1923

Alice Mann's Three Years in the Desert

The Iowa Homemaker

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Recommended Citation
The Iowa Homemaker (1923) "Alice Mann's Three Years in the Desert," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 3 : No. 7 , Article 15.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol3/iss7/15

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CANDY may be very fattening for the already too fat individual and bad for the digestive system of the dyspeptic, but for college girls it is a joy forever. Perhaps candy is not as good for her as the highly esteemed spinach, but who among dietitians has the courage to insist upon "balanced rations" where candy is concerned.

To eat the candy a college chum makes is a delightful pastime. Only veteran dormitory inmates can experience the real joy derived from eating a creamy piece of fudge at a midnight spread. Nice, indeed, to eat such candy, but how unfortunate the girl who comes to college with no knowledge of candy making and no favorite recipes of her own. She may treat her friends to "Waldos" and "O'Henry" bars. Time without number, but she sinks into oblivion when the candy pan is brought out and the group calls for real college-made candy.

The oldest, most timeworn, and yet most popular recipes used in college is the one for fudge. Of all things to be sure of before entering college be surest of all that you are able to make fudge. In every dormitory are girls who don't have their own favorite recipes to bring along to college, it may be well to include a few of the commonest so that they, too, may be among the popular college girls as everyone wishes to be.

Chef's Note: This fudge recipe is a college favorite and can be enjoyed by all. The creamy texture and rich flavor make it a delightful pastime.

**Fudge**

2 cups sugar  
1 cup liquid  
2 tbsp. cocoa  
1 tsp. butter  
3/4 tsp. vanilla  
1/2 tsp. cream of tartar  
1/2 cup chopped nuts

Boil together sugar, milk, cocoa, and cream of tartar until it forms a soft ball in water. Remove from fire, cool, and add nuts. Stir until creamy. If there is time the fudge may be improved by kneading.

Cinnamon Gib

2 cups brown sugar  
1/2 cup liquid (condensed milk, cream or milk)  
1 tbsp. butter if milk is used  
1 pinch salt

Cook the sugar, salt, and liquid until it forms a soft ball in water. Remove from fire, cool, and add nuts, and butter. Stir until creamy. If there is time, the fudge may be improved by kneading.

Cinnamon Gib

1 cup Karo corn syrup  
2 tbsp. butter  
1 tsp. cinnamon

Cook the ingredients until when dropped in water the candy becomes brittle. Pour into a buttered tin and allow to cool. This makes a brittle, buttery, cinnamon candy that is not particularly rich, yet which satisfies the craving for something to eat between meals.

Pinehoch

2 cups brown sugar  
1/2 cup liquid (condensed milk, cream or milk)  
1 tbsp. butter if milk is used  
1 pinch salt

Cook the sugar, salt, and liquid until it forms a soft ball in water. Remove from fire, cool, and add nuts, and butter. Stir until creamy. If there is time, the fudge may be improved by kneading.

Bakery Note: This recipe for Pinehoch is a delightful pastime and can be enjoyed by all. The creamy texture and rich flavor make it a delightful treat.

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Peanut Brittle

2 cups sugar  
1 cup Karo syrup  
1 cup water  
1 cup peanuts  
1 tbsp. butter

Cook the sugar, syrup, and water until it becomes brittle when dropped in water. Add the butter just before removing from the fire. Have the peanuts spread on a buttered platter and pour the syrup over them.

Brown Sugar Nuts

2 cups brown sugar  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 tsp. vanilla  
2 cups mixed nut meats

Boil sugar and milk and until it becomes brittle in water, remove from fire and add vanilla. Have nuts spread on a buttered platter. Cover with beat until cool. Add the vanilla just before pouring out. Be careful not to stir while pouring or it will sugar out.

Alice Mann's Three Years in the Desert

SLEEPLESS nights, while violent desert winds tore at her four-room portable bungalow; walking guided by the stars; waking before dawn to watch the mysterious desert mirage; sleeping under starlit skies, often alone, with dangerous "side-winders" (snakes) about and coyotes barking in the distance; all these were the experiences of an Iowa State graduate, Miss Alice Mann, '90, who tells of her three years homesteading in California on her desert claim.

"Long before daylight," writes Miss Mann, "on the morning of November 7, 1918, my brother and I reached Leliter, Indian Wells Valley. During the day we were transported with our personal and household belongings to a portable four-room bungalow which had been moved onto my claim from a neighboring claim. We immediately established my home, notwithstanding the fact that the moving dislocated the ridge-boards so we could see daylight thru the peak of the roof."

We were delighted that we could begin holding down the claim at once and everything moved on serenely for several days. Then, without warning, one of the violent winds for which most deserts are famous, came suddenly upon us. For two days and nights it blew with terrible force. Twice I saw the roof on one side rise several inches and every moment expected it to move off into space, leaving only the starry heavens above us. Two awful, sleepless nights and then—the calm. The wonderful stillness and the exquisite beauty of the landscape after the storm is sent an indescribable charm to the desert."

Indian Wells Valley, Miss Mann says, is a fertile country about twenty miles wide and thirty in length in the northwest corner of Kern county, California. The Valley is entirely surrounded by mountains, with the high Sierras on the west.

"Alfalfa, grapes, peaches, pears and nearly all kinds of vegetables are successfully grown there. Cotton has been experimented with and thrives in the locality. Melons of all kinds are the best in quality I have ever seen. A very enterprising settler has one hundred acres of alfalfa, just recently shipped out a carload of cattle."

