

Sweet puffy, and pink melt-in-your-mouth Valentine's Day treats



Valentine's Cookies

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

When I was a young girl, I used to love to cook with my grandmother in her vintage '60s Orinda kitchen. One day when I was visiting her from my home state of Michigan, we made these amazing meringue cookies with mint chocolate chips. She called them "forgotten" cookies, because we put them in the oven and proceeded to

forget about them for several hours, or even overnight. They were delightful little sweet puffs that melted in your mouth. I got to thinking about them the other day, and decided that with a little splash of pink, they'd make pretty Valentine's treats. Instead of mint chips, I used dark chocolate chips and they are so tasty. Gigi would have loved a basket of these as a Valentine's treat!

Forgotten Valentine's Cookies

(Makes approximately 2 dozen)

INGREDIENTS

- 3 egg whites
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
- Pinch of salt
- ¾ cup superfine sugar (ordinary granulated sugar will also work)
- 1-2 drops of red food coloring
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¾ cup dark chocolate chips (I use Ghirardelli 60% cacao chocolate chips)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Place egg whites, cream of tartar and salt in a large bowl. Using an electric beater or stand mixer, beat egg whites with cream of tartar and salt until egg whites are frothy and white and hold soft peaks.

Gradually add the sugar in small batches and continue to beat on medium-high until all of the sugar has been added. This will take a couple of minutes. Continue to beat for another minute or two until egg whites are shiny and hold a stiff peak when the beaters are lifted from the bowl. Beat in vanilla extract and a drop or two of red food coloring (just enough to turn the egg whites pink).

Gently fold the chocolate chips into the batter.

Drop by large spoonfuls onto prepared baking sheets.

Place baking sheets in oven, shut the door and TURN OVEN OFF.

Leave meringues in oven for at least 4 hours, or even overnight, until cookies are crisp and dry. Store in an airtight container.



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.

Calming cats during vet visits

Fears and anxieties in pets – Part 3



Illustration Jaya Griggs

By Mona Miller, DVM

As a continuation of a four-part series addressing fears and anxieties in pets (especially during veterinary visits), I'd like to pay some attention to our feline friends. Most cats like to do what they do, in their own time and space. If we are lucky, cats will cuddle with us, sit on our laps, allow us to pet and adore them. Cats often don't travel in cars much (there are some exceptions) and generally don't like to be put in carriers (again, some exceptions). So when it's time to take your cat to the vet for its annual wellness exam and vaccines, it can be a bit traumatic for all parties involved to find the cat, put it in the carrier that is used only a couple times a year, travel in the car and endure the howling or plaintive meows. Once you get to the vet, there's still

a car ride back home, and then the "emotional punishment" that you suffer when the cat goes to hide in the closet for hours. There are many times when one of my appointments has to cancel because the owner can't find the cat to get it in the carrier!

When cats get stressed, they can become fearful or aggressive (much like dogs and humans). The ideal vet visit would be with a calm and cooperative cat.

I always recommend a secure carrier, and I really like the top-loading ones. Cats are much easier to lift out, then to pull out, and most seem to be calmer with this technique. As an aside, I believe strongly in one carrier per cat, and secure enough to house a cat in the event of a natural disaster (earthquake, wildfires) for at least 24 hours. Cats traveling uncontained in a car, and then entering the business of a vet-

erinary hospital is a recipe for disaster. They can get spooked by sounds, scents and sights – and go running off into the parking lot. Most vets have their own version of this story from personal experience, and there is nothing sadder than a runaway cat in a situation that was entirely preventable.

You can place calming articles in the carrier to help relieve anxiety. These can be a T-shirt that you have worn (especially helpful for cats who sleep with you on the bed), or a comfort blanket (one that the cat sleeps on regularly), or a bit of fresh catnip, or a catnip toy that the cat plays with. Calming treats, or a plant-derived product such as Rescue Remedy, may help, and most likely have no negative side effects. It's always best to check these things with your veterinarian, to ensure that ingredients are safe. Not all plant-derived extracts are safe for cats.

A particular strategy that I prefer is spray Feliway into the carrier 30 minutes prior to putting your cat in it. This is a synthetic analog of the "happy territory" marking pheromone that cats secrete when they rub their faces on objects. Feliway can be used for situational anxiety, such as travel, as well as for daily or long-term anxiety (for example, the plug-in diffuser form of Feliway is often helpful for cats

who urinate outside the litter box – an article for a different day). There are no negative side effects from using Feliway.

