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Cover by Diana Glycer

On the Following Pages...

Nuts to Dessert Rum Balls	Barbara Hayes	6
Recipe for the Gift of Friendship	Lois Carlson	7
It's all Gift: A Recipe for a Good Thanksgiving	Alene Campbell-Langdell	9
In Search of a Simple Taste	Tom Allbaugh	11
How to Melt	Laura Simmons	13
Morning Shortbread Shortbread	Melissa Campbell-Langdell	14
The Gift	Elena Smith	15
Magic Touch Sue's Meatloaf	Joe Bentz	18
The Miracle Spaghetti Dinner Tomato, Pancetta and Porcini Mushroom Sauce West African Peanut Soup Citrus Biscotti	Liz Leahy	20
Soup of Dreams Soup of Dreams	Lynn Maudlin	23
La Comida de me Gente Cherry Yum-Yum Almond Oat Pancakes Crunchy Cherry Snack Bars	Theresa Johnston	26
A Green Fuzzy Christmas Soft Ginger Bread Guinness Stew	Tim Davis	30
Recipe for Search and Rescue "Tastes Like Goodness" Chicken Drumsticks That Vegetarian Chili Recipe	Diana Glycer	34

Nuts to Dessert

A rum ball or two is all you do
to make the occasion gay.
Add four or five or six or seven,
(Of course it rhymes with heaven!)

It's all in how you enjoy this treat
That points to the adjective.
So follow these rules
And then you will choose
this fine, nutty aperitif.

barbara hayes

Rum Balls

1 cup of finely chopped pecans (Use food processor, but don't turn them into butter)

1 cup of crushed vanilla wafers (Powder them in a food processor)

1 cup of powdered sugar

2 TBSP unsweetened cocoa (pre-tasting is ill-advised)

Re-blend all dry ingredients in food processor.

2 TBSP light corn syrup (deadly but necessary)

1/4 cup Captain Morgan (yum) rum.

Stir wet ingredients into dry ingredients. (Strive for even distribution lest some get an abundance of rum and others get cheated)

Roll into balls, then roll in granulated sugar.

Refrigerate overnight.

Yes, you will eat some before they're properly cold.

Recipe for the Gift of Friendship

What a special blessing when we have dear friends. A close friend is someone to be treasured. It's easy to take our friends for granted when things are going well. As I get older, the more I value my friendships and want to cultivate and nurture them.

Often we lose touch with friends. All too soon, that special person may no longer be with us – either by distance, illness, or death.

During the past few weeks, I've thought a lot

and would no longer take the risk of being hurt again. He presented a strong defense against anyone penetrating his vulnerability, but underneath I could see the loneliness in his eyes.

A few days ago, I called an old friend in Denver, Colorado. While living there, she and I spent many happy times together. Now we keep in touch on birthdays and at Christmas. The rest of the time we seldom hear from each other. Distance may alter the relationship. We may grow in different ways – interests change, and we make

lois carlson

about how transitory is a friendship. For that matter, any relationship. How quickly time passes by. As a clinical social worker, for years I worked at a small community hospital where I counseled patients and their family members in dealing with various illnesses and using the tools to help them better cope. In the course of my counsel, I encouraged them to maximize each day, to make every day count as if it were the last.

But in reality, shouldn't we do that on a regular basis?

None of us knows what tomorrow holds.

Sadly, I recall counseling one patient who was very ill and quite alone. He had no living relatives and seemingly no friends – by choice. I encouraged him to let others reach out to him, to be his friend. The man pushed away all of my overtures of offering sympathy and care for his well-being and dismissed any desire to have any friends. He did not need anyone. No doubt, at some point in his life he had been deeply hurt

new friends. But a strong friendship endures, even though we're on a different level of kinship.

When I called my friend, it was as if we had not been apart. We had a lot of catching up to do. She has grown immensely since my Denver days. We talked about the many things that she was involved in, her spiritual awakening and excitement in this new walk. It reminded me of our frequent talks we had so long ago of hashing over issues of frustration about our jobs, school, politics, or to dissecting the meaning of a movie we had seen. It was an open time of sharing our thoughts and concerns; knowing it was safe and we were free to express our opinions, even though quite often we did not agree. When I felt down and needed a lift, she was there to offer support. When she wanted someone to lean on, I was there for her. Many years have passed between us since those earlier days, but our bond remains strong.

Over the years, God has richly blessed me with wonderful, caring friends. Some I have kept more frequent contact with than others. I recognize

how much more I need to reach out to these individuals in a deeper way, to let them know how much they mean to me and that I am there for them when they need me. I am reminded of Proverbs 18:24 (RSV): “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

How like our Lord.

He is *always* here for us, ready to comfort, uplift, instruct, and guide us. But are we always there for Him? He is all the things I have described in my friend, and so much more! He is a friend who never lets me down.

My best companion. Always here, ready to listen.

Thought for today:

God's phone line is always open.

free-lance writer, la verne, ca

It's All Gift:

A Recipe for a Good Thanksgiving

Pancakes. My mother could whip up a batch from scratch faster than about anyone I know. They were a staple in my house growing up and one of the first things I learned to cook. I learned how to pre-make the mix. We often had various combinations of grains in our pancakes. I learned how much oil and milk to add. I learned how to tell when it was time to flip the pancake by looking at the edges and the middle and watching for just the right amount of

The land seduced Israel, until the Israelites wanted more and more of land and security and goods. They organized great cities, great armies, and great tax systems; they ate well, exceedingly well at the expense of others.... In the end, Israel forgot (see Deut. 8:11-19). They forgot that this good life and this good land were gifts, the outcome of God's promise. Greed overcame gratitude; selfishness displaced compassion. Covenant was reduced to control and exploitation. They

alene campbell-langdell

bubbles that indicated that the heat had made it all the way through. But I also learned along the way the things that would ruin a good pancake or any other recipe.

For instance, who can forget the time they forgot and added the salt twice? Salt is needed. A recipe without salt or any other spice tends to fall flat. There's no taste, nothing to enliven the taste buds and draw one back for a second bite. But too much salt and it's impossible to eat. I thought of that balance of too much or too little when I read the warning in Deuteronomy: "Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth'" (8:17). In the recipe for a good Thanksgiving, pride is like too much salt. Joy and even a sense of pride in our country or our families can prompt us to give thanks as we recognize the good gifts they are. But, as Brueggemann points out in his book, *Cadences of Home*, these blessings can seduce us to forget that they are gifts.

forgot, and they imagined that their might and the power of their hand had gotten them this wealth (Deut. 8:17).

Browsing the internet a few days before Thanksgiving, I noticed an article about how to balance the celebration of Thanksgiving (the holiday) in light of our not so good history as a country in relationship to Native Americans. One of the points caught my eye in its simplicity: remember that white people were the guests, not the hosts, at the first Thanksgiving. It's good advice at this Thanksgiving and every day of our lives to remember that we are the guests at the bounty that has been spread before us and the only proper response is "thank you."

There are a couple of other things that will ruin a good pancake or a good Thanksgiving; too much or too little heat. The first happens when you put the batter in the skillet and then get distracted in another room. The next thing you know, there is the smell of burning and smoke.

