



The Country Register™

Manitoba and Saskatchewan's Complimentary Guide to Specialty Shopping & Attractions

Dec. 2023/Jan. 2024

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The FREE Specialty Publication
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2 Minute Lift

TWO MINUTE READS TO FLIP OUR SCRIPT

BY: KATHY J. SOTAK

Learn to Play Big Again: Beware of Shrinkage

Where'd we get the idea to play small?

Antoni Gaudi was a Christian, architect and designer who must have been hard of hearing. I mean, he must have, because **he didn't hear the message that we are supposed to play small in life.**

I've recently returned from Barcelona, Spain, where Gaudi is a household name and his art and architectural wonders are everywhere. His life's work was architecting the Sagrada Familia, which is a larger-than-you-can-imagine basilica 140 years in the making. (The first stone was laid in 1882 and is targeting completion in 2026.) He designed the build in phases, in a way that they can't quit early without completing the entire work of art. Smartly played.

Gaudi played big. He created big, larger-than-life works that celebrated God, Jesus, spiritual ascension, humanity and nature. He did not think "Well, churches are normally around yaybig, so I'd better stick within that parameter." He did not think "What could I do with my own two hands?" or even "What could be done in my lifetime?"



That's because **no one ever told him to play small.**
In other words: **He never shrank.**



My analysis concludes that I've shrunk. As a child in the birthing canal to the world, I'd spend countless hours dreaming up my future. Then I stepped onto my path, and somewhere and somehow, I forgot how to dream. When I tried, my dreams became predictable and easy. My structured, safe life, drawn with straight lines, bled into the center. No wonder I feel boxed in.

What to do next? Take a moment



to mourn then pick up the chin. Today is a great day to be our own architect. Let's grab out sketch pads and look up. Celebrate our first draft, then let's turn the page.

This time, Gaudi-style.

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Christmas Trivia

A Special Christmas Gift

During World War II, the United States Playing Card Company collaborated with American and British intelligence agencies to create a special deck of cards. These cards were distributed as Christmas gifts to soldiers, but they also helped Allied prisoners of war escape from German POW camps. When wet, individual cards peeled apart to reveal maps of escape routes. This gift held a lifesaving secret during a time of war.



Mince pies initially contain meat

During the 16th century, medieval people believed that if you ate a mince pie every day from Christmas to Twelfth Night (5th January), you'd have happiness for the next 12 months. These pies were known as Christmas Pyes and contained anything from rabbit to mutton, pigeon to pheasant! They were larger than their modern creations and made into an oval shape, which was said to represent Jesus' crib.

Winnipeg, SK

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Keeping In Touch

Cindy and Joe Ashfield <old.stuff@sasktel.net>

As I write this today, I am warm and comfortable. Outside, there is a wind whooshing (is that a real word?) around every corner of the house. It isn't an angry wind that comes with great gusto; instead, it is blowing the bird feeders about and bringing some freezing rain.

We have a pair of robins that have decided to reside in Whitewood this winter. I guess they think we are far enough south, so they can't be bothered to make the trip south even though some of our "snowbirds" have gone. My neighbour said she watched a blue jay and a robin vying for food near their feeders. I am not sure who won that contest. We are still seeing some white-breasted nuthatches, sparrows, a few chickadees, as well as woodpeckers. We had the peanut ring stocked, hoping that all the birds would enjoy that treat. The blue jays got it all. The rest had to be satisfied with the black oil sunflower and the suet cake, which, by the way, is laced with peanut butter. The blue jays don't seem to know that. I wonder what tales the winter bird count will tell this year?

As the year winds to a close, the hours of sunlight are greatly diminished, both by the cycle and the overcast skies which seem to be prevalent these days. I am so looking forward to the lights and good cheer of Christmas. Our fake tree doesn't fill the house with that lovely natural aroma that the live ones did, but the bonus is that we put it up quite a bit earlier now & the house takes on a new look. Our Christmas village, which used to decorate our shop and then our mantle, has found a new home at the Nursing Home here... perhaps bringing some Christmas memories to the residents. Do any of you recall the "Ideals" publication that used to be sold? They were filled with Christmases past and seasonal poetry.

This is my time for craft activities that I enjoy, and I also like to listen to an audiobook, which is my version of multi-tasking. I found a great selection on the library website to add to my favourites. Joe is the artist at our house, and for years, he created our Christmas cards for friends and family. He has decided to abandon that gift, so I thought I would try paper-quilling some of ours this year. We have the little stove on in the sunroom today, and it is the perfect place to sit and roll some quills. He has made that his contribution.

