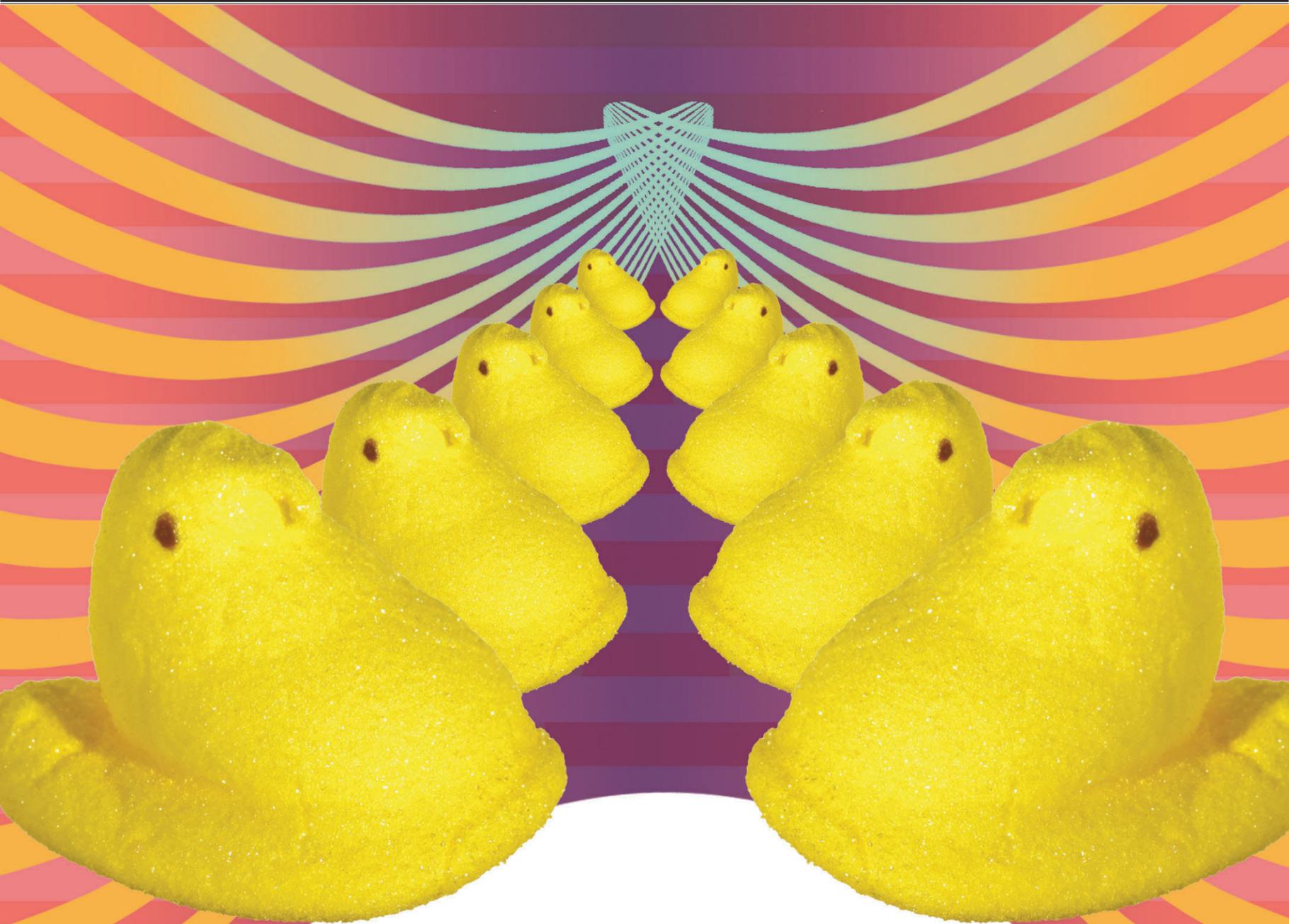


ENTRÉE

Gatherings: Venice inspires detective series and delectable dishes. **3N**

At Home: South Milwaukee home reflects a bit of France and beyond. **6N**

Gardening: Paths don't have to be lined with primroses to be pretty. **7N**



At the gooey hands of their fans, marshmallow chicks and bunnies leave the Easter basket behind to find fun on the Internet

Playing for Peeps

By **JOANNE CLEAVER**
Special to the Journal Sentinel

Who you calling a marshmallow? Squishy, soft, stretchy, sugary . . . you telling me these are signs of weakness?

