

Judge John Hodgman

2025 HOLIDAY RECIPE GUIDE

Oops! All Jello!



FEATURING:

BAILIFF JESSE THORN

YOUR JUDGE, JOHN HODGMAN

& THE WONDERFUL JENNIFER MARMOR

Booklet by Ashe Vernon

“People, watch your tummies.
Horses, watch your hooves.
It’s an all-Jello edition!”

—Jesse Thorn



“We're gonna shut our pie holes and
open our Jello bellies.
Oops! It's all Jellos!”

—John Hodgman



“... So, there’s two of them that you liked.”

—Daniel Speer



“Aaand it was all downhill from there!”

—Jennifer Marmor



“Look, this is not about the destination! It
was about the friends we gelled along the
way.”

—John Hodgman

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PRETZEL SALAD

Submitted by Cadie in Baltimore, MA

"I grew up in a very small town on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. At all of the family Christmas Eve dinners, we always had Pretzel Salad.

Note: It's not a dessert. It's a side dish. It goes on the plate with turkey/potatoes/gravy etc.

As everyone got older, whichever aunt was in charge of making this would sometimes take short cuts. **Like using frozen strawberries—bad idea.** They added too much water, and the whole thing was a runny mess. Everyone ate it anyway. **Also a bad idea to try to use real whipped cream. You really need the synthetic texture to hold the middle together.** Apologies in advance!"

JESSE: This is 10,000% a dessert, by the way. If you believe in honoring dessert in any way, if you believe in the existence of dessert, if you are not a dessert denialist, this is a dessert. - This is really good!

JOHN: This is really good!

JENNIFER: I'm a big fan.

JESSE: Jello on my script!!
Jello on my script, alert!!

2 ½ CUPS CRUSHED PRETZELS
¾ CUP UNSALTED BUTTER
3 TBSP BROWN SUGAR
3 CUPS STRAWBERRIES
1 CUP SUGAR*
(*John: Cool Whip IS sugar!)
8 OZ CREAM CHEESE
1 PACKAGE COOL WHIP
6 OZ (2 PACKS) STRAWBERRY JELLO

INSTRUCTIONS:

Combine pretzels with brown sugar and butter, spread evenly across the bottom of dish. Bake at **350°** for **10 minutes**. Wait until cooled. Combine sugar, Cool Whip, and cream cheese, and spread mixture evenly over the pretzel crust. Follow instructions on the box to make strawberry Jello, mixing in chopped strawberries. Pour over top and allow to set in the fridge.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JOHN: I would be curious to try it with **half a cup of sugar**, or maybe a quarter cup. I don't think it needs to be as sweet as it is in the middle.

JESSE: (on using frozen strawberries) Defrost them **in a sieve** over a bowl, let the juices drip down, use the juices to make the strawberry Jello.

FINAL RULING:

"IN BASEBALL TERMS, A HOME RUN TO THE SCORE HOLE."

(John gavels the center of the dish with a dull thwack, but minimal splatter.)



“My husband wants to buy a new snow globe every year for Christmas. He says it's festive. The kids love it. I think they're tacky. I don't wanna put up 20 snow globes that require outlets all around the house. We have five so far. Where does it end?”

JOHN: The difference between a hoard and a collection is a display case. Are they all piled up in the corner, or are they displayed nicely?

You said you don't want 20 of them, right? And if your husband gets one every year, by the time the 20th is acquired, the kids will be grownups and outta the house! And the snow globes will be all that you have left of them.

Those will be your final memories.

JESSE: (Laughing.) I mean, they'll still have that sled that says “Rosebud”!

JOHN: I would say that a new snow globe every year will become a little unbearable. Once you get to 12, then it's one-in-and-one-out.

12, FOR EACH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, IS WHAT I SAY!

That's more of a curse than a ruling for you, Vanessa.

But I had to come up with something.

JESSE: Yeah. Like, I can imagine having 20 snow globes, because you've acquired one every year—if you are putting them up on December 1st and taking them down either January 1st or on the final day of Christmas. However, if there's **any** risk of these bleeding into like November/late January, then I say throw them all away.

JOHN: Jesse, you raise a good point, which is that I had the number wrong. You shouldn't get 12 snow globes for the 12 days of Christmas! You should get 25 of them, and use them as an advent calendar. Sorry, Vanessa!

JESSE: The one thing that I'm concerned about here is that apparently all of the ones they've bought so far are electric.

JOHN: I don't think that you should get any more electric ones. I'll say, that seems excessive to me.

Five electric snow globes and twenty more that aren't electric.

That's my ruling, that's my gavel on Vanessa.