Celebrating Christmas with all its traditions, some new and some old, will keep some of us busy and not so noticing of the shorter days. There are

usually lots of activities planned where ever you live. Houses are decorated, some with creative light displays or lawn arrangements. Businesses have decorated their windows or premises, too, and many have ordered some special stock for the season. Our Christmas cactus has decided not to wait, so it is sporting a floral splendour right now. Soon we'll see pontsettias and amaryllis being offered to brighten our homes.

Still, Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, bringing a message of love and hope for the coming years. Once again, on Christmas Eve, the story will be retold in words and song. Our wish for you as the new year approaches is for some memories to treasure and that the new year brings you happy times as we travel its path.

Sea Salt Fudge

To be honest, I'm not great at making fudge. Usually, I end up with never-ending fudge where you cut a piece, and the rest just oozes over to fill up the spot or it turns out gritty. But with this recipe, I've finally found success!

- 1 ¼ cups semi-sweet or bitter-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup Nutella (at room temperature)
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ¼ to ½ teaspoons sea salt

Spray an 8x8 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line the greased pan with parchment paper, but keep the paper long enough so that it extends over the edges of the pan.

In a microwave safe, medium-sized bowl, combine chocolate chips, butter and sweetened condensed milk. Microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir, then microwave for an additional minute. Stir quickly until smooth and the chocolate has melted. (You may have to microwave again at 30 second intervals, depending on your microwave strength). Immediately stir in Nutella and vanilla. Stir quickly until all the ingredients are fully incorporated.

Immediately pour the mixture into the prepared pan and smooth the top of the fudge. Chill in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 hours.

Once the fudge is chilled, run a knife around the sides of the pan. Using the overhanging parchment paper, lift the fudge out of the pan. Cut the fudge into small squares.

Sprinkle fudge with sea salt. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

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Stories of Yesteryear
Reader Submitted Stories
& Stories From Down on the Farm



“Be Productive”

By Judy Ann Stupak

I remember the day my mom took a hammer to the T.V., I was in High School. Having a T.V was a status symbol - automatically catapulting you from a 'have not' to a 'have'. It didn't matter that we still didn't have running water, central heat, or even a telephone. The television - with its one channel - was the measure of success.

Someone had given us the television. They were upgrading from Black & White to colour. It came in a solid wood cabinet, and it was the best piece of furniture in our living room. We had not had it long - maybe



one winter. Us children loved it. I even hoped it would help improve my marks in school since I had recently failed an exam in Phys Ed. How embarrassing. I won ribbons in track meets but could not fill in the blanks of Dallas ____ or ____ ____ Giants. If it didn't involve hockey, I didn't know it. Saturday evenings were spent visiting. Some poor neighbour would

have our clan descend on them so that we could watch "Hockey Night in

Canada." Conversations about any other program - *I Love Lucy*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Gilligan's Island* - were over my head. Ironic, considering I was named after Judy Garland, and my sister after Rosalie Allen (a popular country music disc jockey known for her yodelling ability).

But the T.V. had to go. In a family of 9, everyone had chores to do. There were cows to milk, meals to prepare, things to make. Everything was done large scale, so efficiency was important. Solving problems was a family affair. We tried to find the shortest/easiest ways of working. We spent time troubleshooting. We spent time building prototypes of our ideas. We spent time assessing problems, assessing resources and finding solutions. That was BTV (before T.V.). The T.V. changed our family dynamics from a positive to a negative. The T.V. turned mom into the chore police. She was spending her time/energy nagging and threatening. Her competition was in that box, and she didn't like it!

The cabinet the T.V. came in, however, was saved from destruction and remained in our living room. If the T.V. was not useful, at least the cabinet was. In went her fabric. In went her sewing supplies. A curtain covered the hole.

Santa doesn't wear red because of Coca-Cola

Contrary to popular belief, Father Christmas's red coat was not the creation of a clever Coca-Cola advertising campaign. Before the company had even been invented, St Nick was depicted wearing a scarlet coat in multiple books and illustrations. From the 1930s onwards, Coca-Cola did, however, help shape the image of Santa as a jolly old man.



Homemade Pumpkin Spice Creamer

This would make a cute little gift for friends, especially if you include a nice mug and a few cookies. Remember to give the creamer a bit of a shake if it's been sitting.

