

Sample these scrumptious desserts using seasonal fruit

By Susie Iventosch

In the last issue, we featured a recipe for quark, a type of dairy product that resembles something between cottage cheese and Greek yogurt. It is enjoyed in Northern European countries, especially in Germany and in Slavic countries, and is used in many of the baked goods in those places. As promised, we are featuring the recipes for Andy Scheck's Cherry Quark Cake and my Goat Cheese-Quark Cheesecake in this issue.

Since the last Lamorinda Weekly issue, I've made my second batch of quark, and this time,

I allowed it to drain a little bit longer than the first time, which resulted in a texture more like soft cottage cheese than the smoother texture last time. Both batches, however, tasted the same and both worked very well in the baked goods made with the quark.

I need to note that we had a reader who was having some problems with the quark being too grainy in texture, and Andy and I think that the problem may have been in heating the buttermilk too quickly. So, if you have had a similar experience, try heating

the buttermilk very slowly over low heat until the point where the liquid starts to separate at the edge of the pot, but before it comes to a boil. Remove it immediately. Andy says this is the proper chemical reaction you want to have for the best quark.

Andy serves his cake at room temperature, and my family really enjoyed it like that, but our leftover cake was chilled and I actually preferred it cold. The filling and flavors were more concentrated when it was cold. This is a personal preference, so you can

experiment to see what you like best! Also, you can use almost any available fresh fruit you like for this cake. Andy used cherries and I made it with blackberries and blueberries, but it would also be lovely with peaches or apricots and perhaps even juicy plums. Look for the best in-season fruits!



Blackberries and blueberries in quark cake

Photo Susie Iventosch



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

Swim or stay out of the lake? – blue-green algae toxicity

By Mona Miller, DVM



Illustration Jaya Griggs

A local veterinary hospital recently had a case that involved a get-away dog walking at the Lafayette Reservoir, who ended up swimming the length of the reservoir before entangling her leash in the weeds on the far end, enabling her rescue. In addition to being exhausted and frightened, this dog was potentially exposed to blue-green algae toxicity, and was hospitalized at one of the local 24-hour emergency hospitals. Although I have yet to see any formal announcements this year from the East Bay Municipal Utility District or the East Bay Regional Park District about this potentially deadly liver toxin, it reminded me to get the word out. It's one of the reasons to not allow your dog to swim in water containments that specifically don't allow people or pets in the water.

Blue-green algae is a natural bacterial component in most lakes. Under the right conditions, the algae goes into a bloom and some of these algae species can release cyanotoxins. These conditions include low-level water, limited water circulation and increase in heat and light. Blooms usually last a couple weeks before they dissipate. Toxicity in a patient occurs when the toxin is ingested or through skin contact. Signs involve skin rashes and irritations, nerve disease, or sudden severe liver damage. Unfortunately, the mortality rate is fairly high for patients with the neurologic or liver damage form. Signs are vague and include lethargy, not eating, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and even shock. Signs occur well within 24 hours of exposure. There is no specific antidote to the toxin. There is also no specific test to check for the presence of the toxin, so knowing your dog's environmental exposure is a key factor in the diagnosis. Immediate aggressive veterinary care is recommended, including intravenous fluids and liver support injections, as well as monitoring bloodwork. Often, dogs are treated for a few to several days with intensive care support.

According to the East Bay Regional Parks District website, the first reports of toxic algae blooms occurred in 2014, in Lake Temescal and Lake Chabot (which still remains affected). Most likely, the

recent California drought, and to some degree climate change in general, has been responsible for algal blooms forming at these lakes. And according to the website mywaterquality.ca.gov, Lake Anza has had recent cyanobacteria observed near the swim and dam areas – although no toxins have been reported.

The dog that prompted my report on this topic did very well, and suffered no long-term effects. Not all algae blooms contain toxins. Interestingly, as of 2016, no deaths in cats from cyanobacteria have been reported in veterinary literature – it is possible that cats are not sensitive to the toxin, or perhaps they generally don't like to swim!

Prevention involves avoiding or decreasing exposure to potential algal bloom toxins. This includes avoiding obvious algae scum areas, found most along a shoreline, washing dogs thoroughly after letting them play or swim in a lake or river. If you think your dog might have been exposed to blue algae toxins, it is warranted to seek immediate veterinary care.