You think a cream egg could take this abuse? Any cream egg would break under the pressure.

You think a handful of jelly beans could turn any old person into a Peepcasso? Those little squirts of colored sugar couldn't inspire anyone. Garnish: that's the most jelly beans can hope for.

Those beady-eyed bunnies . . . you know they're hollow, right? Not like us. We're sugar to the core. We're the ones who can make those Easter fantasies come true.

That's right, go ahead. Put us in your dioramas.

Not hot enough for you? Barbecue us over your spring grill.

Afraid of us when we're fresh and tender? Ignore us 'til we're old and crusty. We can take it.

Just remember: What you make of us says more about you than it does about us.

Isn't that the truth?

If it's spring, it's time for the great American Rorschach test: What will you do with your Peeps?

For the first few decades after Peeps were acquired by their current owner, Just Born Inc., in 1953, the blindly staring marshmallow chicks and bunnies were a cheap filler candy in the nation's Easter baskets. Overshadowed by regal rabbits, outclassed by filled eggs and certainly outnumbered by jelly beans, Peeps simply . . . were. Vaguely vanilla, garishly glittering yellow or pink, their entertainment value derived mainly from their tensile qualities—in other words, how far they stretched between teeth and fingers.

Sure, a few adults had semi-secret Peeps habits. They'd break the seal on a few packs and squirrel them away. A few weeks later, depending on the humidity, they'd harvest their stale Peeps and indulge in some surreptitious snacking.

All that was before Peeps went viral. Thank you, World Wide Web, Facebook and YouTube.

And, thank you, Washingtonpost.com, home to the nation's most prestigious Peeps craft competition run by one of the nation's most sober news organizations.

Just as Peeps themselves illustrate that calories abhor a vacuum, the secret obsessions of thousands of Peeps fanatics rushed to fill popular social networking Web sites with images of all that can be done with—and to—marshmallow critters.

The Post's wildly popular diorama contest provided the center of gravity. Spinning in wild orbit are a galaxy of Peeps recipes, crafts, lore, and toothpick-wielding Peeps dueling each other into microwave-oven induced quivers.

There's no reining them in now.

"This is brand ownership at its pinnacle," said Sue Northey, senior vice president and director of brand planning for Cramer-Krasselt, a Milwaukee-based

Please see **EASTER, 4N**



► **Which came first** — the Peep chick or the egg? **4N**

► **ReciPeeps** for Peepsicles and other treats. **4N**



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HOME BASE

NEW PRODUCTS, GREAT IDEAS

FOOD TRENDS

If you like to grill, you're not alone

Tailgating officially began this weekend with the Brewers baseball home opener. And the grill may be the hottest cooking accessory of the year, as the recession drives families to eat more meals and do more entertaining at home, or in the parking lot, whatever the case may be.

Three out of four households (77%) now own an outdoor grill or smoker. Gas grills top the charts, followed by charcoal and electric.

Here are some top grilling trends, according to The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association:

The multi-tasker: Grills now have as many as 12 burners, allowing simultaneous cooking of different foods at varying temperatures. Other coveted features include built-in infra-

red rotisseries, wok stations, storage drawers, built-in thermometers and lights.

Affordable infrared: Hotter and faster, infrared is a rapidly growing technology in the grilling industry. The intense heat brings home the taste of restaurant-quality grilled steaks and meats, and in half the time as traditional at-home grilling.

The outdoor oasis: Outdoor kitchens offer all the comforts of the traditional kitchen, like sink, blender, cocktail bar, spacious cooking and prep areas, dishwasher, refrigerator.

Accessories galore: New tools include handy baskets to cook mini-hamburgers or "sliders," potato grilling racks, and non-stick grill top-pers to steam or roast poultry, veggies and more.

COOKING

Butter substitute puts its promise where your mouth is

Butter has long been the gold standard in baking. But I Can't Believe It's Not Butter is making a run for the baking market with its new Cooking & Baking sticks.

They taste and bake like butter but have 50% less saturated fat, according to Unilever, the company that makes them.

If you don't believe it's as good as butter, there's a money-back guarantee through June 30. Log on to www.bakeittobelieveit.com for details.

— Karen Herzog