STRAWBERRY CREAM CHEESE JELLO

Submitted by Elizabeth in Bellingham, WA



“My mom got this recipe from a former neighbor, Debbie. It was always served at fancy dinners with holiday foods. However, my Jehovah’s Witness family did not officially celebrate holidays, so these meals were held after Thanksgiving or Christmas. We technically were not celebrating anything... even if the dinner embodied the holiday mood.”

JESSE: Do you think it was my Aunt Debbie?

JOHN: Probably your Aunt Debbie.

JESSE: Probably Debbie, right?

JENNIFER: Yeah. Seems likely.

JOHN: The finish is cheesy. The sort of more liquidy ingredients strain through my teeth and down my gullet.

JENNIFER: *Did you guys know that Sweet Cheese is my nickname?*

1 PACK STRAWBERRY JELLO
1 PACK CHERRY JELLO
4oz CREAM CHEESE
1 (SMALL) COOL WHIP
1 CAN CHERRY PIE FILLING
1 CUP CHEDDAR CHEESE
(FOR SPRINKLING)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Follow the instructions on the Jello box to make a mixed batch of strawberry & cherry Jello. While hot, mix in cherry pie filling. Place in the fridge to set. While waiting, whip together the cream cheese and Cool Whip. Spread the mixture over the fully set Jello. Top with a hearty sprinkling of cheddar cheese.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JESSE: In the future, I'll be putting a layer of pretzels at the bottom of this.

JOHN: I think that if you wanted to really amp it up, you would do like a Red Leicester. But a much stronger cheddar.

JENNIFER: There's something about the texture with the grated cheddar that I don't love, but the taste isn't bad.

JOHN: It tastes like a good cherry pie, but I'm missing some crust. Cherry pie without a crust? Not so good.

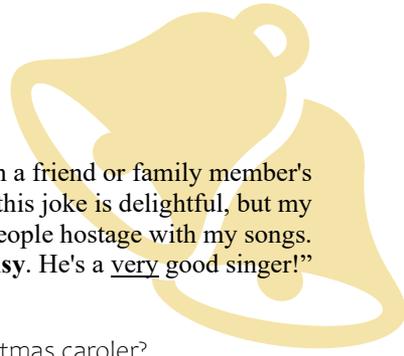
FINAL RULING:

“THIS IS DEFINITELY A DESSERT. AND IT’S PRETTY GOOD.”

(John gavels the center of the dish with a dull thwack and makes a mess.)

THE CAROLING CON

From Elodie in Joshua Tree, California.



“Around this time of year, whenever I knock on a friend or family member's door, I pretend I'm a Christmas caroler. I think this joke is delightful, but my partner **hates** it. He says I'm holding people hostage with my songs. **Please order him to join my whimsy.** He's a very good singer!”

JOHN: How's that different from just being a Christmas caroler?

JENNIFER: I think she's singing, and then when the friend or family member opens the door, they're like, “Ah! HA-ha! Elodie, it's just you! Not a lone caroler!”

JOHN: Well, no, she's not alone. Elodie's probably there with her partner, who is melting into a pool of **bah humbug** and **anger** and **embarrassment**.

I'll tell you what. I grew up in a somewhat of a restrained bah humbug household. But then the Rosemeyers moved next door. And the Rosemeyers, the father was Danish by birth. And they brought a lot of old-world Yule to the party. They lit their Christmas tree with **legit candles**. Like, it was an incredible fire hazard.

It was so exciting to watch that tree try to burn the house down.

And they went caroling—legit, unapologetic, door-to-door, multivocal caroling. And Peter Rosenmeyer—who was and is my good friend—**boy**, did that kid have some pipes! And he roped me into it! And I went door-to-door singing “Dona Nobis Pacem”. Anyway, people in Brookline, Massachusetts had never seen anything like this before, and it was so wonderful.

I mean, Elodie and your husband, you both got the wrong idea.

- 1) Don't be embarrassed if your wife wants to sing at the door of a friend or a family at the holiday time.
- 2) Elodi, Don't make it meta. Just go ahead and do it!

That's my ruling: go ahead.

Get out there and do some New Year's Eve caroling.

But not if you've been drinking!

Alright. That's what I rule there.



LIME COTTAGE SALAD

Submitted by Joanne in Oakfield, NY

“My paternal grandma always made it for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Now that she’s passed, my mom usually does it—but not for all the holidays. It’s almost always present at Christmas (*with maraschino cherries on top for Christmas colors!*). It’s a side dish, although I could see people treating it as a dessert. I have no idea where the recipe came from; it’s been in the family for decades. **I genuinely like this recipe**, even though I don’t like cottage cheese. But to be fair, **if I hadn’t grown up with it, I wouldn’t even touch it.**”

JESSE: It looks horrific. Like an alien’s brain.

