**A Visit to a Marzipan Kitchen**

By Margaret Myhre

Marzipan is a paste made of almonds, powdered sugar and corn syrup, which can be used to frost pastries and cakes or molded and sculpted into different shapes for use as cake decorations or candy. I am very lucky to live just a mile or two from Beate Christoph who operates a marzipan business out of her home. She...
makes delicious, fresh marzipan confections in the shapes of fruits, vegetables, autumn leaves, Santas, snowmen, and animals including delightful little hedgehogs!

Beate was born in Germany, moved to the United States as a child, and arrived in Spokane, Washington a few years ago. In 2003, she met Edith and Joe Nendl, originally from Germany and Austria, who had been making marzipan, chocolates and pastries for more than fifty years. The Nendls were ready to retire just as Beate was searching for a new business. They shared their “secret” marzipan recipe with her and trained her in the arts of shaping and coloring marzipan and working with chocolate.

Recently I had the privilege of touring Beate’s marzipan kitchen and observing the steps involved in creating marzipan hedgehogs! First fresh almond paste from California almonds is combined with sugar, invert sugar and corn syrup in an enormous mixing bowl to create marzipan dough. The different types of sugar give the dough the correct sweetness, texture, and pliability for molding and painting. No eggs or flour are used in the recipe and no baking is required.

The mixed dough is transferred to a sort of oversized pasta machine which flattens the dough into sheets of uniform thickness. Another machine resembling a gigantic egg slicer is used to cut the dough into strips. The strips go into yet another machine that rolls the strips into balls of uniform size and weight. The setting for creating hedgehogs calls for dough balls that weigh one ounce each.

Some marzipan is shaped by hand into plums, peaches, apples and strawberries and finished using the same sort of tools a sculptor would use. But hedgehogs are created by pressing the ball of dough into a specially designed food-grade silicone or metal mold. These neophyte hedgehogs are turned out on a rack and air-brushed using USDA-approved food coloring. After a light coating of cocoa butter, the marzipan is ready to be placed in glassine candy cups, set in plastic trays, then nitrogen-purged and vacuum-sealed in a plastic pouch, and packaged in a case.

Readers who do not live in the Spokane area (I believe that includes all but one of us) can order Beate’s marzipan hedgehogs as well as marzipan fruit, veggies, and other animals from her web site or her Ebay shop. The links are listed below.

Confections by Beate,  http://stores.ebay.com/Marzipan-Confections-by-Beate
Once again, one of the highlights of the Milwaukee Rendezvous was the Rainbow Bridge Ceremony to honor our little ones who have crossed the Rainbow Bridge since the last Milwaukee show. Through the years, the lives of these little ones have been celebrated in many ways. This year it was a photo CD set to music, some of which was requested by different members of our hedgehog community.

Before the ceremony, we listened to the traditional playing of *The Music of the Night*. We were lucky enough to have Standing Bear and Queen Sable the Serene herself there to oversee the playing of this song.

After that we all watched the slide show which started with the Rainbow Bridge poem and ended with a special tribute to Steph Hyne and her family who lost their home and most of their pets in a devastating fire in September. As always, hugs were exchanged and tissues passed around the tables...always a very touching moment.
This interesting book is part of a science series called *Animals in Order* which was designed for elementary school students. The text begins by summarizing the order of animals known as insectivores. It describes their characteristics as well as their place in the animal kingdom.

Following this introduction are chapters devoted to insectivores in the Americas, insectivores in Europe and Asia, insectivores in Africa, and insectivores in Madagascar. The final chapter offers a brief discussion of insectivores and their relationship with people. Although some of these small animals may be regarded as pests, insectivores also contribute to keeping the insect population under control and for this they deserve our appreciation. Back matter in the book includes a glossary, index, a short list of recommended books and websites, an index and author information.

The author, Sara Swan Miller, is a Montessori teacher and environmental educator at the Mohonk Preserve in New Paltz, New York. Among the other books she has written are *Three Stories You Can Read to Your Cat* and *Three Stories You Can Read to Your Dog*.

