



THE CLAN GRAHAM NEWS

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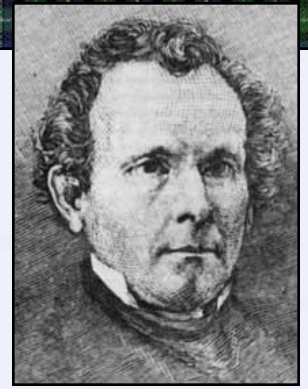


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A central portrait of Sylvester Graham, a man with curly hair and a high-collared shirt, framed in a wooden frame. The portrait is surrounded by green leaves. Below the portrait is a yellow banner with the name 'Sylvester Graham' written in cursive. The bottom of the image features a row of graham crackers.

**Bake homemade graham crackers
with specialty graham flour.
History and a recipe inside!**

FALL 2010



Graham cracker invented in 1829 by the Reverend Sylvester Graham

BY JENNY FITZSIMMONS

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

The Reverend Sylvester Graham was the last child (of 17) born to John Graham of Suffield, Connecticut, on July 5, 1794. Sylvester's grandfather was the Chaplain John Graham (of Woodbury, Connecticut), who was the second son of James Graham, 3rd Marquess of Montrose. His father was 72 years old when Sylvester was born and died shortly thereafter. Several years later, his mother was declared insane and unfit to care for him.

After losing both his parents, Sylvester moved from one relative's home to another and picked up various trades along the way. He worked as a farm hand, a clerk and a teacher before deciding on the ministry as an antidote to his poor health. He attended Amherst College but failed to graduate mainly due his unpopularity among his fellow students; nonetheless, he married Sarah Earl, daughter of a Rhode Island sea captain, and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1826.

Inspired by the temperance movement, Reverend Graham developed the Graham Diet in 1829 while living in Bound Brook, New

Jersey. He believed that eating meat and fat, as well as drinking alcohol, caused unnatural feelings of lust that resulted in a multitude of ailments including indigestion, consumption, epilepsy, and even insanity. To control these unhealthy urges, he advocated a diet of primarily fresh fruits and vegetables, whole wheat and other high fiber foods, and very sparing amounts of fresh milk, cheese and eggs.

The graham cracker was invented as a health food specific to the Graham Diet, and was originally marketed as "Dr. Graham's Honey Biskets." The flour used to make the original cracker is a combination of white flour, coarse-ground wheat flour, bran and germ. Reverend Graham would be most displeased with today's graham cracker, which is rarely made with whole wheat flour and contains additional sugar and spices.

His book produced a short-lived health craze among puritanical Americans. Graham boarding houses were opened in New York and Boston, and in addition to the diet, occupants could enjoy sleeping on hard mattresses with the windows open and taking cold baths. "The Graham Journal of Health and Longevity" enjoyed a run of two years before succumbing to a lack of subscribers.

The Reverend joined the lecture circuit and shocked audiences with his frankness

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regarding sexuality. Women reportedly fainted during his discussions on the evil of corsets and the need for natural, unrestrictive clothing. His tirades against refined flour drew the ire of bakers, and his insistence on a vegetarian diet won him no friends among butchers. On several occasions mobs attacked him during lectures, and his ill-humored and aloof temperament managed to alienate his friends over time.

Even at the height of his popularity, the media ridiculed him for his zealotry and many regarded him as more ridiculous than inspired. In 1839, he retired from the lecture business, and he died in relative obscurity on September 11, 1851, in Northampton, Massachusetts, after a round of failed Grahamite cures.

While some may have regarded his ideas as just plain nutty, a few influenced his contemporaries and some have become nothing short of dietary law today. John Harvey Kellogg, the inventor of cornflakes, concurred with Reverend Graham's ideas regarding lust and the necessity of bland foods to control it. Reverend Graham also founded the American Vegetarian Society in 1850, the first of a number of such groups.

Most interestingly, his diet turns out to be healthier than what was consumed by the Americans of his time, or even by Americans today. Though he advocated a high fiber diet full of fresh fruits, vegetables, grains and seeds on the erroneous assumption that it would reduce feelings of lust, we now know that this very diet helps protect against many health problems, such as cancer and heart disease.

In addition to his dietary recommendations, many of his other ideas regarding health turned out to be quite right. He advised his followers to brush their teeth daily, get fresh air, bathe regularly, exercise and get at least seven hours of sleep—all of which are highly recommended by doctors today. He also encouraged people to purify their water, an act which helped prevent the spread of cholera during some of its worst epidemics.

These days in Northampton, Massachusetts, you can go to Sylvester's Restaurant, which stands on the site of Reverend Graham's last home. Ironically, the meals available resemble the usual American diet heavy on meat and fat rather than the Reverend's healthier fare.

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Bake healthy, homemade graham crackers using specialty graham flour and honey

BY EKENA B. PARKINSON

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

For an historical and heritage-based cooking experience with a Graham theme, bake graham crackers. They taste just like those that are store-bought, but homemade is fresh and free of preservatives.

Graham crackers are made with graham flour, developed by the Reverend Sylvester Graham in the 1830s as part of his controversial Graham Diet. (When referenced, both the crackers and flour use the lower case letter “g” in Graham.)

Not to be confused with gram flour (derived from ground chickpeas and used mostly in Indian and Southeast Asian recipes), graham flour is derived from whole wheat that is very slightly ground and produces a coarser texture.

According to Wikipedia, “rather than simply grinding the whole grain wheat kernel (bran, germ and endosperm), in graham flour the components are ground separately. The endosperm is ground finely, initially creating white flour. The bran and germ are ground coarsely. The two parts are then mixed back together, creating a coarse-textured flour that bakes and keeps well.”

Being a less refined flour, its healthy processing method retains the highest nutritive value, including protein and fiber, of the grain.

Graham flour may be found in the specialty baking section at some health food stores or purchased online. If it is unavailable, make an equivalent by substituting one cup of graham flour for 2/3 cup white flour, 1/3 cup wheat bran and 1 1/2 teaspoon of wheat germ.

Graham crackers, a naturally sweet snack in Reverend Graham’s diet plan, are traditionally made with graham flour and sweetened with honey. The flat, crisp cookies were known as “Dr. Graham’s Honey Biscuits.” Consuming one large rectangular piece, two squares or four small rectangular pieces, is the equivalent of only 59 calories, according to Calorie Count.

Modern and modified graham crackers have other ingredients, such as sugar and cinnamon, and are popularly used to make s’mores and pie crusts. Such sweeter desserts are in contrast to the original Graham Diet.

While there are many versions of graham cracker recipes, the classic one specifically uses graham flour. Here is one adaptation of a recipe for classic graham crackers from “The Fannie Farmer Baking Book” by Marion Cunningham (published by Gramercy in 1996; ISBN 0517148293).

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups graham flour
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoons of salt
- 1/2 stick (4 tablespoons) of butter, softened
- 1 egg
- 6 tablespoons of sugar
- 4 tablespoons of honey
- 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda
- 2 teaspoons of water

DIRECTIONS

Combine the flours and salt in a medium bowl. In a large bowl, mix the butter, egg and sugar. Stir in the honey. Dissolve the baking soda with the water, then add to the butter mixture. Gradually add the flour mixture and

blend until a dough is formed. Add more graham flour if it is too sticky. Dust a clean surface with graham flour. Roll out the dough in small sections to 1/8-inch thick. Slice into squares or rectangles or use cookie cutters for decorative shapes. Prick holes with the tines of a fork. Place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees F for 10-15 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool to a crisp on wire racks. Yield: About 3 dozen.

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