

Box Office Poison:

Once upon a time in Hollywood,
Katharine Hepburn, quite imposing
Had a potluck that she could
Mitigate some actress loathing.

With backcombed curls
And flat, scuffed boots,
she greeted girls
in staid suits.

The first arrived, a total blessing
Dear blue-eyed Joan
With cornbread dressing
“Well,” she said, “Beats being alone!”

And then tromped in friend Myrna Loy
A banker’s daughter from Montana
A comedienne, she called, “Ahoy!”
Carrying butter, rolls, and lilies—canna.

Jean Harlow next, the sultry dame
Walked through the doors with gin in hand.
Never one to be too tame,
She’d brought vermouth and olives—canned.

Then Carole Lombard walked along,
And swung a cape across her shoulders
Revealing tea complete with silver tong
And sugar crystals like small boulders.

Greta Garbo, the recluse quiet
and never one to wear a dress
Carrying gravlax, that Swedish flavor riot
Crept through the door in trousers, yes.

Miss Dietrich followed, a blonde bombshell
with German shortbread jam cookies,
she looked around: “Ah, this’ll be hell,
“At least there ain’t too many rookies.”

In swanned Miss Rita, the debutante,
Vaudeville dynamite bringing gravy,
And Judy Garland with a face of want
Toting mashed potatoes and looking slavey.

“Well, come on, all! Dinner’s nearly ready,”
Katharine beamed, “We’re missing one,

But she'll come in—she's always steady
if only she were just more fun..."

"Oh, let me guess," pursed Crawford steely
"Our favorite doll, and here she comes
Running in, and not genteelly,
Go on Myrna, bring me Tums."

Bette Davis rushed up the steps
Bringing cranberry sauce and bad vibes
Ludicrously overdressed
She talked too fast with lots of gibes.

But, to no avail,
the meal proceeded.
All entered well
and all were seated.

The table set,
The potluck on,
The ladies sat—
Vicious queens of Aragon.

Dishes traded with a flutter
First fish, then turkey—brown and roast
Rolls, potatoes, gravy, butter
Dressing, tea, and a very dirty martini toast.

"Well now, girls, we've got to talk,
We can't go on in enmity
Let's walk the walk,
and find some good serenity."

But Katharine's hope of Golden Peace
Was naive at best,
And hopeless at least.
For young Jean underwent cardiac arrest.

Crash! Out of her chair and on the floor,
The ladies stood amidst a roar.
Jean Harlow, fainted and barely breathing
And nine faces around her, wreathing.

"What's wrong?" gasped Carole, leaning down
And still the others huddled round.
Doughty Joan stood back, raising dishes of cloisonne
"This, my friends, is what we call *box office poison*."

And this, dear reader, we suspect
is why Jean Harlow died so young.
A jealous actress—a career wrecked
Bad kidneys from a poisoned tongue.

Now Lady Joan had her ideas,
And never trusted any pleas.
So who did the deed—who spiked the food?
Who could have ever been so rude?

**Note, I the author, don't actually have a firm answer, but I suspect Judy Garland who was rather unstable and an envious type (plus I just never found her especially glamorous).

An AI image of Joan and Bette for you. I'm not sure why there are so many grapes.



Brownies for Breakfast (possibly at Tiffany's):

¼ c. butter
¼ c. oil
1 t. instant coffee flakes (or 1 T. brewed coffee)

Melt the butter with oil and coffee until fully combined. It doesn't need to be hot. I do this in the microwave in about 1 minute on high and whisk with a fork.

1 ¼ c. sugar
1 t. vanilla
2 eggs

Whisk the sugar and vanilla into the oil mixture. Add the eggs one at a time and stir until combined.

¾ c. flour
½ c. cocoa powder
¼ t. salt
1 t. baking soda
1 T. cornstarch (optional, makes a glossier top)

Sift the dry ingredients directly into the wet ingredients. Stir and fold the batter a couple times until combined but not over-mixed.

Pour batter into a greased dark metal 8x8 pan—glass won't set the batter properly—and bake for 30 minutes at 325 F.

Let the brownies cool entirely (overnight if possible); they continue to firm up as they cool yielding a chewy-but-not-goopy texture.

NB: This follows ratio baking principles and is the best I've worked out for my kitchen. It takes me about five minutes total to bring the batter together, so it's also about the fastest dessert I can make. Since these have to sit for several hours after baking, I usually eat one for breakfast the morning after I've made them. This works well because they have strong coffee and chocolate flavors.

Happy Holidays!