What sets this book apart is the fact that it discusses the hedgehog outside of the realms of fiction or pet care. It is illustrated with an amazing collection of large color photographs. The book’s cover features a close-up of a star-nose mole and the title page presents a lovely photo of a hedgehog. Other photographs include an incredible underwater photo of a diving shrew, a golden mole devouring a dragonfly, a night photo of a solenodon, three varieties of tenrecs, a desman, and several extremely attractive hedgehogs.

Although this book is out of print, paperback and hardback copies are available through Amazon, Advanced Book Exchange, and Barnes and Noble.


If you have suggestions or ideas for items you would like to see in the newsletter, e-mail the editor at newsletter@hedgehogwelfare.org
The hedgehog community suffered a huge loss this October. We were stunned to learn that our dear friend Jackie Lekroengsin was in the hospital in Thailand in grave condition. Within 24 hours of hearing this terrible news, she was gone. Our group rallied together to hold a candlelight vigil for her passing and to hope that her beloved hedgies, Spike and Bellino, would find a loving home to care for them. With much effort and perseverance, Beth Hatch Reichert (rockrose63) and Margaret Campbell (miatamaggie) were able to track down her hedgies, make sure they were being properly cared for, and find out Jackie’s final arrangements in time for all of us to join in.

While we are still learning more, both about Jackie and about the home Spike and Bellino are in now, let’s take some time to remember and celebrate Jackie’s life. The following was posted by Jackie on May 23, 2008 in "Introductions"

1) Your name or Screen name you use on yahoo: gypsygirl878@

2) General geographic location: BKK, Thailand

3) Member of the hedgie Internet community since: about a year

4) Your hedgies: Spike, who’s almost 2 years old and a very shy boy, but so cute. And Genie (my girl) has crossed rainbow bridge last April, but will always be in my heart

5) Other beloved animals: Pets of friends.

6) Anything you want to share about your human family: Oh, it’s just me. My story would be great for a soap, lol.

7) What do you do for a living? Teaching English & German to Thai adults.

8) Where did you go to school? In Vienna, Austria

9) Special interests other than hedgies: photography, live music, collecting cds, animals

10) What special talents do you have that you use or would like to use to benefit hedgies? Saving all the hedgies which are mistreated in Thailand, more free time and space and maybe to know how to treat them when they’re ill.

11) The best thing about hedgehogs is: I guess I could write a book about that. They look like teddy bears with a spiny coat, have such a cute and innocent personality and,...... (sorry I’m running out of words... just so adorable)

Then in answer to Naomi’s asking her to tell us more about her exciting life, on May, 24 she posted:

Hi Naomi,
I wouldn’t mind, but I have no idea how to make such a long story short, lol. O.K., I’ll try: Let’s say I was born in Vienna, grew up there, became a cabaret dancer when I was 18 and danced in over 18 countries for 13 years. When I did some shows in Thailand I fell in love with a Thai man, got married but continued dancing. When I reached the age of 31 I trained to be a teacher, settled down in Bangkok with my hubby and started teaching English & German. He died in a car accident 15 years ago, but I decided to stay, because I’ve fallen in love with Thailand as well. If you’d like to know about life in Thailand then please join me on ringo.com - a photo club - because pictures say more then words and I love showing of my photos, lol. I’ve also started a hedgie photo group, because

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they had all kinds of animals, except hedgehogs.
Lots of hedgiehugs,
Jackie & Spiko

Jackie was a long time animal lover and rescuer with her Thai husband, Moo. They lived in a small house outside town, where they had many different kinds of rescued animals. She has posted pictures from then, showing a house overflowing with dogs, cats, snakes, other assorted creatures, and love. Once Moo died, she had to give up the house and animals to move to a small one room flat in town.

Elaine: I met Jackie online a little less than 2 years ago, when she first got Spike and Genie at an animal market. She thought they looked sad and picked on, and would fit in her small apartment. Jackie's Yahoo profile was written the first day she had her hedgies and was filled with excitement about them. She wanted to learn more about them so she could better meet their needs. Jackie joined aloveforhedgehogs around the same time I did and we learned about hedgies together. She added HWS and Pog Chat to her list of groups and was a great participant in all of them.

