

DRINKS

I tried Pepsi's new S'mores Collection and did not want s'more

Pepsi's new S'mores Collection includes Toasty Marshmallow, Graham Cracker and Chocolate Pepsi.

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By Randee Dawn

If the world is divided into Pepsi lovers and Coca-Cola devotees, I am absolutely on Team Coke. I've not voluntarily put Pepsi into my system since Michael J. Fox was the company spokesperson, at which time I had a longstanding passionate affair with Diet Pepsi that verged on the obsessive.

It's been a few years, in other words.

I broke up with Diet Pepsi a while back, too; something switched off about it in me, and it no



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longer tasted right. So, I got off the juice and straight on to Diet Coke, where I remain to this day. These days, I'd rather go thirsty than drink a Pepsi. I am suspicious of businesses where no Coca-Cola is served thanks to Pepsi cornering the market.

I am 100% certain that – no matter what the studies say – I could identify Coke over Pepsi in a blind taste test.

Yet, I voluntarily undertook an assignment for TODAY in which I had to taste Pepsi. (I'm here to do the tough work when it comes to sugary, processed food tastings.) In fact, I was looking forward to it. Why? Because Pepsi got me in one of my soft places: Last week, the company released a limited-edition-only-for-social-media-influencers collection of sodas which, when combined, would give you a full s'mores experience.



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Our contestants for today's taste test: Graham Cracker, Toasty Marshmallow &

Randee Dawn

I *love* s'mores. They are one of nature's perfect food combos when done right: sticky and sweet, melty and crunchy, and one is plenty. (After I've had a proper s'more – which, for the uninitiated, is graham crackers sandwiching a square of chocolate and a recently-fire-toasted marshmallow – I skip directly to toasting marshmallows ad infinitum.)

Alas, most s'mores-“flavored” things are disappointing, if not outright terrible. They use chemicals to ape flavoring, the proportions are off (too much of one thing, not enough of another), it isn't warm and melty with a bit of snap, and so forth.

(That said, hand me a quart of Gifford's Campfire S'mores Ice Cream and I'll see you in a half hour with an empty carton. Despite the lack of warmth, that company's take on s'mores flavoring is just ... **chef's kiss.**)

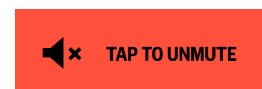
But this taste test was for TODAY. It was for *science*.

I was in. Could the country's largest beverage company, part of a \$225 billion-dollar business in the U.S. alone, turn my aspartame-coated heart around?

Here's how my adventure to the blue can side went.

As a writer for TODAY, I was able to wrangle the limited-edition sodas. I'd failed to read the fine print before reaching out for them; initially, I had thought I'd just have to pop a top and start guzzling down on s'mores satisfaction. But no: Pepsi had created *three* sodas meant to be combined into your favorite s'more's combo: Toasty Marshmallow, Graham Cracker and Chocolate. They arrived in small 7.5-ounce cans, along with a list of four recipe combinations.

There's “no wrong way to s'more,” Pepsi says in its marketing materials, but I decided to sample each can by itself, and then in the suggested combinations.





— Graham Cracker Pepsi. But why? Randee Dawn

All by themselves

Strange days. It's hard to imagine anyone choosing to drink one of these flavors all by themselves. Toasty Marshmallow is so understated as to have no particular taste at all; it was cloying in the mouth and seemed absent of any real marshmallow flavor. Chocolate has merit, but it's more like a can of Pepsi that walked by Chocolate's house and wa down the street. There's something of a *wet* chocolate and coffee taste in gets a B grade for effort.



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Graham Cracker, though, is clearly a prank. Either that, or it's been designed by someone who hates graham crackers so much that they've thrown them into the fireplace briefly before applying them to the other s'more ingredients. Sharp, burned notes come right up front and once they fade there's an incongruous sensation of ... bread. It makes my mouth angry.



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— Pour out your own, but taster beware. Randee Dawn

'The Classic'

1/3 Graham Cracker

1/3 Toasty Marshmallow

1/3 Chocolate

Pulling out my kitchen scale, I weighed out 5 milliliters of each into a shot glass, swirled and sipped.

Result: Burned graham crackers still dominate, breadiness more prominent. But there's no perceptible marshmallow taste. My taste buds are temporarily on strike.

'For the Graham'

1/2 Graham Cracker

1/4 Chocolate

1/4 Toasty Marshmallow

“Add an extra splash of Graham Cracker (Optional, but encouraged!)”

The marshmallow has been completely cowed in this recipe and is basically hiding under the bed of the giant chocolate-coffee flavor, which is squashed beneath the continuing breadiness of the giant graham cracker.

I did not go for the “extra splash.”





— Tools of the trade. Randee Dawn

'Marshmallow (is for) Lovers'

1/2 Toasty Marshmallow

1/4 Graham Cracker

1/4 Chocolate

At last, we have a working memory of marshmallow. This is the best combination so far; the marshmallow is subtle to thanks to the proportions is keeping the weird graham cracker and chocolate tastes under control. This is almost worth having a bit more of.



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THE PEPSI S'MORES COLLECTION RECIPES

In a 12oz glass, choose your recipe and pour the below amounts to enjoy!