JOHN I don’t want to eat it.

JENNIFER: I looked at the link that Joanne sent, and all the photos of similar cottage salads look a little chunky.

JESSE: *I guess I never knew how much I did not want to see cottage cheese glisten.*

1 POUND COTTAGE CHEESE

1 CAN (20oz) CRUSHED PINEAPPLE

2 PACKS LIME JELLO

LETTUCE LEAF (FOR SERVING)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Blend the cottage cheese until smooth. Use the instructions on the box to make a double batch of lime Jello. While hot, mix in the crushed pineapple and cottage cheese slurry. Leave it in the fridge to set. Serve on a fresh leaf of lettuce.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JOHN: If you want something to look a little festive, **pomegranate seeds are your friends**. They’re like little red jewels and they’re beautiful.

JESSE: Jennifer, I’m really grateful for the hard work that you put in. And this isn’t a rejection of you in any way. This is a rejection of Joanne in Oakfield, New York—and her entire family! Her grandmother, in particular.

JOHN: Joanne, I just automatically had a second spoonful. I don’t hate it.

FINAL RULING:

**“DIVISIVE TO SAY THE LEAST. POLARIZING.
I RULE THAT THE SALAD IS DONE-ZO.”**

(We can’t hear John gavel the salad this time. But rest assured, he does.)

PIZZA PREDICAMENT

From Greg in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania:

“I always make pizza on Christmas day. I use a different world flag each year as the inspiration for the toppings. In the past, my kids have had good suggestions. We've done the Welsh flag—which was a red sauce-dragon on a field of white cheese and green pesto—and the Maryland state flag. But lately they keep suggesting flags with blue. There are no blue foods. My children are being grinchy. **Order them to stop.**”

JESSE: There's no blue foods?! Tell that to the *Avatar* menu at the burger restaurant that I recently saw!

JOHN: Yeah, you could make an *Avatar* pizza, for sure.

JESSE: I saw it. It came with an ocean-blue aioli. It's meant to inspire you to think of the blood of the avatars.

If you put the avatars in a press, you get that aioli.

JOHN: But I will make this order to Greg in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Your kids can't be grinchy; they're asking for blue foods. Grinchy love green. ... They're being Blue Meanies.

ALL THE SAME, YOU CAN DO IT. YOU CAN DO IT!
AND INDEED, I ORDER YOU TO DO IT.

Use some blue food coloring and figure out a way to make like a blue/white pie. And if I got to eat this green salad, you gotta eat that blue pizza.

I rule that Greg's gotta make blue pizza.

CUCUMBER JELLO MOLD

Submitted by Afton Cyrus, Senior Recipe Editor at *Simply Recipes* by way of Anne Wolf

The pitch came through from my friend and colleague Anne Wolf, and I trust her completely... though this dish sounds WILD to me. Here's her original pitch:

"My grandma clipped a pastel-green Jello mold recipe sometime in the 1960s, and it quickly became a family fixture. In the late '70s, my grandparents traveled to Japan, and my grandma updated her signature Jello mold—swapping the horseradish for a touch of wasabi.

The result was a little **unexpected**, a little **daring**, and perfectly fitting for my **adventurous babushka**."

JESSE: I'm looking at this. I'm looking at this food. I've nosed it. It smells of cucumber. And I don't want to eat it.

JOHN: If this were in a ring mold, it might look somewhat more festive and less like a colon stoppage.

JENNIFER: John, yours on camera looks like a cheap special effect.

JESSE: Martian nightmare. Grinch bile.

1 PACK LIME JELLO
¾ CUP HOT WATER
6oz CREAM CHEESE
1 TSP HORSERADISH
2 TBSP LEMON JUICE
¾ CUP DICED CUCUMBER
¼ CUP MINCED ONION
1 CUP "A little bit of Hodgman love,
called Mayonnaise." - John

INSTRUCTIONS:

I truly don't know how you would assemble this. Make the Jello and just pour everything in while hot, I guess. If you must.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JOHN: I would try this with **wasabi**—whether it's real wasabi or cheapo tube wasabi. Because even though it's a high-grade horseradish that's dyed green, it has a specific kick that I think might be interesting in this.

JESSE: If I **didn't** have a palette that had developed to **not like** something like this, there would be a... **30%** chance that I would be like, " ... I guess this is what food tastes like. I like it. "

JOHN: What would make this taste even better is if you braised some cocktail wieners in grape jelly and mustard and then inserted them into the middle of it as a little surprise.