- 1 cup whipping cream
- ¾ cup whole milk
- 1 can of Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup pumpkin puree
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp ground cloves

Add all the ingredients into a blender or mixer and mix until well combined and smooth.

Transfer the creamer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

——*—*—*

Dairy Free Pumpkin Spice Creamer

We know a lot of dairy-free people...I have to take Lactaid pills myself if I want to consume milk. My husband took this to work, and it was voted "better than store-bought." If you're struggling to find the sweetened condensed coconut milk, I found it at Superstore® next to the evaporated milk. It turns out more like a soft, whipped topping.

- 1 can coconut cream
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 can sweetened condensed coconut milk
- 1 cup of Silk® half and half
- ½ cup pumpkin purée
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp ground cloves

Add all the ingredients into a blender or mixer and mix until well combined and smooth.

Transfer the creamer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

Countryberries Designs

Santa Pillow

This Santa has so many possibilities! He was designed to be a wool applique pillow top with bells or buttons but could also be a table mat or wall hanging. He could be a punch-needle or hooked rug piece. If you're a painter, create Santa on paper, wood or canvas. He'd make a cute note card. Enlarge this pattern to your desired size. Whatever craft you choose, have fun and be creative!. Not for commercial use. Please give the artist credit.

Designed by Kathy Graham

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Piecing Life Together

Another “Auld Lang Syne”

by Barbara Polston

Hard to believe, but here we are, welcoming another New Year. “Auld Lang Syne” is the song associated with the New Year. The first line of the song means, loosely interpreted, “for the sake of old times.” In singing Auld Lang Syne, we look back. Another tradition associated with the New Year is the writing of New Year’s Resolutions. In doing so, we look forward, resolving to make the coming year better than the last.

Are you a resolution writer? I don’t write resolutions but I do set annual goals. At the end of each year, I revisit them, asking how many I achieved, where I came close and where I fell short. If I’ve fallen short of achieving a goal, I also ask myself, “Why?” I’m not making excuses, but determining if it was necessary to change the goal, if I really put forth the effort to achieve it, or if circumstances beyond my control made achieving the goal impossible or unlikely. It’s important to do this analysis; how else will you know if you’ve been successful?

Some of my goals from last year were achieved and, on some, I fell woefully short. The ones I considered most important were, of course, the ones I worked on the hardest. We staged a successful charity sew event, generating 120 quilts to comfort women and children fleeing domestic violence. The committee worked hard for an entire year to ensure this would happen. A check mark placed in the “achieved” column! On the other hand, I still have those pesky 10 pounds to lose. A check mark made in the “failed” column.

Each year’s goals include some related to my quilting career. Last year’s quilting goals were achieved and I was able to squeeze in a couple of projects for gifts, commissions and pieces for auctions for causes I believe in. Most of my quilting was taken up with a really big project that will culminate in the months ahead. I’m excited that I’ll soon be able to talk about that.

This year, I’m thinking it might be fun to make something just for me, committing to a project, or two, that has been sitting on my shelf and nagging at my brain for years. I’ve added completing at least one of those projects to my goals. I wonder, by the next "Auld Lang Syne," if I will be able to put a check in the “achieved” column.

Abraham Lincoln said, “Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.” I believe he means that those goals we work on are the ones most important to us. Achieving them brings feelings of success. If you haven’t already set your New Year’s Goals, put pen to paper, set some goals and get to work!

Barbara Polston, the author of *Quilting with Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and *Meet Puppy Brian and Puppy Brian and the Grey Cat* (www.puppybrian.com), lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but getting more time to stitch in a variety of forms.
Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.

Town and Country Cooking

by Janette Hess

was not available at time of publication.

Oh NO!!! Carl has a screw loose!!!

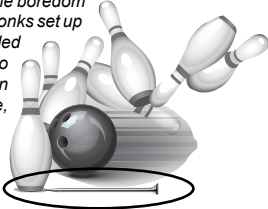
*Or, maybe it was a nail! All Carl is sure of is that he dropped something while he was hurrying to open the store.
Whatever it was, he thinks he dropped it amongst the pages of The Country Register and he needs your help to find it.*

*Regular readers of The Country Register will know that Carl runs a small town store that sits smack dab on the Manitoba and Saskatchewan border, and that Carl fancies himself as a bit of a handyman, but his eyesight is not what it used to be.
Can you help him find it?*

*It looks like this: —————→
This is not a contest, just some fun for you, our readers.*

*Did you find
Carl’s loose screw in our last issue?
Word Origins: Bowling*

t origin of bowling seems to be obscure. In Germany and steries there, to relieve the boredom sistered lives, German monks set up egels - or clubs - and rolled ded stones at the clubs to em over. Soon, German discovered the pastime, the fourteenth century, n alleys had become a sport in Germany.



