

MENASHA PUBLIC LIBRARY: SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB



WHAT IS PEPPERMINT?

Peppermint is a naturally occurring hybrid of spearmint (*mentha spicata*) and water mint (*mentha aquatica*) that grows wild all over Europe and North America. Historians believe that it originated in the Mediterranean. Peppermint has a strong, yet sweet scent. Its warm, pungent taste soon cools in its aftertaste. The culinary uses of peppermint have been around since ancient times and it was mostly used for flavoring sauces and wines. The ancient Greeks and Romans used peppermint to adorn both people and tables during celebratory events. Alexander the Great believed that peppermint had aphrodisiac properties, and forbid his soldiers from using it for fear that it would interfere with their desire to do battle.

Peppermint has also been well for its medicinal uses, most notably its stomach-soothing properties. Oil of peppermint, which is an essential oil distilled with steam from the herb, is used for flavoring candy and chewing gum, as well as toothpaste and other oral health products.

DECEMBER

PEPPERMINT



8 TIPS FOR PEPPERMINT

- Peppermint has long been used topically for muscle aches and joint pains. This is because it contains forty percent menthol, which is what gives peppermint leaves their strong numbing and cooling effects.
- Peppermint's essential oil works at inhibiting the growth of certain dangerous bacteria, including salmonella. This is also attributed to its high menthol component.
- Peppermint is considered a good source of manganese and copper and contains small amounts of calcium and iron.
- For homemade mouthwash: chop peppermint and add to boiling water to infuse. Cool and then strain the herbs out and store in the refrigerator.
- Growing peppermint is faster when you propagate it from cuttings rather than planting from mint seeds. It spreads aggressively through stolons, or underground roots, so be prepared for spreading if planting in the ground.
- Research has shown that periodically sniffing peppermint increases the user's concentration level and performance on tasks that require extended concentration.
- Peppermint tea can help relax the muscles of the gastrointestinal tract. This helps the body digest fatty foods more easily. Drinking warm mint tea can also help those suffering from a cold as it thins and loosens phlegm, acting as a natural decongestant. To make: pour 1 cup near-boiling water over 6 to 8 fresh peppermint leaves or 1 tsp dried. Steep for 5 minutes. Strain.
- Peppermint leaves can help ease the pain of sunburn by stimulating the cold receptors on skin and dilating blood vessels. First, make a strong batch of peppermint tea and then cool it in the fridge. Then, gently apply to burned skin with cotton pads.



Add Peppermint to:

-Fruit Salads

-Iced

Tea/Lemonade

-Yogurt



Note: This information is meant to supplement, not replace advice from your healthcare provider and is not meant to cover all possible uses, precautions, interactions or adverse effects.

Sources Consulted: Encyclopedia Britannica; Consumer Health Complete; spiceography.com; Gale Health and Wellness; MasterClass

Cozy Homemade Peppermint Mocha

Courtesy of: pinchofyum.com

INGREDIENTS:

For the Mint Syrup

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 bunch fresh mint leaves OR 1 teaspoon peppermint extract (or a combination of both)

For the Mocha

- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate bar or baking bar (not cocoa powder)
- 1/2 cup espresso or strongly brewed coffee
- whipped cream
- crushed candy canes

Time:

Total Time: 50 Minutes

Yield:

1 Serving



Directions:

1. Bring the water to a low boil. Add the sugar and stir until dissolved. Add the mint or peppermint extract and steep for 10-15 minutes (heat off or on low) until the syrup has good flavor to it. Remove the mint leaves and store in the refrigerator for future peppermint mochas.
2. Heat the milk and unsweetened chocolate together until melted (could be in the microwave or on the stovetop).
3. Add the milk mixture to a glass jar. Put a cap on the jar and wrap with a towel (the metal lid will get hot). Shake until foamy.
4. Pour the milk mixture into a mug. Stir in the coffee and 2-3 tablespoons of mint syrup. Top with whipped cream and candy cane pieces.

1 mocha contains: Calories: 285 Fat: (g) 16.6 Cholesterol: (mg) 9.7 Carbohydrates: (g) 23.5 Dietary Fiber:(g) 4.7 Total Sugars: (g) 16.6 Protein: (g) 10.2 Sodium: (mg) 101.7

Peppermint Cream Bites

Courtesy of: Midwest Living Magazine



Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups crushed chocolate sandwich cookies with white filling (15 cookies)
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 teaspoons shortening

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line an 8x8x2-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of pan; set aside.
2. In a medium bowl combine crushed cookies and melted butter. Press mixture into the bottom of prepared pan. Bake for 8 minutes. Cool slightly in pan on a wire rack.
3. Meanwhile, in a food processor combine powdered sugar and softened butter. Cover and process until butter is evenly distributed. With processor running, add milk and peppermint extract through feed tube until a paste forms. Spread peppermint mixture evenly over prepared crust. Freeze for 45 minutes.
4. In a medium microwave-safe bowl combine chopped chocolate and shortening. Microwave on 100 percent power (high) about 1 minute or until chocolate is melted, stirring once. Let chocolate cool for 15 minutes. Pour chocolate over peppermint layer, spreading evenly. Using the edges of the foil, lift uncut bars out of pan. Use a 1-1/2-inch round cookie cutter to cut into rounds* or use a sharp knife to cut into squares. Store in the freezer until serving time.