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Jell-O shots

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Jello Shots (1200/1245)

Jello Shots

A Jello Shot is an alcoholic beverage consisting of liquor incorporated into sweetened gelatin dessert and chilled in a small container. Given the various kinds of gelatin and liquor on the market, the types of Jello Shots are almost unlimited. Since the mid-1950s, people have developed their own recipes and personalized their production in various ways through the use of colors and chilling molds. Many do not view these as actual “alcoholic beverages” given the addition of what they have come to know as a sweet desert. A significant problem is that when people have this view then they often do not have an appreciation of the potential negative effects and dangers of over indulgence. There is also the issue of underage consumption and ease of “concealment”. For most observing a young person eating a bowl of jello is of no concern. But, this particular bowl of jello may contain an extremely dangerous level of alcohol given that most Jello Shots are made with 190 proof pure grain alcohol.

The Basic Jello Shot

The basic Jello Shot is made with 1 cup of boiling water, 1 cup of vodka, 1 cup of pure grain alcohol or flavored liquor, and a small box of jello (3 oz.).

Most Popular Types of Jello Shots

The following are some of the most popular Jello Shot mixtures:

- Dreamsicle Jello Shot: Orange Jello, Whipped Cream Or Vanilla Flavored Vodka, And Triple sec
- Strawberry Lemonade Jello Shot: Strawberry Jello, Lemon Flavored Vodka, and Triple sec
- Caribou Lou (Pina Colada): Pineapple Jello, Malibu Rum, Triple sec, and ½ Cup Pineapple Juice Substituted For Some Of The Boiling Water
- Jolly Rancher: Melon Jello, Vodka, and Apple Pucker
- Purple People Eater: Grape Jello, Vodka, and Watermelon Pucker
- Bomb Pop: Cherry Jello, Lemon Vodka, and (Citron) Blue Curacao
- Margarita: Lime Jello, Tequila, Triple Sec, and a Splash Of Lime Juice With The Boiling Water
- Tequila Sunrise: Orange Jello, Tequila, Triple Sec, and Grenadine
- Tropic Thunder: Berry Blue Jello, Lemon Vodka, and (Citron) Blue Curacao
- Blue Hawaiian: Berry Blue Jello, Malibu Rum, Blue Curacao, and ½ Cup Pineapple Juice Can Be Substituted For Some Of The Boiling Water
- Rum Runner: Strawberry Banana Jello, Light Or Dark Rum, and Triple Sec
- Bahama Mama: Watermelon Jello, Malibu Rum, and Peach Schnapps
- Cosmopolitan: Cranberry Jello, Vodka, Triple Sec, and Splash Of Lime Juice With The Boiling Water
- Sex On The Beach: Orange Jello, Vodka, Peach Schnapps, and ½ Cup Cranberry Juice Substituted For Some Of The Boiling Water
- Lemon Drop: Lemon Jello, Lemon Vodka, and Triple Sec

- Blue Firecracker: Berry Blue Jello, Vodka, Peach Schnapps, and Drop In A Maraschino Cherry With Stem (It's The Wick For Firecracker)

A Brief History of Jello Shots

While it still remains a debate for some, legend has it that Jello Shots were “invented” by a man who was in the Army in the 1950s. It is also believed by many that this soldier was actually Tom Lehrer, who would soon become a well-known singer-songwriter, satirist, pianist, and well respected mathematician in the 1960s.

During and immediately following the Korean War (1950-1953), alcohol became a scarce commodity for many members of the military assigned to various bases and forts around the world. Obviously, ways to “make the most of what they had” became a private concern and activity for many. History has it that Tom Lehrer, while doing his tour of duty on a naval base after being drafted, started experimenting with ways to mix alcohol with various other liquids. His idea was to try to increase the amount of alcohol available without “watering down” the alcohol content of the “mixture”. After several different attempts, he found that the most productive combination was vodka and orange jello. While alcohol was difficult at times to locate, there was plenty of gelatin being sent to the American troops in and outside of the United States. Lehrer and his fellow military personal soon realized a secondary benefit of this mixture. Military police, guards, and senior officers did not think it strange when so many were moving orange jello from one location to another, from one base to another, or even when it was being consumed during “work hours.”

In an interview with Tom Lehrer, he stated that the catalyst for his “invention” was during the plans for a Christmas party on the naval base in 1955. In that all alcohol was forbidden from the party, he and a friend began thinking of ways to “smuggle” it into the party. After many experiences with different types of jello and liquor they found the best mixture was found when one follows the stated directions on the box, but uses vodka instead of cold water. After mixing these ingredients together, they simply put them in small paper cups to chill. When going into the party the next day, what they were bringing past the security looked like a very simple desert for the party. This genesis of Jello Shots would soon take on a life of its own and begin a love hate relationship for many for decades to come.

The Dangers of Jello Shots

The most dangerous thing about Jello Shots is that most do not even taste like alcohol. Those that do are most often made with flavored alcohol which also masks the basic alcoholic beverage taste. This lack of taste somehow equates to many that it also means a lack of alcohol. This is quite the opposite in reality. Many Jello Shots are made using 190 proof pure grain alcohol (Everclear being the most popular). This almost pure alcohol has essentially has no taste, but very quickly intoxicates the consumer. As with many drinks which use pure grain alcohol as their base, they pose a danger in that large amounts can be consumed rather quickly due to their similar taste to Cool-Aid and other fruit juices. This fact has led to many incidents of alcohol poisoning and some deaths across the United States.

Another contributing factor to the dangers of Jello Shots is that it can encourage adolescents to begin consuming alcohol at younger and younger ages. While beer, wine and other forms of alcohol may be an “acquired taste”, having the taste of strong liquor masked by a stronger fruity taste makes it easier to consume. Moreover, just as the military guards in 1955, individuals charged with monitoring the presence and use of alcohol will note the case of beer,

but may miss the inconspicuous jello mold also present. It also allows young people to keep a straight face and “not lie” when they say they do not drink alcohol.

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See Also: Alcoholic Beverages; Alcohol Poisoning; Under Age Alcohol Consumption; Pure Grain Alcohol

Further Readings

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