It was on page 12

Carl must have dropped it when he went bowling last month.

Eggnog Pie

This really does taste like eggnog, except in pie form. I use a graham wafer crust, but a pie crust would be fine, too.

- 1-9” prepared pie crust
- 3.4 oz (102 g) pkg. vanilla instant pudding mix
- 1 cup of whipping cream + ¼ sugar whipped until stiff peaks form **OR** 2 cups of Cool Whip, thawed
- 1 ½ cups of store-bought eggnog
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg

In a medium bowl, combine the eggnog and pudding mix. Beat until thick. Add in the nutmeg. Gently fold in the whipped cream until the mixture is fluffy and pale yellow.

Spoon the mixture into the pie crust and smooth out.

Refrigerate for at least 4 hours until firm.

Creamy Christmas Eggnog

This very rich eggnog comes together quickly and requires minimal work.

- 4 egg yolks
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 4 ½ cups milk
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 4 egg whites
- Additional nutmeg for garnish



In a large mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks until they are thickened and light. Gradually stir in the condensed milk, vanilla, milk and nutmeg. Beat the egg whites until stiff, then add them to the milk mixture. Garnish with additional nutmeg if desired.

Mistletoe

From the Ancient Greeks to Norse mythology, mistletoe has been a symbolic herb for centuries. Many customs have linked it to love, fertility and new life. In some way these beliefs eventually led to the custom of kissing under the mistletoe during the Christmas period. This tradition became increasingly popular in Victorian England when men would look to steal a kiss from any woman seen lingering beneath a sprig of mistletoe. A refusal was seen as bad luck.

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Memories with Santa Claus

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Towards the end of a year, I sit for a bit and contemplate Santa Claus. Not the one visiting from the North Pole at the mall and not the new decorations in the stores. I just look across the living room and study the form of a 14” stuffed bearded, velvet figure who emerges every December. He spends the rest of the year in a cardboard box that held cans of food 40 years ago.

This Santa has been a part of every Christmas I have ever known.

My great aunt, Aunt Wilma, brought him home in the early 1920s. She was in her early 20s, age-wise. Home then was an apartment in a six family house in Brooklyn, New York that she shared with her mother, three brothers, and a sister, my grandmother. Her father had died suddenly in 1919 when she was 17. She and my grandmother worked as winders in a small knitting mill. Their economic situation was far from prosperous, but somehow there was always enough.

Around the corner from where they lived was a store I’ve only heard referred to as “the Junkies.” I assume it was something like a thrift store. There she found our Santa Claus.

Santa was there the Christmases of 1929 and 1930 that Uncle Henry had to be away at the tuberculosis sanitarium, and he was there through the Decembers my Uncle Bill struggled with a brain tumor in the late 1930s.

Santa listened to the tap of my Uncle Henry’s typewriter as he wrote his Christmas correspondence at the dining room table. He was there as my great-grandmother, Nanna, baked and cooked for the holiday. Santa was also there the Christmas of 1958, the first one she wasn’t there for.

He was there as the family had grown with marriages and children arriving. One of those children, of course, was my mother. Santa was there for her first Christmas and every Christmas after. He sat upon the piano as Mom played carols and hymns every December growing up and into early adulthood.

In 1967 Aunt Wilma and Uncle Henry moved from the home that our Santa had known for over 40 years. When Aunt Wilma wanted to toss him out, Mom rescued him. Thus, he has been a part of every Christmas I have ever known.

He was there during my first Christmas in 1973, and he moved to North Carolina with my parents, grandparents, and myself in 1978. He was there through all the changes a few decades bring, including Mom’s last Christmas in 2017. Thus, he was saved during the purging of possessions when my husband, Wayne, and I sold my childhood home.

Now Santa has been there for our Christmas celebrations. Wayne’s five grown children and their families gather at our house, and we all treasure being together. Santa has seen everyone open their presents, including the knitted and crocheted gifts I make every year with extra love in them.