One side of the pancake is black and charred. I suspect that this is the danger James is warning us against (1:27). Don't get so distracted by the gifts you have received that you forget those who are in distress. Don't forget that the guests of that earlier Thanksgiving meal were themselves refugees from persecution and war.

If it's not helpful to forget and leave the pancake on the stove too long, it's equally unhelpful to try to flip it too soon. Scrambled pancake anyone? "Constant vigilance and worry leads only to frustration," says the voice of experience. I was delighted recently, watching the movie, *Bridge of Spies*. In it, the character played by Mark Rylance is a Russian who has been caught spying in the United States and is on trial for his life. His lawyer at times feels he isn't taking the situation seriously enough and asks him, "Aren't you worried?" And each time, Rylance, in the character of Rudolph Abel, replies, "Would it help?" Or as Jesus says, "Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?" (Matthew 6:27).

We are called to the table at Thanksgiving and every day trusting that God knows what we need and wants to provide for us. We sit at the table with dignity and pride as children of God, but we must never forget that we are there as guests, nor are we the only ones invited to the table. And so we give thanks for those who came to this country long ago and for those who are still coming. May we come to the table with enough humility to recognize that all is gift, enough compassion to care for those in need, and enough trust to make the world a beautiful (and a tasty) place!

In Search of a Simple Taste

1.

My brother leans over to me at Thanksgiving. He says, “I think you need to go in search of the recipe. You need to go there.”

We understand each other. “You’ve been there. What have you found?”

He shakes his head. “You need to go.”

“You’ve been to Florence,” I say.

He nods.

“How was it? The Dome?”

“The one art museum I wanted to get into was closed that day. The only day I was there.”

“Too bad.”

4.

A few weeks after the American Embassy in Iran is stormed and hostages taken, I enter the student center of the college I am attending in Michigan, get coffee and move to a table to sit down, a copy of Vonnegut’s *Breakfast of Champions* tucked away in my backpack. There are only two others in the sitting area, two Iranian students I have occasionally seen here. As I approach a table nearby, they turn to me and begin speaking in Persian.

“What?” I say. “Oh, no, I’m sorry. I am an American.”

“Where are you from?” they ask.

tom allbaugh

“You need to go.” He waves his hand. “Get the recipe.”

2.

The recipe was known before the murders. It was passed on orally. Julia Bonfiglio, born here to immigrants, knew the recipe and made it every Sunday. Her daughters seemed not to think that anything needed to be done to preserve it.

Here is what I think I know about it today.

This is going on taste.

Ingredients:

Pepper (to taste)

Basil?

Pork and Beef meatballs

Fresh chicken parts (bone in)

Tomato paste or sauce.

Romano cheese

Noodles

5.

There is an oral tradition to the recipe. I remember standing in the front corridors of the old house on Hickory Street in the late morning before the meal, and there was a strong scent that would waft through the old boards and old carpets. Sometimes today, when I stand in a house built before 1920, that smell appears, and I am near an aqueduct to the past. It is not enough time to add new ingredients. Rather, I remember the childhood game of elevator, the old rooms upstairs where no one slept any longer, the warmth of cooking, the grating of cheeses imported and arguments in a language I do not know.

But I can’t recognize what the other ingredients are. The scent of memory fades too quickly.

6.

Julia Bonfiglio was my grandmother. Her daughter, my mother, never snuck up behind her

and wrote things down. She would sit at the kitchen table over the worn old floor with her legs crossed and catch up on all of the people she had known before she had left to be married. She would watch my grandma stewing the meatballs and the chicken in the sauce. My mother told me that one of the ingredients was pepper. That was the one thing I know and have written down. In addition to the stewing of the meats, especially the drumsticks and thighs, there was pepper.

My mother had her own recipe for it, but it didn't represent childhood the way that the lost, oral recipe did, lost on that hot May night just before I graduated from high school.

7.

I walk into the faculty lounge of Richard Bland College. It is my first full-time teaching assignment at Richard Bland College of the College of William and Mary in south central Virginia. I get coffee, make a few photo copies, and turn to see the economics teacher heading for the door. He is bald and has a mustache and round glasses, and he studies me and says, "Paisan?"

When I explain, he invites my family and me to his house for dinner, where I discover his use of basil and pork in the sauce. A few weeks later, this invitation is followed up by an invitation to attend the local chapter of the Virginia Italian American Society. My daughter, Carolyn, who is five, wins a fake flower arrangement in the raffle.

8.

To achieve the past, we must keep going outward; we must go forward to find ourselves going back.

9.

At Thanksgiving, I begin listing the ingredients to him. I tell him about the importance of pepper.

"You just need to go," my brother says.

How to Melt

Do not run back to the freezer.

Let the warm hands caress

Your honeycombed self

And press you into service

The butter is for bread, not for the mold.

Expose yourself to heat—even desert heat.

Melting means movement, not stasis.

What you do cannot “flow from you like a river” if you remain as ice.

Stop resisting. Allow. Draw near to warmth.

Find your new supple self.

laura simmons

I attended a workshop earlier this year that had several elements yielding a recipe of sorts.

1. We rolled our own beeswax candles.
2. We heard about various desert fathers and mothers, and mused how the desert sun/heat would influence their experience of God.
3. We danced to a Rilke poem with the line, “May what I do flow from me like a river.”

And we wrote a lot. One assignment was to write a ‘poem of instruction’ about yield, “or surrender, or acceptance, or however you want to word it.”

Morning Shortbread

As a child, I was a morning person. In the morning, the house was my domain. I would come downstairs and fling cushions onto the floor, cushions that would become imaginary islands in the stories I made up in the moment. Or I might watch “David the Gnome” on TV, if it wasn’t so early that there was only a series of colored vertical bars on the TV screen.

Sometimes I got into trouble waking up early. Once, when we were on vacation in Hawaii, I decided to go swimming. At four in the morning. When I hadn’t yet learned to swim. Fortunately, my father woke up and fished me out of the pool just in time.

But I remember one morning in particular. I was about six years of age, and the night before, something special had happened. I had cooked my first recipe! My nanny showed me how to make shortbread. And I was so excited; I wanted to do it again.

So, I went downstairs, and pulled out flour, bowl, sugar and butter.

melissa campbell-langdell

I set the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (or whatever you set ovens to in England).

I mixed together the butter and the sugar—2 sticks and ½ cup. I was barely able to reach into the bowl.

I added the two cups of flour and mixed until I had dough. I had dough! I was excited. I was cooking. I formed a ball, as my nanny had showed me. I flattened out the dough, and I placed it all in the pan, patting it flat.

I swirled my fingers around the bowl, lifting them to my lips to taste the batter. When you do that, don’t you feel like a kid again?

I placed the pan in the oven for 30 minutes or so, as I had been told. I was so proud. I had remembered the whole recipe and repeated it, exactly. Or so I thought.

And I took out the cookies, let them cool.

And ... tragedy! My cookies were completely adhered to the pan, and burnt. I forgot to grease the pan. Instead of impressing my parents and brother, my shortbread turned out to be a disaster.

So now, I always grease the pan or use parchment paper. But I will never forget that morning and the magic of cooking, all on my own.

Happy Baking! And remember to grease the pan.

