad that Sue and I both love mint desserts. On the one hand it means being able to make something you know the other person will like. But it also means having to share. Considering we are both the youngest in our families, sharing is not our strong suit.



While I really like dessert, I don’t like many at restaurants. I’m a definite pie snob. So one of the best parts about making a dessert is I can have seconds, thirds and it allows for breakfast to be a repeat of dessert.

One of my favorite desserts is grasshopper pie. It’s a refreshing finish to a meal on a warm night – even if the warmth is from a hot fire. With it being so rich, I tend to cut smaller pieces compared to a fruit pie – which is good when serving to a group or wanting it to last in the freezer for more than a night or two.

My sister, Pam, shared the recipe with me eons ago. She spent the summer of 1981 in Alaska with her boyfriend at the time. One stop was Gustavus, where he had relatives. Pam picked up a copy of “The Gustavus Inn Recipe Book”, which was published in 1977. Sally McLaughlin followed in her mom’s footsteps with making family style meals and publishing a book of recipes. At the time this was published, McLaughlin said the grasshopper pie had been the inn’s most popular dessert since it opened in 1965.

I use Oreo cookies or a cheaper version (two rows from a normal, regular package) and omit the butter and sugar. I put

them in a plastic bag to crush – and a wine bottle works just as well as a rolling pin. I don’t have a double boiler, so I put water into the pot I cook pasta in and the ingredients into a medium sauce pan that floats in the water. I also sprinkle some of the fine crumbled chocolate on top of the mixture before freezing it – just to jazz it up a bit.

Grasshopper Pie

The crust: With a rolling pin, crush about two-thirds of a package of plain chocolate wafers until they are fine crumbs. Measure the crumbs – there should be 1 cup. Put them in a small bowl and add 1 tablespoon of sugar and 3 tablespoons of butter. With a pastry blender, work these ingredients together until no trace of butter remains. Press the crumbs firmly onto the bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie pan. Bake the crust for 7 minutes in a 350-degree oven and cool it on a wire rack.

The filling: In the top of a double boiler melt 24 marshmallows with one-quarter cup of milk. Do not let the water under the pot boil and stir the marshmallows occasionally. When they are melted, set the pot aside to cool slightly.

In a small bowl whip 1 cup heavy cream until stiff. When the marshmallow mixture is a little cooler, stir in 2 tablespoons of white creme de cacao and 3 tablespoons of green creme de menthe. Pour this mixture into the whipped cream and gently but quickly fold the two mixtures together. Pour into the cooled chocolate crust and put the pie in the freezer. When it is frozen hard, cover the pie with plastic wrap and tin foil folded tightly over the edges.

If the pie is frozen very hard, it is sometimes better to let it sit at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving. Cut into very small pieces as it is very rich. Will keep in freezer for up to two weeks.