

Candy and Cookies!



Sweets were not common in the kitchen house. Sugar, when available, was valued and used sparingly. It was often stored under lock and key! However, sweets were made using sugar substitutes such as honey, molasses, and other natural sweeteners. Benne (sesame) seeds were secretly brought to America on the slave ships by black women who had used them in their native cooking. Benne seed cookies and candy were made by black cooks in Charleston and other lowcountry South Carolina locations. They replenished their benne seeds by planting a few seeds at the far end of each row of cotton, for example, to harvest later. Freed slave cooks often continued to make benne candy, which was peddled on the streets of Charleston and Savannah to white people.

Groundnut Candy

1 qt. molasses

4 cups shelled peanuts, roasted

1 c. brown sugar

1/2 cup butter

Combine all ingredients except nuts, and boil for 1/2 hour over a slow fire. Then add the roasted and shelled peanuts and continue cooking for 15 minutes. Drop on lightly greased cookie sheet or on a piece of marble. Make little cakes of the candy and let harden. Note: some people are allergic to peanuts.



Benne-Seed Cookies

1 cup flour

1/4 tsp. salt

3/4 cup butter

2 eggs, beaten

1 tsp. vanilla extract

peanut oil

1/2 tsp. baking powder

2 cups brown sugar

3/4 cup benne(sesame) seeds

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt. Cream butter and add brown sugar; stir till fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla. In a large skillet, toast sesame seeds until taffy colored; add to batter. Oil a large cookie sheet. Drop batter by teaspoonfuls 1 and 1/2 inches apart. Bake in upper part of oven for 10 minutes. Let cookies cool 1 minute then scrape onto a rack to cool. Makes 6 dozen.