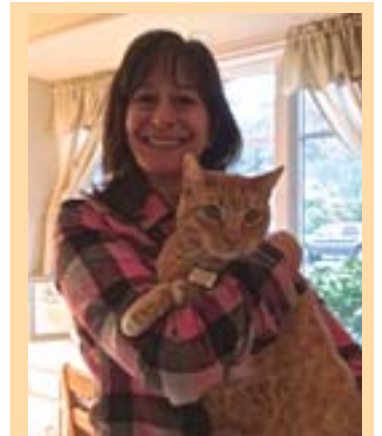
At the vet, different restraint methods can be used by the veterinary staff. Vets, nurses and assistants are often very well-trained in reading an animal, and choose a restraint method on a case-by-case basis. Some cats feel much more comfortable hiding under a towel without a lot of pressure. Some cats respond well to being wrapped snugly in a towel, like a burrito. Others do better when "scruffed" at the loose folds of skin on the back of the neck – this brings them back to kittenhood when mama cat carried them around.

For cats that are stressed by travel to the point of physical danger (panting, high body temperature) or are too aggressive to handle, your vet might recommend anti-anxiety or sedative medications. I will cover this in my next article. Most of these medications are safe and effective. However, in some cases, cats can be so stressed that they are fractious and aggressive, and require a light anesthesia in order to do procedural items such as vaccines and blood draws.

A home-care veterinarian might be an option for cats that might not respond to the options above, including med-

ications. It might be worth a try to see if the cat is more cooperative in its home environment. This can often work fine with fearful submissive cats, but not necessarily with aggressive cats. There are limits to what can be done in the home; for instance, radiographs can't be taken and most often, blood and urine draws cannot be performed.

In my next article, I will address medications – anti-anxiety versus sedatives. Stay tuned!



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.

Info: www.feliway.com/us/Products/FELIWAY-messages

Author of debut memoir discusses decades of struggle following Holocaust

Contra Costa County Library presents Meet the Author
'A Life Rebuilt: The Remarkable Transformation of a War Orphan'

- February 4 | 6:30 p.m.
San Ramon Library
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- February 5 | 6:30 p.m.
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- February 11 | 6 p.m.
Orinda Library
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- February 11 | 6 p.m.
Walnut Creek Library
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925-973-2400

Born in 1939 Belgium, Sylvia Ruth Gutmann became an orphan at age three when her parents were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz. In her debut memoir, *A Life Rebuilt: The Remarkable Transformation of a War Orphan*, she chronicles her escape to Switzerland with her two sisters, their arrival in New York to the home of her uncle and his abusive wife, and her struggles to overcome the trauma of her childhood.

For more information, visit sylviaruthgutmann.com

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Submitted by Ian Richards

The Contra Costa County Library will host author Sylvia Ruth Gutmann as she discusses her debut memoir, "A Life Rebuilt: The Remarkable Transformation of a War Orphan." Born in 1939 Belgium, Sylvia Ruth Gutmann became an orphan at age 3 when her parents were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz. Together she and her two older sisters managed to escape to Switzerland and eventually made it to America. Deeply traumatized, Sylvia arrived in New York City at age 7, where a well-meaning uncle and a cruel aunt took her in. "Don't speak of it. Put it behind you. Move on," they told her. The messages she received in America forced her to again keep silent and hide in full view. She spent the next five decades struggling to put the pieces of her life back together and to fully understand the past she was too young to

remember.

"A Life Rebuilt: The Remarkable Transformation of a War Orphan" chronicles an odyssey that spans 60 years, three countries, and thousands of miles. Remarkably, at age 62, Gutmann developed a relationship with a young man, 40 years her junior, and against all odds she moved to Germany to live with him. Here she began to share the story of her family's fate with German students, senior citizens, and even neo-Nazi groups. By doing so, Gutmann reconciled with the people she had feared and loathed, and resurrected the lives of the parents she cannot remember, and cannot forget. Heart-breaking and ultimately inspiring, this memoir of loss, love, resilience, belonging, identity, and authenticity has a surprising resolution, told in an intimate voice with candor, substance, and heart.

"I needed five decades to heal

from the trauma of being brutally separated from my parents when I was a child," she says. "It's horrifyingly ironic that the current zero-tolerance immigration policy of separating young children from their parents, has made my story even more relevant today."

Gutmann will be speaking at 1 p.m. on Feb. 11 at the Orinda Library and at 6 p.m. on that same day at the Walnut Creek Library.

Gutmann is a former spokesperson on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal Federation of New York City. Every year she shares her story at numerous Holocaust remembrance and Wounded Warrior ceremonies organized by the U.S. Military. She has also spoken extensively throughout Europe and was granted honorary German citizenship in 2002 for her peace activism.

For more information, contact Serenity Dean at (925) 646-9900.

Info: <https://sylviaruthgutmann.com/>