FINAL RULING:

"NOT SOMETHING I WANTED IN MY MOUTH—AND REALLY BELONGS SMASHED ON THE END OF MY GAVEL. LOOK!"

(And lo, the salad is smashed. Judge John Hodgman rules; that is all.)

THE MRS. FANTA CLAUS MISTAKE

“Mrs. Fanta Claus,” a hot winter beverage, so named by Jennifer Marmor in honor of Monte Belmonte’s chilled version: the Fanta Claus



JOHN: I would say, I will often drink **eggnog** plain. I enjoy the taste of eggnog quite a bit. And there are people in my family who will add alcohol to the eggnog. I rarely ever do. 'Cause I just love it.

I mean, it's a kind of drinkable
mayonnaise for me.

What I find, as is often the case with grocery store eggnog, is: not enough Orange Fanta in it.

JESSE: Oh, here we go. Now we're ready! The party's about to start, baby!

JOHN: Now, the appropriate way to serve this is to shake it up and spray it all over the podcasting studio that you happen to be in. But because I've already overstayed my welcome here at Technica House, I'm going to just pour it in gently...

Okay. That's a no from me, dog.

I'll tell you why. If this had milk in it, then you might hit that same creamsicle flavor combo that the true Fanta Claus has. And if it had milk in it, it might be better. But the problem is I don't know.

JESSE: It tastes very bad.

JOHN: It's hot orange soda.

Yeah, it's not very good.



TOM & JERRY

Submitted by Markus in Chapel Hill, NC

"You know that winter is here when you see the **Mrs. Bowen's Tom & Jerry Batter** hit the refrigerator section at the grocery store. A Tom & Jerry is in the same clade as an eggnog. It is, ultimately, an egg- and sugar-based drink with liquor added. However, the way my family prepares it, it ends up being much lighter in viscosity and flavor than eggnog. It's also good as a sweetener in your morning coffee. My only suggestions are to give it a try with brandy instead of rum—and to not be afraid to adjust the batter, because it can be cloyingly sweet."

JESSE: Jennifer's holding the jar (of batter), and it looks like a jar that a fancy mustard would come in.

JOHN: That's right. Like a mustard. The kind of fancy mustard you put into a lime Jello salad. What does it say on the ingredients?

JESSE: *Midwestern nightmares.*

2 TBSP TOM & JERRY BATTER

1 CUP HOT WATER (OR MILK)

1oz RUM OR BRANDY

A SPRINKLE OF NUTMEG

INSTRUCTIONS:

Scoop two heaping tablespoons of batter into a mug of hot water. Add liquor to your preference. Finish with a sprinkle of nutmeg.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JESSE: I will say that, drinking it without booze, I want it to be made from milk.

JOHN: I would up the ante with some milk, I think. I think it needs that body.

JENNIFER: Batter ended up on my hands somehow. How? Unclear.

JESSE: Were you scooping it out with our fingers? Like a bear eating honey out of a hive?

JENNIFER: Was I not supposed to?

FINAL RULING:

"THAT'S TERRIFIC! TASTES LIKE EGGNOG TO ME. VERY FESTIVE!"

MULLED DR. PEPPER TANGENT



JOHN: There is one hot, mulled drink that we have enjoyed before, here at the holiday office party, and that's Mulled Dr. Pepper. Hot Dr. Pepper, right Jesse?

JESSE: Yeah. What you do is, speaking as the former president of the San Francisco School of the Arts' Dr. Pepper Club—

JOHN: It was horrible how you were impeached. You didn't deserve that.

JESSE: (Laughing.) That's true. I may be president for life! If I went back there, they would put my robe back on me. Alright, this is something that was advertised by the Dr. Pepper Company for many decades.

You let your Dr. Pepper go flat, and then you warm it in a saucepan. It's important not to boil it. And then you add a squeeze of fresh lemon, like an elderly man at a diner. And it's very good.

JOHN: Well, Chris in Camas, Washington wrote in suggesting that we try eggnog with—instead of orange soda—Blackberry Dr. Pepper this year.

JESSE: Dr. Pepper is, of course, the soda that was designed to **taste the way that an old-fashioned pharmacy smells.**

JOHN: I'm sorry, Mr. President of the Dr. Pepper Fan Club, but that sounds like fake news to me.

JESSE: That is 100% real. Because a pharmacy was where you went for your soda pop!

JOHN: I mean, it was a form of medicine. Coca-Cola was cola nut and cocaine.

JESSE: There's not a lot of forward blackberry flavor, but there's a lot of blackberry on the back end.