The Gift

The screen door banged. Tony was the only guy I knew who walked into our house without knocking. It was late in the afternoon on Thanksgiving Day, and my parents were taking a nap.

I was in the family room watching something stupid on TV and got up to meet him in the kitchen, where he'd stopped to scan the leftovers that were still on the counter. He reached for a slice of cherry pie. "Eat it at your own risk," I cautioned.

His hand drew back. "What?"

"Gramma brought that, and, you know..." He waited for me to continue. "Well, she's starting to lose her memory. Her pie used to be the best, but

He smirked.

"Oh, I get it! The package. There's no way to disguise the shape of a record album." I looked wistfully at our tree, where I didn't see any thin square presents with my name on them. "But how do you know it's Paul Revere, and not the Mormon Tabernacle Choir?" I teased.

"How do you think, knucklehead?" He slurped the last of his milk. "Don't you open the packages?" he asked, a bit surprised.

"Well, no! That would be like... like cheating!"

"Oh, come on, Nellie! Don't you wanna know what people got you?"

elena e. smith

she put in salt instead of sugar, this time. Momma calls it her 'recipe for disaster.'"

"Ick!" he drew back. "What else have you got?"

The bedroom door opened, and Momma emerged in her checkered housedress. "Tony, can I get you some cookies and milk?"

"Yes, please!"

Soon, we were seated on the plaid davenport in the family room, scuffing our shoes on the rag rug. Tony eyed our robust Christmas tree as he gobbled his snack. "What are you getting?" he asked with a mouth full of food. I shrugged. "I'm getting an album by Paul Revere and the Raiders."

"Don't say that in front of Paw – he'll think you're talking about a history book. Wait a minute. How do you know that?"

I'd never thought of it before. I was used to waiting for Christmas morning when we opened all our gifts together. Tony jumped off the sofa and raced to the tree. He rummaged through the presents, fishing out a small square box with my name. He shook it. "What do you think it is?"

"Well ---"

"Wouldn't you like to know?" He tore the edge of the paper.

"Tony!"

Before I could get to him, he ripped the edge off. "A Timex watch!" he announced.

"Tony!" I tackled him to the floor and we rolled around as I socked his arm, hoping to leave a bruise.

He handed me the package with its crumpled paper. "Just tape it back up. No one will know."

“The person who wrapped it will know.”

He thought I might start to cry, but I held it back. He jumped to his feet and looked at his right forearm. “If you left a mark, I’m telling.”

I continued to sit on the floor, feeling miserable. “You better go home. I think I hear your mom calling.”

“Yeah, right. My mom’s a mile away at Papago Plaza, right now.” He swaggered back toward the kitchen so he could leave by the screen door where he entered. “See ya Monday, then.” The door slammed behind him.

Monday? That meant he wasn’t coming over again until school started. Some friend! I sank back on my heels and looked at the mangled package. Then, I grabbed the tape dispenser and headed for my room, grateful that my parents’ door was still closed. I hunched over the box, tape in hand, but I couldn’t resist the urge to peel the paper further back. Inside was a pink Timex watch. My heart sank. Pink? Everyone knew I wouldn’t want a girl color! I’d been asking for a watch ever since my birthday, but the one I’d shown Momma had a brown band with a tan face.

I pulled the tape and positioned it, hoping the rip wouldn’t show. My brothers liked to shake the packages and guess what was inside, but maybe they’d leave mine alone. I might get away with it, unless Papa rearranged the gifts. He had a tendency to notice little things that other people missed.

* * *

The next week, I was a little cool toward Tony, not jumping at the chance to go bike riding or hunt lizards after school. I knew he hadn’t meant to offend me; he had acted out on something that was normal in his family but not in mine. Every year, waiting to find out what presents we got was part of the fun. Now that I knew what my main present was, I was disappointed. I said something

one day at school.

“Oh, brother, are you still sore about that?”

“You took the specialness out of it,” I whined.

“Get over it.”

By Christmas week, I was over it and things were back to normal.

On Christmas Eve, we sat in the family room for our devotions, and with a start I noticed that my present was missing from under the tree. I tried to make everyone think I was looking at the colored bulbs while I frantically scanned every box I could see, but none was the right shape or size, or the right wrapping! Papa talked about God’s gift of His son, and that the Israelites had waited a long time to receive him. We must be patient to wait for our gifts, too. I almost groaned out loud. Could he see the guilt on my face?

Momma passed the plate of cookies as he continued to speak. “When we jump the gun, sometimes the consequences keep us from enjoying the gift as much as we would have if we’d waited. For instance, remember Thanksgiving, when Gramma brought the cherry pie?”

My brothers groaned and Momma muttered, “Now, Papa.”

“God gives His gifts in His perfect time, and he is joyful when we receive them.”

I continued to sit with the family, going through the motions of eating snacks, drinking hot chocolate, and feeling the warm fire as it crackled in the hearth. But by bedtime, I was a nervous wreck. Why had my present disappeared? Was that my punishment?

* * *

On Christmas morning, we woke up to the smell of waffles, Momma’s special holiday treat for us. I dressed slowly, dreading what I would find when we opened gifts that morning. At the table, I discovered that Gramma had dropped off a pecan

pie, which had a small slice out of it... that sat... barely touched... on the kitchen counter. I glanced at it, and Momma shook her head. “No sugar,” she mouthed and I smiled wanly.

After breakfast, we assembled in the family room, sitting on the floor so we could be close to the tree and the presents. Papa began to hand them out, then stopped when he got to me. “Momma—?”

“Oh, yes!” She jumped up and left the room, returning with a square package, just like the one with the Timex watch, and handed it to me. The wrapping had changed. “I hope you like it,” she said, tentatively.

As the boys tore into theirs, I pulled at the tape and opened it slowly. Inside was the watch, but it was not the pink one. It had a tan face, with a brown leather strap. “Gee, thanks!” I said with gratitude, and relief.

“There’s a story behind that,” said Momma. Everyone turned to listen. “They didn’t have the watch you wanted when I went in to the store, so I had to go back and get it, already wrapped. Then, a week ago I noticed that the paper was sloppy and torn, as if it had been opened and rewrapped. Why, I was so mad at that darn clerk – he wasn’t paying attention!

“When I took it back for re-wrapping, I noticed it wasn’t even the right watch! They’d given me a pink one! Everyone knows Nellie doesn’t like pink! Just then — you’ll never believe it — Mrs. Maxwell walked in, and she had the wrong watch, too! You know how her little Priscilla likes pink! She’d been given this watch, Nellie, which was meant for you.”

By now, tears were streaming down my face. My brothers, Curt and Jim, looked at each other, shaking their heads.

“I got a Beatles scrapbook,” whined Jim, mocking me.

“I got a Tonka truck,” Curt said in a cry-baby voice.

“All right boys, that’s enough,” said Papa. “I’m glad you all enjoyed your gifts, and I hope you will give thanks.”

“There are people in India who are starving,” we all said together, to his chagrin.

Then, we bowed our heads and gave thanks. And even though everything turned out better than I’d thought it would, I knew I’d never cheat like that again.

