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TROPICAL LIFE

COOK'S CORNER

Vodka whipped cream gives Eton Mess a subtle kick

We're still looking for reader takes on "summer in a bowl" — email, write or tweet (@MiamiHeraldFood) with your recipes. Some inspirations:

Miami's Le Basque catering is known for its exquisitely styled food served to the posh and pampered, a who's-who list of clients that includes presidents, international fashion houses and global conglomerates. The Basque-inspired entrees are as beautiful as they are delicious. But this summer-in-a-bowl favorite has humbler roots, a traditional British treat know as **Eton Mess**.

It's basically a jumble of meringue cookies with cream and berries and has been around since the early 19th century, served at Eton College's annual cricket game against the pupils of Harrow



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School. It is credited to the school's "tuck shop" — kind of a convenience store for students. The Le Basque version is kicked up a notch with a splash of vodka vanilla-infused whipped cream.

BERRY MOJITO

If you're looking for hot-weather cocktails, *Latin Twist* by Vianney Rodriguez and Yvette Marquez-Sharpnack (Hippocrene Books, \$22.50) has some great takes on traditional and modern drinks. The book celebrates the signature cocktails of 18 Latin American countries plus Spain, exploring the history

• TURN TO CICERO, 4E



A mojito and a Mess to combat summer's heat

LE BASQUE'S ETON MESS

- 12 baked meringue kisses (suspiritos)

For the whipped cream:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1½ teaspoons powdered sugar
- ½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise

For the filling:

- 1 pint of strawberries, cleaned and cut in half

- 1 pint of blackberries

- 3 tablespoons vodka

- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest

- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

- Pinch of kosher salt

- ¼ vanilla bean, split lengthwise

- 1 to 2 tablespoons sugar

Combine the cream and sugar in a large bowl. Use a knife to scrape the seeds of the vanilla bean into the bowl; discard the pod. Whip the cream to semi-stiff peaks. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Make the filling: Combine the berries, vodka, lemon zest, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar and salt in a large bowl. Use a knife to scrape the seeds of vanilla bean into the bowl, then add 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Stir gently but thoroughly and check for sweetness; add more sugar if needed. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to 1 hour.

To assemble: Roughly crumble the meringues into a large mixing bowl, so you have big and small crumbles, medium pieces and large chunks. Add the whipped cream and stir gently, just until the meringue pieces are coated. Add about three-quarters of the berry mixture, including the liquid, and stir very gently just until the berries are well distributed but you still see streaks of red in the white cream.

Carefully scoop the mixture into a large serving bowl or individual serving glasses. Scatter the remaining berry mixture on top and drizzle on the rest of the strawberry liquid. Serve right away. Makes 6 servings.

Source: Le Basque Catering.

Per serving: 323 calories (41 percent from fat), 15.2 g fat (9.2 g saturated, 4.3 g monounsaturated), 55 mg cholesterol, 4.5 g protein, 40.6 g carbohydrate, 3.6 g fiber, 124 mg sodium.

