

Mindy Batt/ Recipe memoir

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Brain Freeze

Whenever I see a large cardboard box—you know, like the ones the big appliances come in—I am overwhelmed with memories of my childhood growing up in the golden prairies of southern Alberta, Canada. You see, my mother had made a magical deal with the appliance stores in the city. Any time they would deliver something that came in a large box to our dumpy little town they would drop the box off in our front yard. They must have thought my family was crazy, what on earth was a family of all girls, in the middle of nowhere going to do with all those enormous boxes. Forts!

We made forts, lots and lots of forts. My sisters and I would carefully design and cut out windows and doors, draw bricks and window boxes, tape on chimneys, make curtains and build furniture out of what was left of the corrugated brown stuff. Our obsession with forts didn't just stop at boxes either. We would stream old sheets from one side of our living room to the other, tied together with rubber bands and shoelaces.

A big brown city; our architectural masterpiece. Little yellow flowers and girls on sleds swayed above our heads. Pillows stacked high, stolen from the sofa made soft little seats for our makeshift movie house. Nights filled with forts made of pillows, old sheets and cardboard boxes were not complete without our favorite shows mixed with salty, buttery popcorn, and of course cool, refreshing, Orange Julius.

Nothing tasted better to me as a child than the taste of warm, salty popcorn dipped in frosty, sweet and tangy Orange Julius until just before the popcorn went soggy, then tossed into my little mouth. Every Sunday night my family would make a big batch of fresh popped popcorn and three blenders full of this citric cold stuff. We would sit in our fort so large it encompassed the entire living room with our old swivel television at the center front.

It was Disney movie night, a night of Muppets, Fraggle Rock or musicals like Annie, Parent Trap and Sound of Music. As kids we did not watch much TV other than the occasional early morning Saturday cartoons, so Sunday nights were a big deal in our house. I remember rushing home from church to catch the six o'clock showing. We would huddle into our fort we had made a few days earlier, click on the tube and enjoy our Sunday treat.

My sisters and I would slurp the thick cold drink until we would fall over with freezer brain, in tears just to get up and do it all over again. Brain freeze or freezer brain as we called it, is the headache that rushes your temples right after you drink something very cold too fast. Freezer brain became a game; we would see who could drink theirs the fastest without getting freezer brain. Oh how our heads would pound!

Orange Julius was the staple in our family year round, the arctic mix of milk, orange juice and ice with a touch of sugar and hint of vanilla got us kids so excited. I loved the frigid small ice crystals mixed with the creamy milk and frozen orange juice pressed against the roof of my mouth until it dissolved into a delicious slurp. Then the headache would subside long enough to take another bite. What more could a girl want, a box, fort, movies and of course Orange Julius.

Orange Julius

6 ounces frozen orange juice concentrate (about half a can)

1 cup milk

1 cup cold water

1/8-1/4 cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

8-12 ice cubes

Directions:

Combine the first four ingredients in blender

Blend 1-2 minutes, adding ice cubes a few at a time, until smooth

Add vanilla and blend for 30 more seconds.

Serve immediately

Serves 4 or 1 depending on who is drinking it.