

names meaning “lady’s fingers,” such as *ṣawābiʿ al-sitt*), and *luqam al-qāḍī*. Puddings are still popular: *muhallabiyya* (usually thickened with cornstarch), *rizz bi-ḥalīb* (rice pudding, which has medieval antecedents), and *mughli* (a nut-enriched cross between a pudding and a custard). See PUDDING. At one point in the late Middle Ages, a crumbly butter cookie evolved under the name *ghurayba* (literally, “the little extraordinary thing”). Borrowed in Turkish, it was pronounced *kurabiye*, the name by which it has become known in the West through its Greek spelling, *kourambies* (pl. *kourambiedes*).

If you look into a bakery in most of this area, you will be struck by the predominance of Turkish baklava-type pastries. The Turkish influence is strongest in Damascus, which was a local center of administration under the Ottoman government. Damascus still has a significant Turkish population and is known for making the best baklava-type pastries in the Arab world. Other widespread Turkish sweets are *qamar al-din*, the famous “apricot leather,” and *sujuk*, a confection made by dipping a string of walnut meats into a boiling mixture of grape syrup and cornstarch, as if dipping a candle. The name means “sausage” in Turkish, and the product does end up looking like a rather lumpy sausage.

Particularly characteristic of northern Syria is *ḥalāwat jibn*, a versatile sweet that is a little difficult to classify. It is made by toasting flour with butter and stirring it with syrup—making a sweet roux, in effect. When the mixture thickens, the cook kneads it with crumbled mild cheese to make something with a texture oddly reminiscent of a washcloth. It can be eaten by itself or rolled around a stuffing such as nuts.

The most famous Egyptian sweet is *om ʿAlī* (mother of Ali), a sort of bread pudding made by baking torn-up pieces of bread or filo dough with milk and nuts. It is suspected that this dish is actually adapted from the English bread pudding, which was introduced at a hospital in Upper Egypt during the early twentieth century by a nurse named O’Malley.

Iraq shows recent Iranian influence, for instance, *rangīna*, a confection of dates and toasted flour, and *nūni panjara*, fritters cooked with a special iron like the Italian *rosette*. Iraq has indigenous specialties of its own, such as deep-fried cardamom-flavored cakes called *ṣalūq*. The Persian Gulf cooks much like Iraq, except that there is far less Turkish influence.

The southern and eastern Arabian Peninsula cooks rather differently. Most sweets in Oman are pudding

like, thickened to one degree or another with starch, agar agar, or other products. In ascending order of firmness, they are *sakhana*, *khabīṣa*, and *ḥalwā*. Some have unusual flavorings, such as fava beans or even garlic, and concentrated milk figures in many *ḥalwās*, possibly reflecting Indian influence. See HALVAH and INDIA. Oman is closer to Bombay than to Baghdad and has adopted at least one Indian dessert, the Indian vermicelli, *siwāya*, cooked with sugar and nuts.

Yemen, at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is one of the world’s poorest countries. Its traditional sweets are usually flavored with honey, which is considered medicinal and also blessed, because it is mentioned in the Qurʾān. Despite the country’s poverty, surprisingly expensive honey boutiques are located in Sanaa. A typical sweet is *fatūt*, crumbled bread that can actually be mixed with anything but very often is flavored with honey or bananas. The specialty of Sanaa is *bint al-ṣaḥn*—layers of leavened dough, stacked up, baked, and served with butter and honey. In Sanaa, this dish is usually served at the beginning of the meal.

See also HONEY and NORTH AFRICA.

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The **Midwest (U.S.)** is the area of the United States encompassing Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Long before this official definition, however, Midwesterners

themselves were characterizing their region and its food. In 1842, for example, Mrs. Philomelia Ann Maria Antoinette Hardin published the wonderfully titled *Every Body's Cook and Receipt Book: But More Particularly Designed for Buckeyes, Hoosiers, Wolverines, Corncrackers, Suckers, and All Epicures Who Wish to Live with the Present Times*, giving the Midwest its first truly regional cookbook. Hardin's book, purportedly the first printed west of the Alleghenies, wasn't a collection of recipes that she culled from cooks in the East Coast or England. She speaks to the stomachs around her, with recipes for "Hoosier Pickles" and "Buckeye Rusk." Here is her recipe for "Wolverine Pudding":

A quarter of a pound of buiscets [*sic*] grated, a quarter of a pound of currents cleanly washed and picked, a quarter of a pound of suet shred small, half a large spoonful of pounded sugar, and some grated nutmeg; mince it all well together, then take the yolks [*sic*] of three eggs, and make it all into balls as big as turkey's eggs; fry them in fresh butter of a fine light brown.

This was a dessert to get a Wolverine through a Michigan winter, and if readers lived in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, or Illinois, they could find recipes to satisfy their sweet tooth, printed alongside "Valuable Rules" for making medicine, raising honey bees, or cultivating fruit trees. Hardin's book firmly roots its advice and recipes in the region now called the Midwest. See PUDDING.

The term itself, as it refers to the stretch of the United States east of the Ohio River and west of the Missouri, did not come into American usage until the 1890s, and Hardin's title hints at the difficulty of describing this region's character. Buckeyes, Hoosiers, and Wolverines still embrace those nicknames, but people from Kentucky or Illinois are not likely to see themselves as Corncrackers or Suckers. Midwestern sweets are marked by this clash in the region between continuity and change. From the Native Americans' precolonial use of *sinzibuckwud*—the Algonquin word for "tree sap" that literally means "drawn from wood"—to the maple candy that Pa gives his daughters in Laura Ingalls Wilder's popular *Little House on the Prairie* series ("It was better even than their Christmas candy"), to the 568,000 gallons of maple syrup produced by Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin in 2013, Midwestern sweets have been created and consumed in response to the needs and desires of the people who live there; people who

have constantly inherited, invented, and adapted their food from the land around them; and the people, sometimes very different from themselves, who live alongside them. See MAPLE SUGARING; MAPLE SYRUP; and NATIVE AMERICAN.