The Classic

- 1/3** Graham Cracker
- 1/3** Toasty Marshmallow
- 1/3** Chocolate

For the Graham

- 1/2** Graham Cracker
- 1/4** Chocolate
- 1/4** Toasty Marshmallow
- 1** Add an extra splash of Graham Cracker (Optional, but encouraged!)

Marshmallow (is for) Lovers

- 1/2** Toasty Marshmallow
- 1/4** Graham Cracker

The Chocolate Connoisseur

- 2/3** Chocolate
- 1/4** Toasty Marshmallow

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1/4 Chocolate

1

Splash of Graham Cracker

— In case you want your own recipes. Randee Dawn

'The Chocolate Connoisseur'

2/3 Chocolate

1/4 Toasty Marshmallow

Splash of Graham Cracker

This combination doesn't know what it is. It's not chocolate, not marshmallow and not graham cracker but – say it with me now – it's still pretty burnt-tasting. Basically, this is a not-good combination of any of these flavors.

Sure, you can look back on these highly individualized results and decide that as a non-Pepsi fan, I was never likely to be won over, no matter what came out of the cans. And to be fair, I question whether Coca-Cola could have made this combination work, either. S'mores is just one tough cookie to get right, though that doesn't stop companies from trying – there's s'mores peanut butter, s'mores cereal, s'mores trail mix and (as we all know) s'mores ice cream, just for starters.

The good news is this: If you really want the Pepsi cans for yourself, you can try and win a set by following @Pepsi on social media. Share an image or description of how you “s'more” on Instagram or Twitter and use the hashtags #PepsiSmores and #Sweepstakes. And if you do get your hands on these cans and love what you're sipping on, let us know – surely there's someone out there willing to drink their marshmallow-chocolate-graham-cracker love.

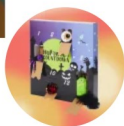
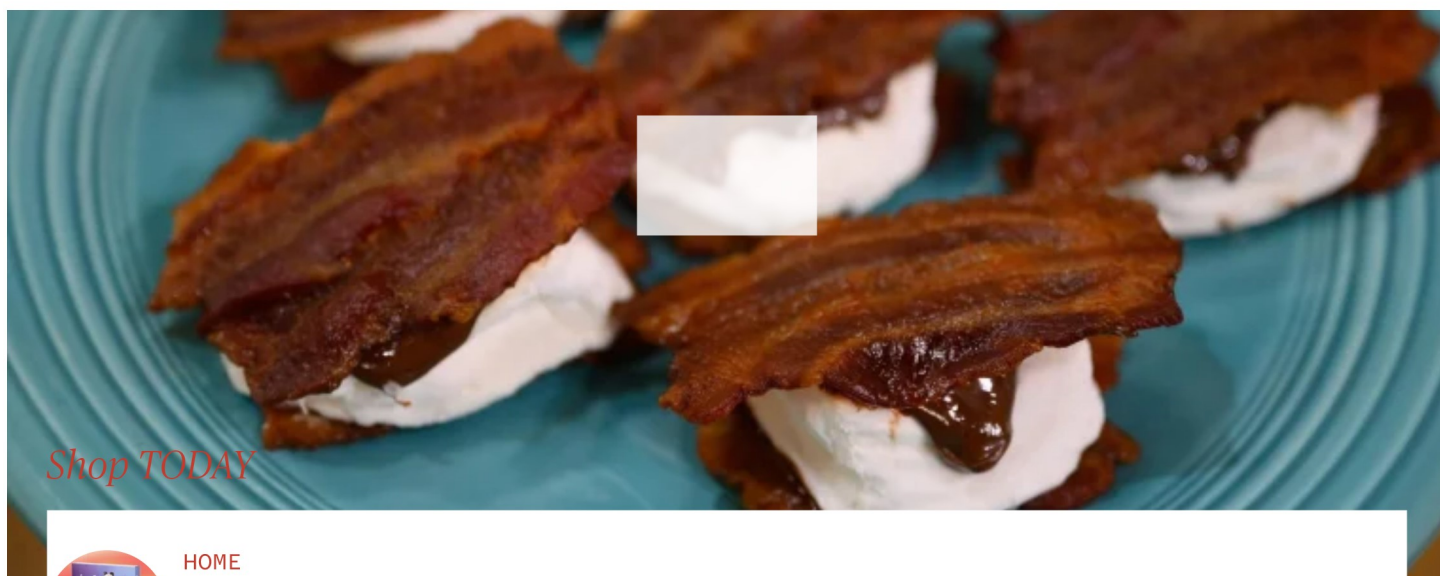
It just ain't me.



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Randee Dawn (she/her) is an entertainment journalist and author based in Brooklyn. In addition to writing for TODAY.com, Variety and The Los Angeles Times, her debut novel, *Tune in Tomorrow*, about a reality TV show run by mythic creatures, published in 2022. She's also the co-author of *The Law & Order: SVU Unofficial Companion*. When not interviewing the stars or dabbling in speculative fiction, she dreams of the next place she can travel to, or cuddles her Westie. More at RandeeDawn.com.



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