Her profile on HWS told us that she was from Austria where hedgehogs were wild. She said that the Thai people thought that hedgehogs were small porcupines and were poisonous and she wanted to educate them. The last line in her profile was: “Please help me learn how to take care of hedgehogs.”

Beth: Jackie’s Genie crossed the Rainbow Bridge on April 21, 2008. My Pine-lope joined Genie there on April 29, 2008. Those were difficult days but we helped each other through them. And we became good friends. We shared a passion for helping hedgehogs through education, rescue and research. In an email sent to me after my Miriquill crossed last month, Jackie said to me:

“I’m glad if I could make you feel, if just a little bit, better. ….so, so sad when I lost Genie and I still miss her, but rescuing another hedgie helped a little….we can try our best to improve their lives. I give each and every student of mine at least one hedgehog lesson. I teach them what kind of animal they are, their behaviors, needs, etc. So I try to improve the living conditions of hedgies here in Thailand this way.”

We also shared a passion for music, so it was a given that Spike would write songs for the Pog Band. I just wish she could be here when the CD is released so she could hear what he wrote.

I just wish she could be here so she could laugh with us and cry with us. I miss her so much. But I know, because she has told me, that the show must go on.

The Show must go on!
The Show must go on!
Inside my heart is breaking,
My make-up may be flaking,
But my smile, still, stays on!
- Queen
The Show Must Go On “Innuendo” (1991)

I’ll try, Jackie. I don’t know how I will be able to do it, but I’ll try. Give my girls big hugs and kisses, and thank Genie for being there for them, as you have been there for me.

Go in peace, my friend. We will miss your love of life and hedgehogs. We will miss your zany humor. We will miss your heartfelt concerns for the well-being of others. We will miss you.

All our Love,
Beth

(Continued on page 7...)
Jackie couldn’t get wheels for her hedgies in Thailand but got each of them one from a “sponsor” here. Cedar (from alovelforhedgehogs) provided the first one. Margaret from HWS sent the new one. Genie crossed the bridge in April 2008 from cancer. Jackie got Bellino this summer when she went to the market for mealies. He looked small and picked on, just like Spike had when she saved him.

Margaret: I met Jackie on line in June 2008. When Jackie rescued Bellino, I contacted her privately to ask her if she would be offended if I got a wheel for him since she could not get one in Thailand and circumstances prevented her from ordering one from the USA. We had an immediate connection and emailed privately on a daily basis. We grew very close in a very short time. I am so very sad that we had such a short time as close friends. I was looking forward to many years of friendship with her.

Both Jackie and Margaret are from Austria, and had an immediate connection. Here’s more of what Margaret wrote about Jackie:

“She did many things - cabaret dancer, DJ, comedian and a magician’s assistant. She said her boss did not teach her magic but that she knew how he cut her head off and how it felt to be in a basket full of swords. She was so funny!

She was always fascinated by Asian culture and when offered a tour in Asia grabbed it. She met Moo, her Thai husband, in Bangkok. She still traveled a lot in Asia. She said that 18 years ago she became too old for cabaret and circus so she trained to become a language teacher and settled down with her hubby. At that time she and Moo started an animal rescue center.

Jackie loved all animals and people who are animal lovers. She once told me that she did not have 100% faith in the human race except for animal lovers like this group and the other groups she belonged to.

She loved her hedgies with all her heart. She also said that she had made some very good friends here and treasured each one.

I hope this helps some of you who were just getting to know Jackie to feel like you know her better now. I did not known her as long as most of you but I know that I loved her as a true friend and I will miss her very much. Bye for now Jackie. I look forward to seeing you when it is my turn to cross the Rainbow Bridge. We will all miss you more than you could ever know. There will be a void in our lives but we will fill it with loving memories of you. I will miss our daily “talks” as I always looked forward to them. God Bless you.