5th grade, december 1965

Magic Touch

My mother did not like to cook. She was happy to admit that. When I was a child in the 1960s, my Mom was what we now would call a stay-at-home Mom, but she called herself a housewife. She fulfilled that role to perfection, and she mostly embraced it wholeheartedly. Our house was spotless. I don't remember seeing a speck of dust on any surface. Coffee tables, end tables and desks were not only sparklingly clean, but they were also bare, kept free of papers, books, cups, toys, or anything we weren't using right that minute.

grabbing one himself (Mom didn't make desserts).

Not only did our routine repeat itself, but the food choices were pretty repetitive too. My Dad was a meat-and-potatoes guy, so we ate a lot of, well, meat and potatoes. Steaks, mostly, and hamburger, and Hamburger Helper, and sloppy joes, and steak, and hamburger, and Hamburger Helper, and.... Dad did not like chicken. He did not like Mexican food. He did not like Chinese food. Italian food was fine, but Mom didn't know how to fix it. For variety, Mom would sometimes switch things up and serve Spam. This was before any-

joe bentz

My Mom and Dad had differing roles so precisely defined that I don't remember them ever discussing them. Dad worked. He paid the bills. He fixed things. He painted things. He built things. He tinkered with the cars. Mom cleaned. She took care of us kids. She watched soap operas (unapologetically). And, because it fit her domain, she cooked. Every day. Even though she didn't like it.

Not that she complained about it. I never heard her complain. She would *tell* you she didn't like to cook if you asked her, but she didn't bring it up herself. Every evening at about 5 p.m. throughout my childhood, the food would be there on the table. All of us would take our usual spots, and the meal would follow its ritualistic pattern. My sister and I were assigned various chores depending on our ages, such as setting the table or doing dishes afterward. Near the end of the meal, Dad would reach toward the cookie jar on the counter behind him and offer us a cookie after

body knew Spam was a joke. She served it with that weird-tasting sauce that I haven't tasted for forty years but that I can still recall with a slight shiver. Mom also made green beans, lima beans, baked beans, au gratin potatoes, scalloped potatoes, baked potatoes, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and corn. Lots of corn, because it was my favorite. We never once had a salad. Salads were things that could only be found in restaurants. But we didn't eat them there either.

Even though cooking was not my Mom's favorite activity, she had one meal that to this day, I would rather have than almost any other. And nobody has been able to make it quite the way my Mom did. Meat loaf was the main dish. I can still picture it in the cake pan—the beautiful brown meat, smothered in ketchup, with little slivers of onion showing through. I can still call up the smell of it, and to me it smells like home, comfort, well-being, and love. The side dishes for a meat loaf meal, probably at my insistence, were always

mashed potatoes and corn. This, my friends, is a perfect meal. The mashed potatoes were soft, and the corn was yellow creamed corn. And what you did—what you *had* to do—was make a little crater in the mashed potatoes and then fill it with the creamed corn. Oh my goodness.

Mom's meat loaf was famous throughout her life. All our relatives knew about it. When I got married, Peggy found out about it and wanted to make it for me. She asked my Mom for the recipe. There was no recipe. Peggy asked Mom to describe how to make it. Mom had trouble doing that. She didn't really know the amounts of things. She just did it. The next time Mom came to California to visit us, we asked her to make it. She did, and Peggy paid attention. We can make it now, and it's pretty good, but honestly, it isn't quite the same. Mom may not have had the magic touch on dozens of dishes, but no one could come close to her meat loaf.

Later, my sister put together a family cookbook with recipes from all our relatives. Mom's meat loaf has a prominent spot in that book. As for Mom, she just shook her head and laughed it off. After all, she said, it's just meat loaf, and she wouldn't care if she never made another one.

Sue's Meat Loaf

By Sue Bentz

Ingredients:

2 lb. hamburger
15 oz. can Hunt's or Red Gold Tomato Puree
2 eggs
1 onion, chopped
1 ½ pkgs. Saltine crackers, crushed
Ketchup

Directions:

1. Put foil in 9 x 13 dish and spray with small amount of Pam.
2. Mix ingredients and shape into loaf.
3. Spread ketchup on top.
4. Bake on 375 for 1 to 1 ½ hours.

The “Miracle” Spaghetti Dinner

In 1983, as a fairly new Christian, I helped to start a ministry for singles through the new church I had begun attending. The church had a vibrant ministry to international students in the Pasadena area and once a month, a group within the church hosted a Friday evening dinner for everyone – generally about 200 – 300 people. At this point, our singles ministry was relatively small – about twenty members, but we decided to take on the challenge of hosting a dinner, and since most of the group members were recent col-

lege graduates with limited cooking skills, I took on the responsibility of organizing the dinner and the bigger task – teaching my fellow singles how to cook!

lege graduates with limited cooking skills, I took on the responsibility of organizing the dinner and the bigger task – teaching my fellow singles how to cook!

We began our planning a few weeks in advance. My roommate Shelli and I decided that serving spaghetti would be one of the easiest things to teach – and to multiply for extra guests. We knew we needed a good recipe for a tomato sauce and included a second one that was vegetarian. We worked on the sauce together for about two weeks, freezing it in 2 gallon bags until our freezer was completely full.

On to the spaghetti! We invited six aspiring male chefs to our home for a lesson in cooking spaghetti and determining ‘al dente’. I had been taught that you take a piece of the spaghetti and throw it against the ceiling to see if it stuck. If the noodle sticks, the spaghetti is ready to serve. Well, you can imagine the difference between two girls cooking and one piece of spaghetti on the ceiling...and six guys, and probably the better part of

two packages of spaghetti on the ceiling! We were pulling it down for at least a week afterwards! But, we had a lot of fun and thought we were ready for our big dinner.

We got to the church kitchen by 4pm and began boiling pots of water in earnest. Helpers brought bread and salad over the next hour. International students began arriving at 6pm and kept arriving, and arriving! We cooked every bit of the spaghetti (even the ‘just in case’ packages) and all of the sauce, and our little miracle is that every single per-

liz leahy

son who walked through the door was fed. For all of us, it was our own little version of loaves and fishes ...we didn’t have a lot of funds between us, as evidenced by our menu selection, but God multiplied what we needed in order to show hospitality to our guests. We met students who had arrived from countries all over the globe who were studying locally. One African family brought instruments and led us in worship. Many good conversations and new friendships developed. And mostly, a good lesson learned of God’s faithfulness in taking the small gifts we had to offer and His version of a “multiplication table”.

I have cooked and catered a good many dinners since this night. Unfortunately, I didn’t retain the recipes we used for sauces but am including a favorite one of mine. I generally triple or quadruple it, as the sauce disappears quickly!