"My nearest neighbor was half a mile away. We went a mile and a quarter for milk and butter, but the rattlers seldom troubled us and it was fine exercise. If our walk happened to be at night we were guided by the location of certain constellations."
“The settlers are a class of people we enjoyed. They are friendly and obliging as in all pioneering localities. Nearly all have automobiles or ‘flivvers.’ Those who had not borrowed large touring cars wish for Fords, that have a way of getting around to advantage in the sand.”

How Did Miss Mann Spend the Long Days in the Desert?

“Our occupations were varied. Never before did I have so much time for reading and writing. We gathered much of our fuel in baskets we would carry away sometimes half a mile to pick up sage brush, iron-rod and creosote bush roots. Sometimes we would borrow a rig from a neighbor and go several miles for a load of solid creosote bush roots, the best fuel we had in the desert.

“We helped clear the land by burning brush.”

“One winter I supplied a village store with doughnuts.”

“The last year in the desert the bus fund was not sufficient to get the children to school, so all the settlers were trying to help. Not having much cash on hand I made baskets and sold them for a few cents each. I’ll admit they were not worth it, but we received ten dollars for the bus fund and went home rejoicing.”

“During the holiday season of our second winter Miss Eva Frances Pike, formerly head of the musical department of Iowa State College, took a short vacation from her busy life and spent a few days in my desert home. We had a wonderful visit. She helped me gather firewood sticks, drove around our valley in a flivver, and looked with admiring eyes at the mountains and the vast stretches of land on every side.”

“No man-made structures cut off the view—a source of perpetual delight to me for three years.”

The Beauty of the Desert Was Even a Pleasure to the Homesteader

“Desert flowers are beautiful. If the wind and rains are late, they cover the ground like a wonderful oriental carpet. Around my house were quantities of yellow primroses. In the desert the foliage of the sagebrush is green and the blossoms are very close to it. The flowers are shaped exactly like those found on the tall stalks in the middle west, but are larger and more delicate. The creosote bush, found all over the desert, is covered with yellow blossoms in the spring. Later in the season the iron-rod bush is covered with dark blue flowers. All the bushes turn a different hue and proclaim that spring has come.”

“During the warm weather we slept in a vast apartment walled in by four mountains, roofed by the star-like sky. Sometimes I was entirely alone, but felt no fear. I knew the side-winders could not climb my cot, and the familiar bark of the distant coyotes caused no alarm. I felt safe that I need not visit a desert shack. The out-door apartment afforded a wonderful opportunity to study the stars which are unusually brilliant in the desert.

“On clear nights, as the sun sank behind the high Sierras, leaving a golden glow over the familiar peaks, we would watch the sunlight creeping up the eastern Argus range until it passed the highest mountains. Then above the entire range a wonderful roseate sky appeared. On cloudy nights the gorgeous western sky seemed to cast reflections in every direction, the more delicate colors often mounting to the zenith.”

“I remember one day we could hear the roaring of a storm in the mountains—while in the valley, only eight miles distant, a peace so perfect and bright so serene caused our little Winifred to say: ‘This is like heaven.’

“One winter morning as we looked out over the mountains, black and ominous, our guests from Long Beach were delighted with this other phase of desert life, so different from their southern home. The most beautiful rainbow I ever saw was in my loved desert. During an electrical storm we went out to take clothes off the line and received a slight shock.”

The Mirage of the Desert

“When the days were long I would rise at 4 o’clock so as not to miss anything. The mirage usually appeared just before sunrise. Often we would see dwellings and large pumphouses at other times invisible. Many times we saw the small village of Inyokern rise to great heights and again it would appear as if half of it were upright and the other half inverted. Sometimes my nearest neighbors’ houses seemed to be traveling toward me, assuming huge proportions.

“The most wonderful transformations occurred in a mountain pass near the rising sun. Sometimes a turret ed castle would appear, again a wonderful ship, then grotesque shapes unlike anything ever seen before or since.”

Visits to the Surrounding Country Were a Part of the Year’s Experiences

“One fine day several families in the neighborhood took a picnic luncheon and went in flivvers to an elevation at the foot of the Coso range, where we saw the remains of a patrified forest. They were gray in color. The grain of the wood and the formation of the bark were plainly visible. On this trip we saw quantities of desert holly.

“Many residents of Indian Wells Valley drive into the Coso mountains to the north to visit the famous Coso Hot Springs. This is a resort noted for its healing qualities. Some go there on stretchers and walk out. The springs consist of variously colored boiling mud. They are white, black, terra cotta and lavender. At a short distance from the wonderful springs is a little geyser of perfectly clear boiling water. Patients drink the water, bathe in the mud and take vapor baths. Recently a modern hotel has been built on the grounds. The patients go by auto or by rail. If by rail, they leave the Aqueduct branch of the Southern Pacific railroad at Little Lake, Inyo county, and finish the journey by auto-stage.”

And So the Claim Was Won

“In November, 1921, I went to Independence, Inyo county, and made final proof. In four months my patent arrived, bringing the satisfactory legal proof of my three years residence on a desert claim.”

Now Miss Alice Mann is a practical nurse in Hollywood, California. For some years after her graduation from the horticultural course she had a nursery near Alamosa, Iowa, and did corn judging over the state. Later she lived with an invalid uncle who was a forty-niner and owned a placer mine in Feather Canyon.

Miss Mann, who is a classmate of Miss Maria Roberts, is secretary of the Alumni Association of Southern California, and is a big booster for the Memorial Union. She thinks kindly of Ames, and writes, “I hope at some future time to see you all on the campus, but it may terminate in a dream.”

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