Love
Margaret” (Oct 14)

Jackie was a great photographer and Spike is the January 2009 calendar hedgie. She had a great sense of humor. She loved music, especially blues. She said that the crickets she raised for the hedgies sang along with the blues. She also loved to listen to Dolly Parton when she was down or sad. Posing as Spike in the pog chat group, she wrote several poems and songs for the band our hedgies started.

Jackie’s Spike and Rebekah’s Thistle flirted online, and eventually married (VERY long-distance). Jackie, in the guise of Spike wrote this for Thistle, and added it to the Pog Chit Chat Band files as well:

HedgieLove
By Spike

I'm just a little hedgehog
And found my hedgie love
For ever and for always, I'll love her huff,huff,huff
---
Chorus:
Ti-ti-ti- Thistles
Thistles is her name,
She lives so far away from me
Which really is a shame
-----
Her spines they shine like jewels
Her belly’s white as snow
She is the cutest hedgehog

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That you will ever know
---- Chorus...
----
Her eyes they shine like stars above
Her nose is sweet and cold
My Thistle is my hedgie love
I'll love her 'til I'm old

Elaine: I talked to Jackie mostly about the hedgies and politics (U.S and Thailand) and exchanged forwards of interesting art, photos and jokes. Oddly, it was these forwards with their long strings of names that allowed a friend of Jackie's in Thailand, who was frantic to contact friends and relatives, to track us down.

Jackie feared that political instability in Thailand would force out all foreigners and she might not be able to take her much-loved hedgies with her. In a different way, that is what has now happened. We do not know if the Thai AGA, the animal group that took responsibility for Spike and Bellino, was picked by her in advance as a back-up if she was forced to leave them behind. We feel that she would be greatly relieved that both her friends there and our on-line group did their absolute best to make sure that her hedgies received great care. Nancy and Kane, a contact of hers in Thailand, jumped in to help with translating and confirming that the adoptive home with a worker from the animal group was well suited and informed to give Jackie's boys the best care possible.

Part of the follow-up from us involves collecting both funds and supplies for the animal group and the caretaker who has taken lovingly taken Spike and Bellino into her home. Sheila is collecting donations which are still being accepted. She may be contacted at sexytexy@comcast.net or by mail at 1100A Heritage Place, Waldorf, MD 20602) Laura D. started the ball rolling by offering several veterinary texts. Laura also found a Thai temple near her to offer prayers for Jackie when her funeral was taking place in Thailand.

Sheila worried about Spike and Bellino being scared by the sudden changes in their lives. She wanted to try to reassure them that we had not given up on them and that we would do our absolute best to see that they found a great home. Shortly after we heard the bad news, she posted this: “I took the liberty of contacting Animal Communicator extraordinaire, Dawn Wrobel, about Spiko and Bellino. Dawn is not able to have a true communication session with them since we are not in contact with the person who has care/custody/control of them and can't have a true dialog between the boys and that person. She was torn about doing that much since she didn’t want to get their hopes up.

However, she did explain to them what happened to Jackie and that they were not abandoned. Spiko is taking it better than Bellino.

I have written to the gentleman at AGA and sent him some care brochures, offered HWS's services in whatever way we might be able to arrange and told him that I have an animal communicator who is willing to work with the boys, pro bono.

I'll keep everyone posted if I hear anything.

Let's keep Spiko and Bellino in our thoughts and prayers and ask that Jackie's loving spirit visits them to comfort them.”

Jackie’s friends in Thailand kept us informed of her funeral arrangements. We will soon post the lovely pictures they sent us. It was very touching to see the number and variety of people who attended. There has also been a great out-pouring from distant friends as the word has spread. From Kis in Denmark to Tracy in Japan, to European and Asian friends of Jackie’s that were previously only unknown names at the top of forwards from her, Jackie touched many people all over the world. This tragedy has brought us all closer together and has reassured us that if something were to happen, we can count on this group to make sure our hedgies are all right!

Peaceful Journey