Tomato, Pancetta and Porcini Mushroom Sauce

Makes about 4 cups

1 – 1oz pkg dried porcini mushrooms

1 cup hot water

1 TBSP olive oil
2 oz pancetta or bacon chopped
1 med. onion chopped
2 tsp minced fresh rosemary or 1 tsp dried
1/8 tsp dried crushed red pepper
1 28-oz can crushed tomatoes with added puree

Rinse porcini mushrooms briefly under cold water if sandy. Place in small bowl. Pour 1 cup hot water over and let soak until soft, about 30 min. Drain mushrooms, reserving liquid. Cut hard stems from mushrooms. Heat oil in heavy saucepan over med heat. Add pancetta and sauté for 2 min. Add onion and rosemary, sauté until onion is translucent, stirring occasionally for about 8 min. Add crushed red pepper and sauté 20 sec. Add tomatoes and porcini. Carefully pour in reserved mushroom soaking liquid, leaving any sediment in the bowl. Simmer until sauce is thick, stirring occasionally for about 35 min. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be prepared up to 2 days ahead and can be frozen).
In keeping with the theme of the International Dinner, a favorite soup recipe follows:

West African Peanut Soup

Serves 6 to 8
2 cups chopped onion
1 Tbsp peanut or vegetable oil
½ tsp cayenne or other ground chiles (to taste)
1 tsp grated peeled fresh ginger root
1 cup chopped carrots
2 cups chopped sweet potatoes (can substitute up to 1 lb of white potatoes)
4 cups vegetable stock or water
2 cups tomato juice (or V-8)
1 cup smooth peanut butter
1 Tbsp sugar (optional – to taste)
1 cup chopped scallions

Sauté the onions in oil until translucent. Stir in the cayenne and fresh ginger.

Add the carrots and sauté a few more minutes. Mix in the potatoes and stock, bring the soup to a boil and simmer for about 15 min. (until the vegetables are tender). Use a blender* to puree the vegetables with the cooking liquid and the tomato juice.

Stir in the peanut butter. Taste the soup – it's sweetness will depend on the sweetness of the carrots and sweet potatoes. If not there naturally, add a little sugar to enhance the flavors. Serve topped with the scallions.

*I find a hand held/immersion blender the easiest to use for making soups – you can keep the soup in the same pot and blend it. If you are using a blender, let the soup cool somewhat as it can force the lid of the blender off with the heat – and can scald! (I know from experience – ouch!).

This is a wonderful soup – tastes like a cream of peanut soup and is full of hidden vegetables.
Recipe from Sundays at Moosewood.
And finally, a favorite Christmas treat:

Citrus Biscotti

as adapted from Stars Desserts by Emily Luchetti
Makes about 2 ½ dozen cookies.

Preheat the oven to 325°.

2 3/4 cups flour
1 2/3 cups sugar
½ tsp salt
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp anise seeds
Zest of 1 lemon, 1 lime, and 1 orange
3 eggs
3 egg yolks
1 tsp vanilla extract
7 oz whole almonds, skin on

Note – this makes a very sticky dough. You'll need to use an electric mixer to work with this more easily. Put the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, anise seeds, and zest in the bowl of an electric mixer. Combine ingredients on low speed. In a separate bowl with a whisk, lightly beat together the eggs, egg yolks, and vanilla extract. Continue to mix, pouring the egg mixture into the dry ingredients. When the eggs are almost completely incorporated, reduce the speed to low, add the almonds, and mix until the dough comes together.

Roll the dough into 3 logs, each about 10 inches by 2 inches. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place the logs on the baking sheet and bake for about 20 min, until logs are light brown. Let the logs cool. Decrease the oven temperature to 300°. Cut the biscotti logs at a slight diagonal, ¾ inch thick.

Return the cookies to the baking sheet, with a cut side up. Bake the biscotti for 15 minutes more, until golden brown and dry.

Variation: Can dip one side of the biscotti into either melted chocolate or a citrus glaze.

Stars Restaurant is famous in San Francisco, and I had the delight of visiting the restaurant on a business trip, discovered the amazing bakery, and have made this cookbook one of my favorites through the years for wonderful desserts. I have been baking these cookies for many years. If you don't already own a microplane for removing zest, this is the perfect recipe to try one on. It's one of my most heavily used kitchen tools and makes removing the zest very easy. The recipe can be easily doubled but for larger batches, I have found it's easier to work with the dough in smaller batches (single or double portions).

I was ambitious one year for Christmas and made 60 dozen of these cookies as little gifts for my colleagues. I realized that some of the men I worked with (mostly now retired) would not have realized these are very hard cookies and I could envision beginning the new year with friends smiling with broken teeth – so I tied notes around the bags to make sure they dipped the cookies.

If you double bake the cookies, as the recipe calls for, the cookies will be very hard and you will want to dip them in warm beverages. I have made the cookies with a single baking and they are much softer – and just as good.

Soup of Dreams

In addition to the wonderful community which is our Niños prayer group, I enjoy a fairly small, mutually supportive community among the folksingers in San Diego science-fiction fandom. One regular performer is Greg Gross, who has a lovely voice and has introduced me to some wonderful songs from a variety of sources. Bearing in mind our “recipe” theme, I am sharing my “Soup of Dreams,” a modification from a recipe that came from my mother via a cousin; originally called “Uptown Minestrone” and using a lot of zucchini, I prefer my modifications and Diana dubbed it “soup of my dreams” because she has actually dreamed about eating this soup!

How, you may ask, does this relate to the SF/filk community and the aforementioned Greg Gross? Well, one of the songs he often performs is “Calling All the Children Home,” written by John McCutcheon, and the lyrics seem appropriate.

"Johnny, Mary Claire, Lulu, Jeanie, Kevin, Jeff, Patty, Nancy, Rob –
Johnny, Mary Claire, Lulu, Jeanie, Kevin, Jeff, Patty, Nancy, Rob"

Shadows growing longer, light is growing dim
Supper's on the table everybody come in
Been playing at the river and I'm tired to the bone
She's calling all the children home

Chorus

Home to the table and the big, black pot
Everybody's got enough, 'though we ain't got a lot
No one is forgotten, no one is alone
When she's calling all the children home
Everybody's sittin' in everybody's place
With their fresh-scrubbed fingers and their fresh-scrubbed face
It's quiet just a minute while sister says a grace
Like she's calling all the children home

Chorus

Home to the table and the big, black pot
Everybody's got enough, 'though we ain't got a lot
No one is forgotten, no one is alone
When she's calling all the children home

Bridge:

I could hear her voice in the middle of a crowd
It was never too late and it was never too loud
Smelled just like home by the time we hit the door
There was always just enough but there was always room for more

So, out in the desert, down by the sea
Hear the voice calling "Allee, allee in free!"
From the city to the forest where the wild beasts roam
We are calling all the children home

Last Chorus:

Home to the table, home to the feast
Where the last are first and the greatest are the least
Where the rich will envy what the poor have got
Everybody's got enough, 'though we ain't got a lot
No one is forgotten, no one is alone
When we're calling all the children home
Gathered 'round the table and the big, black pot
Everybody's got enough, 'though we ain't got a lot
No one is forgotten, no one is alone
From the shacks in Soweto to the ice of Nome
From Baghdad City to the streets of Rome
When we're calling all the children home
"Moishe, Isabelle, Siphon, Kim, Mohammed, Mikael, Red Hawk, Tim –
Johnny, Mary Claire, Lulu, Jeanie, Kevin, Jeff, Patty, Nancy, Rob"

©1990 by John McCutcheon/Appalsongs (ASCAP)

Listen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ia4q-pGNnA>

lynn maudlin

Back when the Niños occasionally met at my Altadena home, I sometimes served this soup. I don't recall if I ever brought it to Diana's or Joe's as a food contribution, but in any case, some will not have had this soup before. It wants several hours of cook time, and there's a fair bit of chopping involved but a lot of flexibility in terms of ingredients.