JOHN: A lot of **backwash blackberry**. Well, that's strike one on Eggnog and Tom & Jerry beverage. Strike two on Blackberry Dr. Pepper and Tom & Jerry beverage. I would say the count is two-in-one. There's one walk, because—

**Thanks to the brandy and the rum, I am now
ambling towards first base. And
no one can stop me.**

JESSE: ... John has a very creative interpretation of the rules of baseball.

TOM & JELLOS

Concocted by Jennifer Marmor

“I couldn't find a recipe for a Tom & Jerry Jello shot. I don't know these holiday beverages very well, so I was like— well, an eggnog Jello shot is a thing. So, I'll just adapt that.”

JESSE: WAIT. HOLD ON. WE'RE MAKING JELLO SHOTS OUTTA THIS STUFF?!

JENNIFER: MAKING? MADE.

JENNIFER: It separated in a way that is not nice-looking.

JESSE: I feel like I would be more comfortable eating this if I knew that it had rum and brandy in it, even as a nondrinker. I do NOT like the idea of eating this without booze in it.

JOHN: I mean, it looks gross, right? It's an opaque Jello shot.

JESSE: *It has a vulgar appearance.*

1 CUP TOM & JERRY DRINK
1 PACKET UNFLAVORED GELATIN
3/4 CUP RUMCHATA
1/4 CUP BRANDY
PINCH OF CINNAMON
PINCH OF NUTMEG, MORE FOR GARNISH
WHIPPED TOPPING, FOR GARNISH

INSTRUCTIONS:

Make gelatin using the instructions on the packet. Make the Tom & Jerry drink using the instructions from page 12. Include a pinch of cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir both together and allow to set. Top with whipped cream and a sprinkle of nutmeg.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS:

JENNIFER: Can I tell you something? I've never done a Jello shot before. I don't know what I'm supposed to do here.

JESSE: I'm just eating a little bit with a spoon.

JOHN: Since I forgot to grab a spoon, I'm just gonna use my fingers, and I'm gonna deslime it. I'm gonna try a big bite of it.

FINAL RULING:

**“I AM FEELING, ALREADY, THE BRANDY AND THE RUM
WORK ITS WAY INTO ME. SO, THERE IT IS.
HOLIDAY CHEER TO YOU ALL.”**

HONORABLE MENTIONS

ALLISON suggested LUSH MUSH

MAGGIE suggested POLYNESIAN GINGER DIP

AMEILIA suggested VERNIE'S SECRET CHEESE DIP

KELSEY suggested THE SPINACH THING

MEEB suggested HOT PINEAPPLE CASSEROLE

BRIDGET suggested GRANDMA ERHARD'S MINI PIZZAS

CAITLIN suggested STUFFED PEPPERONCHINI POPPERS

TERRY suggested BAGENAL

“I’m sorry about the
spilled Jello.”

- John Hodgman, having slammed his gavel into every possible Jello creation



“Hello, there is a big Jello mess in the sink that I will clean after JJHo records!”

—Jennifer Marmor, to the JJHo work Slack

SPECIAL THANKS



Audio Technica House

Megan Rosati

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Jacob Derwin

Daniel Speer

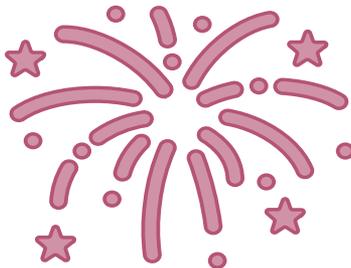
AJ McKeon

Hannah Moroz



"So, there it is. Holiday cheer to you all. Thus ends the episode. Goodbye, and see you in the future."

—John Hodgman



JOHN'S VALIUM FROM KARACHI STORY

JOHN: Look, I had a little bit of brandy and rum.

So, let me tell you the story about the time my wife bought valium over the internet.

I came home one day, and there's this package from Karachi. And I open it up, and it's all these blister packs of medicine. And I look up what it says in Pakistani; it says "valium."

So, I said to my wife—who is a whole human being in her own right—"What happened?"

She said, "Yeah, I had a little too much Tom & Jerry Mix," if you know what I mean. "And at about 2AM, I got online. And I had received an email saying, 'We wanna sell you some Valium. And I gave them my credit card information.'"

JESSE: (Laughing) **And it worked!?**

JOHN: We canceled the card, and then we took the valium. And you know what? **It was an end of year holiday miracle**. It actually calmed us right down and did not poison us. It was not a roofie satsuma; it was genuine Pakistani valium.

So, every now and then—it doesn't seem like much these days, but every now and then,

things work out.

"There's a lot of Jello space down
here in Daddy's tumtum."

- Jesse Thorn