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June Newsletter

June's meeting was great. The weather was perfect with blue skies and a nice breeze. Chris had the large tarp set up so there was room for everyone and tables under it. We held the meeting while Joe cooked for us. We are ready to go for the Michigan Festival of Gourds competition. The ribbons have been ordered and Deb has tables for the set up so there will be plenty of room for all the entries. There will be an "ask the Judges" time after the judging so entrants can ask us any questions they have about what we look for in the entries. We discussed a number of things such as classes we would like to have for upcoming meetings and about the annual Christmas dinner and how to make it even more fun. Marta and Mira are looking into good venues that will allow us enough room to display the "gourdaments" and mingle freely with each other.

Then Joe called us to come and eat. Joe is a fabulous cook. He had ribs that he marinates over night and what I think he called Caribbean Jerk Chicken. Some of us provided pasta salads, and there were awesome deserts. We were all stuffed when lunch was over. But we all managed to waddle back to the tent.

Chris then showed us how to do power carving. She demonstrated the different bits and how to use them. Then we passed the gourd pieces around to see what she had done and how it should look. She also told us about the different sanders and which ones she prefers and how she uses them. It was very informative and Chris is a wonderful teacher.

We will not have a meeting in July and the August meeting will be held at 6:00 on Saturday at the Festival of Gourds. This will be our big annual meeting where we make plans for next year and get everyone's opinions on where they would like to see the group go and where we should focus our energies.

There is going to be a Michigan Gourders only competition at the Festival. There will be one theme. The theme for this year is **PINK FLAMINGOS**. Make your bird any way you like and the flamingos will be displayed outside the competition building. A voting box will be placed where the public can vote for their favorite and the artist winning the most votes will get a \$25. gift certificate to Blue Whale (who will be at the festival as well). I have no idea how I'm going to make mine but you can bet I'll come up with something crazy.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FOOD BABY!

Well, I didn't get a recipe from anyone this month but fear not, I have provided a good summer recipe for you all to try.

Thai Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

- 3 large cucumbers, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup chopped peanuts

Directions

1. Toss the cucumbers with the salt in a colander, and leave in the sink to drain for 30 minutes. Rinse with cold water, then drain and pat dry with paper towels.
2. Whisk together the sugar and vinegar in a mixing bowl until the sugar has dissolved. Add the cucumbers, jalapeno peppers, and cilantro; toss to combine. Sprinkle chopped peanuts on top before serving.

And just for good measure:

Chunky Cheesecake Brownies

Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 9 inch square baking pan.
2. Combine cream cheese with 1/4 cup sugar and 1 egg in a mixing bowl; beat until smooth. Stir 1 cup chocolate chips into the cream cheese mixture. Set aside.
3. Fill a saucepan with water and bring to a boil. Turn the heat off, and set a heatproof mixing bowl over the water. In the mixing bowl, combine butter with the remaining cup of chocolate chips; stir until just melted and blended together. Stir in the remaining 1/2 cup sugar and 2 eggs, then sift together flour, baking powder, and salt; stir into chocolate until evenly blended.
4. Pour half of the batter into the prepared baking pan. Spread the cream cheese mixture over the chocolate layer. Top with remaining chocolate mixture (this doesn't need to completely cover the cream cheese layer). Using a knife, swirl the top chocolate layer into the cream cheese to make a marble pattern.
5. Bake in preheated oven at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 25 to 30 minutes, or until top is crinkled and edges pull away from sides of the pan. Cool thoroughly. Cut into 12 to 16 squares. Store in the refrigerator or freeze.

Even though we aren't meeting next month I'll send out reminders and any important information as we get closer to the Michigan Festival of Gourds. Have a wonderful summer everyone and We'll see you in August.