SOUP of DREAMS

1 lb. Sweet Italian sausage (if you've got a Trader Joe's nearby, they do nice raw sweet Italian sausage using chicken, which I prefer to the pork version). If the sausage comes in a skin casing, squeeze it out so it will form little meatballs, otherwise slice the sausage.

Olive oil - enough to cover the bottom of the stock pot while you brown the sausage "meatballs"

1 yellow or brown onion - chop it to the size you prefer

fresh garlic (at least 1 clove but I use lots; garlic is a virtue!) – use a garlic press or mince it fine

3 c. chicken broth (I usually use the Knorr cubes but there are many options) OR beef, if you want a stronger meat flavor

1 14-16 oz can of Stewed Roma Tomatoes, cut up - INCLUDE the liquid! (with Italian seasonings, if you want; any stewed tomatoes work fine)

- 1 T basil** crushed if dry, chopped fine if fresh
- 3 or 4 good-sized carrots**, sliced (1 cup at least)
- 2 or 3 stalks of celery**, chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper** (or orange or yellow), chopped
- 1 can of Great Northern Beans**, INCLUDE the liquid!
- 2 c. finely shredded cabbage** (Napa or green; I've never used red, might be interesting)
- salt & pepper** as desired (I never use pepper because it makes me choke)

Brown the sausage in the olive oil in a big stock pot. Add onions, garlic, & basil, stir it around a bit. Add carrots, celery, and bell pepper; stir around a bit more.

Add the broth & stewed tomatoes, bring to a boil, reduce heat & simmer 1 hour

Add the beans & cabbage, cook another 15-20 minutes

Serve it with a nice crusty bread!



La Comida de mi Gente

I stare at the raw chicken and the bag of rice sitting on my kitchen counter as I try to psych myself up. They mock me with their simplicity. You see, I can't make *arroz con pollo*. I understand the components of how it is made, but I have a mental block. My sister has explained the process a dozen times and even demonstrated more than once, but I keep asking her how to do it. My grandmother made excellent *arroz con pollo*. Put a wooden spoon in her hand, and like a magic wand, she would use it to

I had a very typical American upbringing, but with a few Mexican tweaks. My father never learned to speak Spanish, and he didn't want to feel left out, so he wanted only English spoken in the house. That never quite worked out, and the end result was a confusing mix of the two languages. My mother and grandmother would start a sentence in Spanish and end it in English or vice versa. Or more often, they would insert certain Spanish words into a predominantly English sentence so most of my childhood was spent as a nev-

theresa johnston

conjure up the most amazing creations. Home-made tortillas and gorditas, *calabacita con pollo*, *pan de sal*—no matter what it was, her dishes were delicious. Her magic hands whipped up generations of home and tradition and family all in one pot. I don't have my grandmother's hands.

My sister jokingly calls me a Mexi-can't. Like most people these days, my heritage is pretty mixed, but I am predominantly Mexican and Irish. I am my father's daughter. I inherited his height and his pale skin. My sister jokes that my legs are blinding white. She has my mother's coloring. My grandmother used to tell a story about when she and my grandfather were out with me when I was a baby. They were in a parking lot and they overheard a woman saying, "*Look at those two old people, they stole that baby!*" She would laugh and shake her head and say, "*No one would believe that such a white baby really belonged to us.*" But I did belong to her. She may have jokingly called me a *gringa*, but I was *her gringa*.

er ending guessing game, trying to decipher what they were saying based on the context of the words that I actually understood. Though I did get pretty good at recognizing many words and their meanings, I never properly learned Spanish. I could never manage to force my clumsy tongue to produce the right sounds. I always got tripped up over those rolling Rs and stuck on the guttural Js. I sounded so white when I tried to speak Spanish that I eventually stopped trying.

Though I sat at my grandmother's feet throughout most of my childhood, somehow I did not learn how to cook from her. Her stovetop alchemy remains a mystery to me. She cooked by feel, her practiced hands grinding spices in the *molcajete* that once belonged to *her* grandmother. It wasn't just good food, it was the food of her people filled with generations of tradition. She cooked for me the same dishes that she cooked for her father, the same dishes that she learned from her grandmother. Nothing was ever measured. When asked how much she added of one ingredient or another, her simple answer was simply,

“Enough”. I received a *molcajete* for Christmas a couple years ago from my sister. I have to confess that I still haven’t used it. I just don’t know how. I remember watching my grandmother, but I can’t get my hands to do what hers did. Don’t get me wrong, I can cook. I created a fish taco sauce that is wonderful. My stuffed bell peppers are delicious. My family likes my turkey and stuffing so much that they voted and we retired my mother’s version. I’m creative in the kitchen and can experiment. But I’m also a perfectionist, like my father. When it comes to the dishes I grew up with, I want them to taste like my grandmother used to make. I want the magic. I want to be able to taste the history.

My aunts Sylvia and Edna were two of the first Mexican American students allowed into their South Texas high school. It is hard for me to imagine what integration in the 50s and 60s must have been like—I was born in 1979 and raised in Southern California. I know that it was a tumultuous situation and that they required an escort. I also know that they both became teachers and returned to that high school. Giving the racists and sexists an extra kick in the teeth, Sylvia became principal of the school she had to fight to attend and eventually got on the school board. I feel a sense of pride when I hear that story. I’m proud that they fought the system just as I am proud that my mother stood up to the INS agent who tried to pull her off the street in LA while she was out shopping. He grabbed her arm without even bothering to ask for identification. I am proud that their blood runs through my veins. At the same time, I often feel like I should apologize for my privilege, knowing that I will never be in that situation. Or so I thought.

The first time I met my husband’s family was on Easter. I was raised with the Mexican tradition of *cascarones*, which are confetti filled egg grenades. We would save egg shells for months in

preparation for Easter. After dyeing them, you fill the empty egg shells with confetti and then glue some tissue paper or napkins over the hole. On Easter, you break the eggs over someone else’s head, covering them with confetti. As you can imagine, some years were an all-out war. It was always a good time, and I have fond memories of needing to wash confetti out of my hair for days after. *Cascarones* were one of my favorite parts of our Easter celebration, and I brought them to Tim’s parents’ house that first year. I explained all of this to his family, and his dad was thrilled that I brought weapons that he could then unleash on his sister. A great time was had by all, and Tim’s grandmother observed at the end of day that I was really nice for one of “those” people. I look down at my skin, both oppressor and oppressed and am confused.

Speaking of confusing, I’ve always hated filling out forms. I never know what box to check when they ask me my ethnicity. “What is this person’s race?” Caucasian, white. But that doesn’t explain the *migas* I had for breakfast or the *frijoles* cooking on the stove. It glosses over the fact that my nephew can’t walk to work without his brown skin making him a target. What about my mother dancing to Mariachi music while she vacuumed the living room? There is a rich and beautiful culture that I am neglecting with that answer. “Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?” Yes, sort of. Except that I don’t speak Spanish. And I never learned to dance in the same way. I consider my answer and think that I should not appropriate a struggle that is not mine. I’m passing. People can’t tell by looking at me. They feel free to talk to me about their negative stance on immigration and comment about how everyone is so “overly sensitive” about race these days. I am glad that forms are finally allowing me to choose not to answer. When they told me to “Remember the Alamo,” they failed to tell me which side I should

have been rooting for.

