

Ask Margaret

by Margaret Word Burnside



My doctor suggested that I try locally made Angel Mints to help alleviate the metallic taste brought on by my chemotherapy treatments. Are the candies really made in this area?

S.R., Brandon

Angel Mint sweets, which earned the name "Angel" because of their "heavenly" taste, were originally created in a small candy shop on the Boardwalk of Wildwood, New Jersey in 1919.



Angel Mint confections are manufactured in Clearwater at the Florida Candy Factory.

Sixty-five years later, Gerald S. (Jerry) Rehm, a former mayor of Dunedin, purchased the original recipe, manufacturing techniques and rights, plus the early 1900s Fralinger kitchen equipment and machinery used for making the trademarked mints, as well as the Boardwalk's signature salt water taffy. He set up shop at his Florida Candy Factory, Inc. in Clearwater, where both confections are still made today. So yes, Angel Mint candies are a local Tampa Bay area product.

The smooth, refreshing mints are manufactured in small, thirty-pound batches, and cooked in copper kettles over old fashioned gas stoves, just as they were ninety years ago. Using the prototype equipment, the candies are then cut and wrapped in moisture-barrier cellophane paper within minutes of being cooked in order to help preserve their freshness.

The benefits of Angel Mint treats and their ability to help and calm digestive problems, soothe sore throats, moisten dry mouths and relieve nausea, diarrhea and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, have been recognized for years. More recently, the mints are being recommended as palliative therapy to help ease anxiety, stress and pain, neutralize free radicals and reduce the metallic taste often incurred after dialysis or chemotherapy treatments. The mints contain important minerals and nutrients as well. These include manganese, calcium, copper, magnesium, iron, potassium, omega-3 fatty acids, as well as vitamins A and C. All this, yet each little mint contains no salt, fat, or soy, and only 36 calories and eight grams of sugar. These benefits are probably due, at least in part, to the pure, natural oil of peppermint, which is combined with pure natural sugar, corn syrup and cream of tartar to make the tasty morsels. And, unless your sweet tooth gets the best of you, one mint at a time is all you need to alleviate the side effects of chemotherapy, or remedy other problems.

As with the Angel Mints, the turn-of-the-century recipes, methods and equipment that helped make the New Jersey Boardwalk Salt Water Taffy famous are still being employed in the creation of the Clearwater factory's Salt Water Taffy, which is available in an assortment of flavors. While banana, blueberry, chocolate, grape, lemon, licorice, lime, orange, spearmint, strawberry, vanilla and watermelon are the favorites, other taste preferences can be specially ordered.

The Florida Candy Factory is still family owned and operated by Jerry Rehm, who is chairman, along with his son Scott, who is president. They are proud of their unique products and the pleasures their candies provide, as well as the possible curative benefits of their smooth, refreshing Angel Mint treats.

The melt-in-your-mouth mints are available for purchase at Incredible Edibles, adjacent to the Florida Candy Factory, Inc. at 721 Lakeview Road between Ft. Harrison (Alternate 19) and Myrtle Avenues in Clearwater. Contact the Rehms at (727) 446-0024 to learn about their occasional open houses and nostalgic factory tours.

What should a bride and groom know ahead of time about toasts?

K.C., Newport News, Virginia

Toasting is a long-standing European tradition of honoring or wishing good health. The custom got its name because the spiced, toasted bread that was placed in wine for flavoring tended to stick to the bottom of the glass. When drinking to someone's health, the entire glass had to be emptied, in order to retrieve the soggy, but tasty toast.

While Americans have embraced toasting, we have created our own set of rules, which normally include sipping, rather than finishing the entire glass in one gulp. We also follow a traditional code of etiquette for the toastmaster, toasters and those being toasted. This protocol is particularly pertinent to wedding toasts.

The future bride and groom can expect to be toasted during their engagement party by her father, as he officially

announces his daughter's engagement. This is a formality that takes place, even if the engagement has previously been announced elsewhere, and the guests already know about it. The host, or someone else may give the toast if the father is not available. When the engagement party is a cocktail reception, the toast can be made at a time when most of the guests are present. When the occasion is a seated dinner, the toast takes place during dessert. The future groom should respond with a toast, which may be followed by a limited number of toasts from family members and friends.

The majority of wedding toasts usually take place at the rehearsal dinner, where the couple's family, wedding party, and out-of-town guests and closest friends are normally gathered in a more intimate setting than the upcoming wedding. The groom's best man serves as toastmaster, giving the first toast to the bride and groom. After the groom stands to toast his bride, the best man can call upon others, who he knows are prepared to offer toasts. These may include the bride toasting the groom, the groom's mother and/or father welcoming the bride to their family, the bride's mother and/or father toasting the groom's parents and thanking them, or whoever was host for the dinner, as well as various family members and friends. Toasts may also be made by those not called upon and by the ladies, who at one time were excluded from the process.



A champagne toast has become customary at weddings and other functions.