

SWEET VEGGIE POPS

A New Twist On an Old Treat

BY JENNIFER CARDEN

On the searing summer days of my childhood, I spent long hours outside with other kids, playing hide and seek, getting dirty, and making mud pies. The moment we heard the bells of the ice cream truck, our ears perked up in unison and we raced off to get our ice cream treat.

Now, 30-something years later, I hardly ever see an ice cream man. Maybe it's because grocery stores today are stocked with so many more ice cream choices, or maybe it's because kids play indoors more. Whatever the reason, the summer school break presents a great opportunity to spend time with your kids, cooking with them and teaching them about food and family. It should be easy to entice them into the kitchen to help create these unique and deliciously cooling Minty Pea Pops and Veggie Corn Pops. They may not get to chase the ice cream man, but they will be having fun, enjoying their dessert, and eating their veggies, too!



Minty Pea Pops

Peas on a Popsicle stick? Just tell them it tastes like mint–chocolate chip ice cream—but these are not quite ice cream and not quite vegetable. They are now a staple in our house—a great dessert, snack, or treat on a hot day. Have your kids help shop for and shell the peas. You'll love it when your child asks for a Pea Pop!

Makes 6 cube-shaped pops

8 ounces cream cheese

1 cup shelled sweet English Peas

1/4 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract

1/8 to 1/4 cup semi-sweet mini chocolate chips

6 Popsicle sticks or wooden craft sticks

Place the cream cheese, peas, and sugar in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for 20-second intervals until the cheese is softened to room temperature.

Using a blender or food processor, puree these first three ingredients into a smooth paste. Add the extract and mix again, scraping the bowl frequently. Stir in the chocolate chips by hand.

Place the mixture into a food grade plastic bag and cut about 1/2 inch off of one of the bottom corners. Squeeze the puree into an ice cube tray or mini muffin tin, place 1 Popsicle stick into each serving and freeze until solid, about 1 hour. You may also spoon the puree into the molds. Depending on your freezer, you may have to let them freeze for up to 4 hours. For best results, make and freeze these overnight.

Once the pops are frozen, remove them from the molds by twisting just like ice cubes. You may need to go around the edge with a warm knife if you used a muffin tin. Sealed in an airtight container, these will keep for up to 1 month.

Feel free to be creative and discover your own favorite flavor combinations in these veggie pops. You may also substitute frozen vegetables if your children are clamoring for these treats and their preferred vegetable combinations are out of season.