My grandmother passed away a few years ago. Last year I moved across the country from what's left of my family, and I now realize how lacking I am in tradition. There are no family recipes written down. I feel a sense of longing for a heritage that I have a blood right to but am not sure how to access. Lately, I have been trying to make changes. I will always be my father's daughter, but I have started learning Spanish at long last, and I am trying to learn to cook some of my grandmother's dishes. My sister is helping me to remember. I know a large part of the mental block that I have when it comes to *arroz con pollo* is that it is a dish that my grandmother made all the time. It was a staple in our household, and if I can't replicate it I know that it will feel like losing her all over again. But I have also realized that if I don't try, then all of those "recipes" will have died with her. Connecting with and celebrating my Mexican heritage is a way of keeping her memory alive. So I stare down the chicken on my kitchen counter. I give myself one last pep talk, and I grab my wooden spoon. It's time to make magic.

Cherry Yum-Yum

1 box graham crackers crushed
1 cup melted butter
2 8 oz containers of Cool Whip
1 8 oz package of cream cheese
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup milk
2 cans cherry pie filling

1. Mix crushed graham crackers and melted butter and press half into a 9x13 pan to form the base layer.
2. Combine whipped cream, sugar, cream cheese, and milk; mix until smooth and spread half over the graham cracker crust.
3. Spread cherry pie filling evenly over the two previous layers.
4. Spread the rest of cream mix to form the top layer.
5. Sprinkle the remainder of graham cracker crumbs

over the top.

Refrigerate for at least 6 or more hours .

Almond Oat Pancakes

*This recipe is gluten-free, and can be dairy-free/vegan if you use an egg substitute.

1 cup Old Fashioned Oats
1/4 cup Almonds
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1 medium banana
1 tsp vanilla
1 egg
1/2 cup almond milk

1. Grind up the oats and almonds in a processor.
2. In a bowl mix the processed oats/almonds, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda and baking powder.
3. In another bowl mash the banana. Then whisk in the vanilla, egg, and milk.
4. Pour the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients to create the batter.
5. Heat a non-stick skillet or griddle over medium heat. Pour batter on the griddle in about quarter cups (I don't usually measure – this recipe make about 10 small pancakes). Cook for 3-4 minutes. The edges with start to brown slightly and there will be a few bubbles. Flip. Cook the other side for about 2 minutes until set.

Crunchy Cherry Snack Bars

*This recipe is gluten-free and dairy-free/vegan

1 cup dried dates
1 cup dried cherries
1 cup unsalted almonds (Raw almonds are the best choice, but roasted are fine.)
**(optional inclusions)

1. You will need a food processor. Start with the almonds and process them until they look finely chopped. Set them aside for later.
2. Next combine the cherries and dates and process them until you have a sticky paste.
3. Add the almonds back in and process until they are

thoroughly mixed. **If you wanted to include ingredients such as chia seeds or old rolled oats, now would be the time. This is just a base recipe, so feel free to play round with it to fit your personal tastes.

4. Press into a square brownie tin. The mixture will be very sticky from the heat of the food processor, so I like to lay out some plastic wrap as a barrier between the mixture and my hands. Try to press it into the pan as evenly as possible and leave it covered with the plastic wrap to cover.

5. Refrigerate for at least an hour until firm. Cut into bars and individually wrap them in plastic wrap to grab and go.

A Green Fuzzy Christmas

My parents started out their married life living in a vacation cabin in Wrightwood that my Grandmother had given them as a wedding present. Christmas was a time of year when we would gather around the fireplace in the living room and watch snow fall from the windows of that tiny house. It was also the season when my Dad would take over the kitchen every evening and bake up several batches of cookies. You see, every year my family would attend two Christmases, one for each of

shirt, measuring cups and spoons abandoned on counters and the table, and cookie cutters piled in a corner, forgotten in the frenzy. There were nights when the heat from the oven was enough to keep the whole house warm, despite the presence of six inches of snow on the ground. And through it all, Dad was as happy as a kid in a candy store as he wielded his electric hand mixer.

My brother and I had one job each year: quality assurance testing (and I mean that literally). He and I would wait as each batch of cookies sat

tim davis

my parent's families. We would go to Mom's family on Christmas Eve and Dad's family on Christmas day. My Dad was a factory worker most of his life, and he started baking cookies and loading them in Christmas themed tins as a way of keeping the costs down for the large number of family presents we would give out at these gatherings. This meant hours and hours of baking small batches of cookies. It took hours because when you live in a cabin designed for weekend vacations, the stove typically is not very big. But that was OK for my brother and me because that meant we would spend countless nights sitting in our pajamas at the kitchen table, watching my Dad work his cookie magic.

Sometimes my dad was like an army general, completely in command of everything that was happening in his kitchen, and executing his recipes with precise and efficient movements that would make an Iron Chef proud. Most of the time, however, it was controlled chaos. There would be smears of flour down the front of his

on the cooling rack after coming out of the oven. Dad would prep the next batch to go in, and we would sit for what seemed an eternity for them to be cool enough to eat. Then, when Dad would give the OK, we would get to taste one. This was important because my Dad likes to experiment. He is easily bored by doing the same thing over and over again, and would have whimsical, "I wonder if this would taste good" moments. My bother and I were the last line of defense that stood between our family members getting cookies that tasted bad and cookies that were awesome (because there was no middle road with my Dad's cookies). And what better way to calm a five and a nine year-old boy down before bedtime, than to load them up with sugar?

One glorious evening, Dad was trying something new and stumbled on the most amazing cookie he has ever created. He started with a basic chocolate chip cookie recipe, but was making separate batches of red and green cookies (because, you know, Christmas colors). On a whim, he added

coconut shavings to the green batch. Who would have thought something as random as coconut shavings in chocolate chip cookie dough dyed with green food coloring would have created the perfect Christmas cookie? They were an almost lime green color with chocolate brown spots. The green coconut fuzz gave a bit of a hairy texture to the surface.

With a worried look on his face, my dad put the cookies on the cooling rack while my brother and I just stared at them. We had never seen anything like them before. My brother's response was "Dad, are they supposed to be all fuzzy and hairy like that?" To which my Dad assured us that this was done on purpose, and that they were supposed to look that way. My response was simply, "Can we eat one yet?"

There is something about a fresh baked cookie that is so comforting. The way the outside has a slight crispness to it, while at the same time the middle is till soft and moist. And a melting chocolate chip is just divine when it hits your tongue. These cookies transported my nine year-old self to cookie heaven. To this day, I firmly believe that this was the moment I fell in love with coconut. There was no doubt about it, these hairy green blobs passed the quality assurance test as both my brother and I asked for another cookie right away. My bother was the one that dubbed them "Green Fuzzies".

It took some convincing to get those first cookies included in the Christmas cookie tins. Kids and adults have very different ideas of what tastes good, and to some adults the appearance of a green fuzzy is not the most appetizing. But we begged Dad to take a risk on it, and he eventually gave in. And we found out on Christmas Eve that we made the right decision. Every single kid had the same awe-struck wonder on their face when their family opened their cookie tin. As Dad ex-

pected, the look on the face of each adult was more like a mixture of confusion and concern over this thing that sat on top of the other normal cookies. But the kids ate them right then and there and would not stop raving about them all night.