The Great Plains states of Kansas, Iowa, the Dakotas, and Nebraska have given Americans one vision of the Midwest: a heartland of small towns and agrarian values, where endless acres of cereal crops, such as corn and wheat, unfurl among silos and farmhouses, as a classic dessert like sugar cream pie cools on the sill. Also known as Hoosier pie, farm pie, Indiana cream pie, and finger pie, because you stir it with your finger, this simple mix of flour, butter, salt, vanilla, and cream originated with the Amish and perhaps Quaker communities who settled in Indiana in the early nineteenth century. See PIE. Over 600 miles away, in the Dakotas, recipes brought in the same period by Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian immigrants give a sense of the communities who would come to represent Middle America: the *krumkake* is a waffle cookie with Scandinavian origins that traditionally shows up for Christmas celebrations, alongside the *sandbakelse*, a sugar cookie baked in a fluted tin, and the rosette, an ornate, wafer-sized, deep-fried pastry. Powdered sugar might dust any of them. With their ties to the old country and ongoing presence at today's tables, these desserts testify to America's belief in the Midwest as a place of family and tradition, where sweets offer one of life's simple pleasures.

This vision differs from the Midwest of the Great Lakes states, in which Rust Belt industrialization, widespread immigration, and urban values, with Chicago's mighty skyline beckoning, define the region. Here, tradition and innovation work together. Immigrant sweets such as the Italian *cassata* cake found in Cleveland bakeries or the Polish *pączki* in Detroit, filled with cream or jam and reminiscent of a jelly doughnut, give the Midwest its signature character, but so do desserts like the brownie, said to have been invented by a chef at the Palmer House Hotel in 1893 during the Columbia Exposition. See CASSATA and DOUGHNUTS. Apparently, one Mrs. Bertha Palmer asked the chef to make a "ladies dessert"—not so messy as a piece of pie, not so big as a slice of cake—that she could include in the lunch boxes for women working at the fair. Voilà, the brownie. See BROWNIE. The Twinkie and the Cracker Jack also came from Chicago. See CRACKER JACK and TWINKIE. In this vision, Midwestern

sweets are as diverse as its cities' inhabitants and inventors, with Indian *gulab jamun* (fried balls soaked in sugar syrup) and sweet potato pie brought north during the Great Migration as symbolic of Midwestern sweets as the famed cherry pies of Michigan's Lower Peninsula or its Mackinac fudge.

These competing visions of the Midwest as city and country fail to capture the rich complexity of the region, where small-town and big-city ideals constantly mix. A city such as St. Louis preserves its German heritage with a fruitcake called stollen, and a town of 27,000, as Mansfield, Ohio, was in the 1920s, can give birth to a mass-market product such as the Klondike bar. See STOLLEN. In fact, the Midwest is where the national food industry began and is currently housed. General Mills, Hostess Brands, the Kellogg Company, Kraft Foods, Nabisco, Quaker Oats, and Sara Lee all started in the Midwest. See HOSTESS and SARA LEE. Wherever people are eating a mass-produced dessert, whether it is wrapped in plastic or pulled from the freezer, they are eating Midwestern fare, a regional vision of food that has reached around the globe.

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mignardise, also called “friandise,” is a general category that includes many kinds of little sweets—small cakes, cookies, macarons, chocolates, candied fruits, and pralines—served most often at the end of a meal with coffee and liqueur. The word comes from the French *mignard*, meaning “delicate” or “pretty,” which in turn derives from the medieval word *mignon*, meaning “small.” Mignardise can be synonymous with the petit four (literally, “small oven”), which appears to be a creation of the nineteenth century. The famous French chef Marie-Antonin Carême claimed that the name referred to the baking of these small cakes in a slow oven whose heat dissipated after the large desserts had finished

baking. See CARÊME, MARIE-ANTOINE. In his *Physiologie du goût* (1826), Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin refers to the “multitude of delicate pastries which make up the fairly new art of baking little cakes.” M. LeBlanc, author of Roret’s *Nouveau manuel complet du pâtissier* (1829), refers to the confection of petits fours as a branch of pâtisserie in which particular commercial bakers specialized. He advises professional bakers to have two ovens, including a smaller oven devoted to baking petits fours and all sorts of small cakes, to save on cooking fuel. By the time LeBlanc was writing, there were already at least 50 different types of ovens that the professional baker could purchase.

See SMALL CAKES.

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military sweets are often overlooked, with studies of food and the military generally focusing on the nutritional content of rations. After all, as the popular saying goes, “An army travels on its stomach.” However, since the creation of the U.S. Armed Forces, sweets have sustained our servicemen and women emotionally and physically. Sweets have also served as a goodwill ambassador of sorts, distributed to foreign populations by American troops for generations.

The Revolutionary War–era Continental Congress first established an official field-feeding program for the military in 1775, attempting to standardize rations and their preparation. The basic “garrison ration” allocated per soldier per week typically included beef, pork, or salt fish; bread or flour; milk or either cider or spruce beer plus a small stipend; and peas or beans. Slight variations on this garrison ration remained the standard for servicemen under all conditions, whether they were in camp, in the field, or in combat, from the Revolution through World War I.

By World War I, the military had created a slightly broader range of rations, designed for use under varying conditions of warfare. There existed, for example, reserve rations, trench rations, and