

4-2-97

Peaches and Cream

Do you remember when milk came in shapely clear glass quart bottles with a cardboard stopper and a frilled cap, and was delivered to your front porch or your back porch ice box? If you were awake early enough, usually before dawn, you could hear the clomp, clomp of the milkman's horse, pulling the square white wagon that contained all the milk and milk products to be delivered that day. As a child I always tried to wake up early enough to watch the horse follow the route without any signal from the milkman. I marveled at the memory of the horse, always knowing which house to stop in front of. The patient horse would wait until the milkman was back aboard and automatically go on to the next house, giving the milkman time to gather the bottles for the next house.



The milk was pasteurized but not homogenized. Consequently, the cream rose to the top, filling the neck and on down slightly into the main part of the bottle. Sometimes Mother would pour off part of the cream to whip for special desserts, a habit we kids applauded although we didn't like it when she used so much cream that the milk was thinner and didn't taste as good. Little did we dream that one day in the future we would *buy* skimmed milk, something Daddy used sneer at as "Blue John."

Sometimes Mother would leave a note sticking from the neck of the clean bottles put out for returning. The note might call for a pound of butter in addition to the pound we usually got every week or a carton of cottage cheese, wonderfully rich in those days with whole milk. Some people got eggs from their milkman, but we had a separate egg man, Mr. Lively, who delivered country fresh eggs once a week. At Easter time he would frequently include several duck eggs for us to dye along with the hen eggs.

I never knew the name of the milkman since he came so early that we never talked to him. That is, until one summer when I was in high school, and Edgar, whom I was dating at the time, had a summer job delivering milk on our route. He always managed to schedule our street last, arriving at our house after we were all up so that we could visit.

I remember a very cold winter in Sherman when I was four. Our milk must have been delivered extra early in the morning, for on very cold mornings the cream would have frozen, expanding out of the neck. I always enjoyed seeing the cardboard cap sitting an inch or two above the bottle, on top of the frozen column of cream. Mother once let us

have a spoonful of the frozen cream. Alas, it wasn't as good as it looked, not sweet at all as ice cream should be. After we moved back to Dallas, I don't remember seeing the frozen bottles because about that time the milk was delivered to our back porch, which was warmer than the front steps.

In the summer, Mother would frequently add a quart of cream to her standing order of milk, a great occasion heralding the making of ice cream. That day also meant that the iceman would deliver an additional fifty pounds of ice for Daddy to shave and chip for the making of ice cream. What an occasion it was when we also had ripe peaches! I enjoyed watching Mother make the rich custard for the ice cream, cooling it, and then pouring it into the freezer with great care. It was a long, tedious process that severely tested my patience. It was an extra-special occasion when peaches were in season and Daddy added the mashed, ripe peaches to the freezer before beginning to crank the handle to begin freezing. We kids were always allowed to turn the crank until it became so stiff that we couldn't turn any more. Daddy would then finish the freezing. Then came the great moment when he poured off the melted water from the ice, carefully opened the lid of the container, and removed the dasher. Then we kids could scrape the dasher for our first taste of the wonderful ice cream. Those marvelous ripe peaches made a special occasion even more special. I can still remember the smooth, cold taste of that peach ice cream. Then we had to wait for Daddy to cover the freezer container with waxed paper, refill the outside with fresh ice and let the ice cream mellow. The anticipation was agonizing, but the reward was worth the wait.

I haven't had homemade peach ice cream recently, but when I do I usually remember horse-drawn wagons and home-delivered milk. When I have to make a special trip to Ukrops for milk, I also long for those long-gone, convenient days of early morning deliveries.