Over the years things change. We moved out of that little ski cabin in Wrightwood and into a brand new mobile home just off the mountain in a town called Phelan. This meant a full-sized oven, so a lot less baking time was required. Dad did try to tweak the recipe every now and then. One year he tried Red fuzzies, but they were not he same for some reason. And then there was the year he tried for make a mint chocolate batch of green fuzzies. I appreciate my Dad's willingness to try things, but sometimes you just can't improve on a classic. As the years went by, Dad was diagnosed with high blood pressure and later would develop diabetes. Making cookies kind of faded away after that and disappeared altogether after both my brother and I moved out of the house. Dad could justify baking so many cookies if his sons were there to eat them, but not just for himself and my Mom. However, even though he has not made cookies in over 10 years, my cousins still ask him each Christmas if he ever plans to do it again.

Every year, as we decorate our own house for Christmas, I think back to those nights in that little kitchen. I remember the heat, the smells, the snow falling outside, and the Christmas music playing in the background. But most of all, I remember the joy on my Dad's face as he created something new. Waiting for the cookies to cool, my brother and I saw a side of my Dad that I still love and admire him for to this day. We learned that sometimes the most amazing things you will ever create, will come from sheer silliness and whimsy if you allow yourself to follow your gut.

Soft Ginger Bread

Ingredients:

- 1 Cup unsalted butter
- 1 Cup white sugar
- 2 Teaspoons baking soda
- 1 Cup water
- 1 Cup molasses (Dark is best, but light will work. Make sure it is Unsulfered)
- 1 Teaspoon salt
- 1 Teaspoon ginger
- 1 Teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 ¾ cup All Purpose Flour
- 2 eggs
- 13 x 9 cake pan (glass if you have one)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350.

In a mixing bowl, cream together the butter and the sugar with a wooden spoon until evenly distributed through the butter. You may want to consider pulling the butter out of the fridge about 30 min before starting, to make this process easier.

Bring water to a boil on the stove, or in the microwave, and stir in the baking soda until dissolved. Let it cool to room temp before adding to the butter/sugar mix.

Add in the following and mix in with a spoon to spread them out evenly:

- Molasses
- Salt
- Ginger
- Cinnamon
- Flour
- Eggs

Using an electric hand mixer, whip the contents of the bowl into a thick batter. 3 min on High should do it. **WARNING:** Overbeating the batter will put too much air on the mixture, resulting in a dry and crumbly consistency.

Grease your 13 x 9 pan (do not forget this step).

Pour the batter into greased 13 x 9 pan, and bake for 30 to 35 min. You will know that it is done if the center springs back after a gentle poke.

Guinness Stew

Ingredients:

- 1 Tablespoon Oil (vegetable oil is fine, I prefer coconut oil)
- 1 Large sweet onion
- 2 Tablespoons minced garlic
- 3 cups of Guinness XXX Stout*
- 1 ½ lbs beef cut into cubes **
- 3 Cups of low sodium chicken broth
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- ½ Tablespoon ground pepper
- 1 Small bag of baby carrots
- 6 medium sized red potatoes
- 1 ½ Table Spoon flour
- 1 Bag frozen peas
- 1 large pot (I use a stock pot)

Directions:

This stew has 2 stages: Creating the Broth, and cooking the vegies

Broth

Make sure your meet is cut in the desired size cubes, and the onion is diced before you start

Add the oil, and meat to the pot at medium heat, as well as ½ the salt and pepper. The goal is to season the meat and cook it until is a pale brown color

Add the Onion and stir until the onion start to become transparent

Add the minced garlic and stir until juices have started to pool at the bottom of the pot

Add beer and broth, as well as the rest of the salt and pepper

Bring this to a boil, then reduce the heat and let it sit at a low boil/simmer for 30 min while covered, stirring occasionally***

Veggies

Cut the potatoes into about 1 inch square

Cut the baby carrots in half, or in third depending on your preference

After the broth has been simmering for 30 min, add the potatoes, carrots, and frozen peas to the pot and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to a simmer, cover, and let it sit for another 30 min. Stew will be done when the potatoes cubes break apart while stirring the pot.***

Optional step : once the stew is done simmering, if you like your stew to be thick, add flour in small amounts until you reach the desired thinness.

You can serve the stew on its own, or over your favorite rice. Typical portion size is 1 – 2 cups of stew per person. This recipe makes about 8 – 10 cups of stew. This stew holds up really well to being refrigerated and reheated.

* XXX Stout Bottled Guinness will give you the best results. Should take about 1 and ½ bottles from a 6 pack, I just drink the remainder of the bottle while I cook. Guinness from a can will work, but can result in a stew with a slightly bitter taste.

** I find that London Broil works best, as it does not have too much of a fat content and is on sale at regular intervals. I prefer to cut my meat in cubes no bigger than ½ an inch, but no smaller than ¼ inch.

*** When the beer starts to boil, it will foam up A LOT until the alcohol evaporates. Just stir it to keep it from overflowing the pot, and turn the heat down until you get a good simmer going.

**** Stir every 5 to 10 min. to prevent the bottom of the pot from burning. You may need to turn the heat down multiple times to keep the low simmer from turning in to a rapid boil.

Recipe for Search and Rescue

I. A stout rope, perhaps. A flashlight's beam.

Animals trained to search, seek, and
find. Urgent men tramping through
mud, woods and fields.

Crossing rocky terrain. Voices
call aloud in the dark.

Worried mother
holding hope.

Grateful glimpse.

Warm welcome.

Happy tears.

Home.

II. Scattered straw, perhaps. Barn's sturdy beams.

Animals gather to soothe and
surround. Urgent men tramping from
far in the East.

Crossing countless kingdoms. Starlight
shines bright through the dark.

Weary mother
holding Hope.

Glory glimpsed.

Invitation.

Grateful tears.

Home.

diana glyer

"Tastes Like Goodness" Chicken Drumsticks

from my all-time favorite cookbook: "Saving Dinner" by
Leanne Ely

12 chicken drumsticks, skin removed
9 cloves garlic
4 TB honey
3 TB dijon mustard
3 TB soy sauce
1 TB lemon juice
1/2 tsp pepper

Using a knife, slash two separate, parallel gashes in the thick part of the drumstick. This will improve the penetration of the marinade and the cooking time.

In a large zipper-topped plastic bag, combine garlic, honey, mustard, soy sauce, lemon juice, and pepper. Add slashed drumsticks and toss to coat evenly. Refrigerate overnight.

Remove chicken from the plastic bag and discard marinade.

Cook chicken on the grill, or bake at 425 degrees for 45 minutes.

That Vegetarian Chili Recipe

1 can pinto beans (rinsed and drained)
1 can black beans (rinsed and drained)
1 package taco seasoning mix
1 jar salsa
1 10-oz package frozen corn
1 sweet potato (peeled and cubed)
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon cumin

Dump everything in a crock pot, set it on low, and cook for 6-8 hours. Mix well and serve over spaghetti, topped with shredded cheese and chopped onions. Corn muffins are good with this. Heck, anything is good with this.