The state of California has a very informative website with a California Harmful Algal Blooms Incident Reports Interactive Map https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/where/freshwater_events.html.

Additional reading can be done at the East Bay Regional Park District website: <http://www.ebparks.org/news/displaynews.htm?NewsID=246&TargetID=3>.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com. She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

Andy's Cherry Quark Cake

Cake Crust

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups stone ground whole wheat flour (I used half unbleached flour and half stone ground whole wheat)
½ cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1 stick butter, cut into small pieces and left at room temp for about 30 minutes
Pinch salt
2 Tbsp. milk (you may or may not need this for the dough)

DIRECTIONS

On a flat surface or in a bowl, mix together flour, sugar and salt. Add egg and butter, and begin to incorporate egg and butter into flour mixture using your fingertips. You want to be able to gather the dough into a pliable mass so you may need to add just a bit of milk to make a workable dough. I did not need any milk, and mine easily came together by mixing just the dries with the egg and butter, but if your dough is too dry, then add just a little bit of milk at a time to be able to gather the dough.

Andy chills the dough for about 20 minutes in the refrigerator before pressing it into the bottom and about 2/3 of the way up the sides of a 10-inch springform pan. I did not chill my dough, which made it fairly easy to press the dough into the pan right away. It's very important to get the dough going up the sides, which helps keep the filling mixture from oozing out during the baking.

Set aside the crust in the springform pan while you make the quark-fruit filling. (Just a note ... this crust is delicious!)

Cherry Quark Filling

INGREDIENTS

2 eggs, separated
1/2 cup granulated sugar
¼ cup milk, heated until just warm to the touch
1 4-ounce package Organics (brand) Vanilla Organic Cooked Pudding and Pie Filling Mix (available at Whole Foods and through Amazon)
2 1/2 cups quark
¾ pound cherries, pitted, or any other fruit you like (I used blackberries and blueberries)

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 F.
- Butter a 10-inch springform pan with removable bottom.
- Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. In a separate bowl, beat egg yolks with sugar until smooth and well mixed.
- Add vanilla pudding mix to egg yolk mixture and stir well. Then, stir in about 2 Tbsp. of the heated milk. Save the rest in case you need it!
- Add the quark and continue to mix. If the batter is too dry, add a little bit of the reserved heated milk.
- Carefully, fold the egg whites into the batter using a rubber spatula.
- Add the fruit, and carefully fold into the batter, again using a rubber spatula.
- Pour filling mixture into the cake crust in the pan and bake for approximately 70 minutes, or until the filling is beginning to set and it turns a nice golden-brown. The filling will rise during the baking and then sink a bit after removing from the oven.
- Cool completely and then release the sides of the pan, removing the cake to a platter. Serve either chilled or at room temperature.



Goat Cheese Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

Crust

2 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
1 ½ sticks butter, melted

Filling

8 oz. goat cheese
8 oz. cream cheese
4 Tbsp. sugar
2 eggs (can also use ½ cup egg beaters)
4 oz. quark
1 Tbsp. vanilla

Topping

½ cup quark
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 Tbsp. vanilla

Compote

2 cups blueberries
4 Tbsp. honey
2 Tbsp. brown or granulated sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

For compote: In a small sauce pan, cook all ingredients over medium-high heat, until slightly thickened, approximately 15 minutes. Remove from stove and cool to room temperature. Set aside until ready to serve.

DIRECTIONS for Cheesecake

Preheat oven to 350 F.

In a mixing bowl, place graham cracker crumbs and melted butter. Mix well and pat into the bottom and sides of a well-buttered 9-inch pie dish. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, goat cheese and sugar with an electric beater until creamy. Add eggs and beat on low speed until well-incorporated. Stir in quark and vanilla.

Pour batter into pie dish with crust and bake for 30 minutes, or until center is barely jiggly. (Time may vary from oven to oven.) Remove from oven for about 10 minutes. Increase oven temp to 425 F.

Meanwhile, mix ½ cup quark, ¼ cup sugar and 1 Tbsp. vanilla in a small bowl. After the cheesecake has set out for the 10 minutes, carefully spread this mixture over the top and bake again for about 10 more minutes. Remove from oven. Cool completely and then refrigerate until cold. Serve cheesecake cold with compote spooned over the top.

