

Kid's Korner

Expensive Silk Begins with a Caterpillar

WASHINGTON — In China, newly hatched silkworms are tickled with feathers to prod development. A dog's bark, a cock's crow, or a foul smell, the Chinese believe, can upset the freshly hatched worms.

In India, members of the Munda tribe stalk through the forest with slingshots ready to fell predator birds that pick silkworms off trees. During this time tribesmen do not shave or cut their hair, and they eat only vegetables. Their wives may bring them dinner but are not allowed to spend the night.

In Japan, some silkworms spend their short lives in special germ-free environments, often nourished by a scientifically formulated mixture of mulberry leaves, soybeans, and cornstarch.

110 Cocoons Per Necktie

Such reverence for silkworms is ancient, and so is the process that creates some of today's most cherished garments. Special conditions and 110 cocoons are needed for a silk tie, 630 for a blouse.

Silk's secret was first unraveled in 2640 B.C., according to legend, when Chinese Empress Xi Ling Shi dropped a cocoon into hot water and discovered that she could unwind a glistening thread from the softened mass. But silk — the cloth of emperors — remained China's secret for more than 2,000 years. Imperial law decreed death by torture to anyone who disclosed the silkworm's magic.

Silkworms may have reached Japan in A.D. 300. In the sixth

century, legend says, Roman Emperor Justinian sent two monks to China to obtain a supply of worms. Silk began to spread throughout the world. China still produces more than half of the world's silk. More than 10 million Chinese farmers raise silkworms.

As it has for centuries, silk enriches tradition and ritual. By custom, an Indian woman is married in a silk sari. The corpse of a venerable Hindu may be covered with silk as a sign of respect. A silk quilt is the measure of a Chinese woman's dowry.

Sometimes known as the queen of textiles, silk looks beautiful because its triangular fibers reflect like prisms. Layers of protein build up to a pearly sheen.

Sutures and Tennis Rackets

But silk can do more than look pretty. Surgeons use its easily knotted strands in sutures, and Chinese doctors have replaced sections of diseased arteries with it. Silk is part of some tennis-racket strings, fly-fishing lines, and parachutes. French bicycle racers use silk tires for smoother rides and better traction. Skiers like silk next to their skin because it is warm and draws moisture away from the body.

All of this from a worm that really isn't. It's a caterpillar, a member of the order Lepidoptera, which includes butterflies and moths. The most common source of silk is the domestic *Bombyx mori*, but there are more than 500 species of wild silkworms. One of them, found mostly in China,

How many of you come home from school with your tummies growling? And what tastes better than a big glass of ice cold milk and one of Mom's homemade cookies or a piece of homemade cake? These next two recipes are designed especially for you to make. Ask Mom to help and make yourself some after-school treats.

NUTTY CHOCOLATE SQUARES
1 package Betty Crocker Snackin' Cake chocolate almond, chocolate fudge chip, German chocolate coconut pecan or golden chocolate chip

1 cup milk
1 package (4 1/8 oz.) chocolate instant pudding and pie filling
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease bottom only of rectangular pan, 13x9x2 inches. Prepare cake mix as directed on package except mix in bowl and substitute milk for the

produces an off-white silk known as tussah. A shimmering gold silk comes from the muga caterpillar of India's Assam Valley.

With extraordinary eating capacity, cultivated silkworms feast only on mulberry leaves, increasing their body weight 10,000 times in their 25- to 28-day lives.

They don't even have to stop eating to get air; They breathe through nine holes in each side. Periodically they do stop to sleep for about a day. When they wake up, they wriggle out of their too-tight skin and start eating again.

After a final molting, they secure a place for a cocoon. First they throw out a light web to anchor themselves. Then they toss their heads to extrude a protein mixture

water. Stir in pudding and pie filling (dry) with milk. (Batter will be thick.) Spread in pan. Sprinkle with nuts. Bake 15 minutes; sprinkle chocolate chips over top. Bake until wooden pick inserted in center comes clean, about 10 minutes longer. Cool completely. Cut into about 1 1/2-inch squares.

CHOCOLATE FUDGE SUNDAY CAKE

Prepare 1 package Betty Crocker Stir 'n Frost devils food cake mix as directed except

decrease water to 1/2 cup; add 1/4 cup mashed ripe banana. Serve with chocolate-cherry whipped topping.

CHOCOLATE CHERRY WHIPPED TOPPING

Squeeze frosting (it comes with the cake) into small bowl; add 2/3 cup whipping cream. Refrigerate until chilled. Beat until stiff. Fold in 1/4 cup well-drained maraschino cherries, cut into fourths, add 1/4 cup toasted almonds, coarsely chopped.



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COLOR THIS!

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|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. GRAY |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

BOBOLINKS: IN THE SOUTH THESE BIRDS ARE KNOWN AS "RICE BIRDS." THEY MAY DO SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE RICE CROP. THEY ARE FOUND IN FIELDS AND MEADOWS POURING FORTH THEIR BUBBLING SONGS. BOBOLINKS USED TO NEST IN THE NORTH CENTRAL STATES BUT NOW ARE SPREADING WESTWARD FOLLOWING IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE.

