

Sweet and sassy

Spring is just beginning to peek around the corner, and I'm definitely ready for some flip flops, sunshine and warm-weather treats.

Nothing screams summertime quite like root beer floats, and if you are feeling quite American just at the thought of the frothy, creamy, sassy treat, that's because root beer floats don't get much more American.

North American colonists adapted root beer from Native Americans, using the root of the sassafras bush (or the bark of a sassafras tree) for a beverage carbonated with yeast (like beer) and sweetened with sugar, molasses or syrup.

There's no one root beer recipe, but pharmacist Charles Hires first introduced his concoction to the world at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876.

Many years later, the key ingredient, the sassafras root, was banned by the FDA when it came to be known as a carcinogen in 1960.

Lucky for us, artificial sassafras flavoring is still used in root beer. Other flavorings can include anise, burdock, cinnamon, dandelion, ginger, juniper, spikenard/sarsaparilla, vanilla, wintergreen, corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, molasses and sugar.



That's why there's so many different variations and tastes to all the brands of root beer.

I'm Just Cookin'

Written by Darci Tomky

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Most modern brands are artificially carbonated instead of using yeast, and root beer does not naturally contain caffeine, although some brands add it in.

All that yummy frothiness is enhanced with additional foaming agents like yucca or quillaja extracts.

Now that we know all there is to know about root beer (thanks to root-beer.org), we can finally get to our recipes!

Root beer plus barbecue plus chicken. Oh my, oh my!!

This slow cooker recipe from centslessdeals.com is fantastic. I know it sounds weird mixing root beer and barbecue, but somehow it works. And letting the chicken breasts soak up all this goodness in the Crock Pot makes the chicken so tender it just falls apart before you can even shred it.

Plop it on a bun, and you are all set for a springtime meal!

Since we just couldn't get away with only one root beer recipe, I had to try the root beer float cookies as well. As I was flipping through the Six Sisters' Stuff cookbook, these caught my eye.

They use root beer extract, which looks just like the little bottle of vanilla extract at the supermarket. Even the frosting has root beer in it!

A word of warning: these cookies are moist! Like they-will-stick-to-everything moist. And just so you know, I made mine into little sandwiches—much easier to transport and store when there's frosting involved.

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To make this a true root beer float, don't forget the ice cream to pair with this sweet and sassy treat!



Root Beer Chicken Sandwiches

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon garlic powder
2 teaspoons chili powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 cup root beer
1 cup barbecue sauce

Combine dry ingredients and sprinkle mixture on each chicken breast and place in Crock Pot. Pour in root beer and barbecue sauce. Cook on low heat setting for 6-8 hours. Shred the chicken and return to sauce to cook for another 30 minutes. Serve on bun of choice.

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