Our Santa has indeed seen better days. The velvet of his suit is flat and worn, its burgundy red perhaps a bit faded. The once white trim on his clothes is a dull brown in some places and entirely gone in others. His beard is now matted and a yellowish gray, no longer fully glued to his face.

Yet, he exudes more spirit than all the untested, brand-new Santas out there. His fabric face retains every feature with that customary twinkle in his brown eyes. His cheeks are as rosy as if he just arrived on his sleigh.

Our Santa is vibrant with the many decades of December memories that he carries. This Christmas, he will again see what he has seen ever since Aunt Wilma brought him home. He will see love.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Chapel Hill, NC.
Her email is 913jeeves@gmail.com.

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The Christmas Wish

By Deb Heatherly

Ok, I'll admit that Little Sam is not the most original name, but what else do you call a cat that looks exactly like another except for size? Little Sam just seemed to fit.

I'm not sure exactly when he made his presence known, but I clearly remember he was very aloof, coming near only when he knew it was dinner time. For a year he watched me, hiding under bushes and watching my every movement in the yard. At the same time, I watched him and wondered if I would ever be anything but a free meal.

Finally, the day came when I was allowed the honor of petting his head while he ate. Eventually I was allowed to pet him for longer lengths of time and even hold him for short intervals. Still, it was very clear that this feral would always be guarded and that snuggling and cuddling were just not in his nature. I was ok with that and happy to be his caretaker.

His boundaries defined; it took me by complete surprise when Little Sam brought home a friend. Actually, more than a friend. Little Sam brought home a kitten and decided to play mother. The tiny gray and white bundle of fur seemed almost attached to Sam's side as they walked in the yard, and most afternoons I'd see them curled up tightly as they slept in the sun. Male or female, I had no clue for the mere sight of me sent the little one under the house with Sam in hot pursuit. Where Sam was, the kitten was. These two were never far apart.

Sam was a good teacher and the kitten paid close attention. I watched from the window as Sam taught him to chase bugs, climb trees, and use my car tire as a scratching post. He also learned quickly to go in and out of the kitty door of the heated shelter we had on the property. This building had been built for the feral cats we fed and looked out for and it was on one of the kitten's visits to the shelter that I thought it was a good idea to teach him about human contact.

Let's just say that I was the one that did the learning that day. Although armed with leather gloves and determination, I was no match for Sam's little student. After much hissing, spitting, and growling the little one, who I named Spitfire because of this encounter, jumped out of my hands and out the kitty door he flew.

While I did hold him briefly that day, he was too mad at being caught to realize that I only wanted to show him love. Love was not something he desired or something I could force. It was then that I realized that I might have finally met my match. I would have to learn patience if I ever wanted to earn his trust.

Several months passed and Spitfire was becoming a handsome young man. Each day he came closer to me, and seemed to be learning that I meant no harm, but any wrong movement or loud noise sent him into a hasty retreat.

Christmas was quickly approaching and my only wish that year was for our young charge to like me, or at least tolerate me enough to allow me to touch him. I did not desire presents, just the feel of this sweet kitty under my fingers. I shared this wish with my family, but no one gave me any hope.

Christmas arrived that year with bitter cold and a cutting wind. Late in the afternoon I ventured outside to wait for my 'present.' He always showed up around the same time knowing I would feed him but today there was no sign of him.

Fooled again I thought. He was the smart one, probably curled up in the kitty shelter out of the cold while I sat on the backsteps shivering. Three times I rattled the food bowls and called which had always worked in the past but not today. On this chilly Christmas evening he was nowhere to be found.

With cold hands and a sad heart, I was about to give up when finally, I caught a glimpse of him out of the corner of my eye. Then, as if he had lived there all of his life, he marched right up to me, looked at the food dish, and loudly demanded his dinner. Much to my delight, he was far too busy eating to notice when I simply reached down and picked him up. I thought for a moment that I was dreaming.

I snuggled, I kissed, and I whispered soft words to my furry captive. He glared at me and then settled into the 'torture.' I was thrilled with each glorious second, but I could almost hear him thinking: "Ok, I'm putting up with this but only because its Christmas."

I'd like to tell you that after that night we were best friends, but Sam's kitten, like Sam, had a mind of his own. I was allowed to pet him when it suited him and on other days, I was back to being a free meal.

In the end, I decided I was ok with him being the boss. Watching him mature and seeing the love between him and Sam was a gift in its own. I would love him on his own terms and be content in the knowledge that Sam had taught him the most important lessons of all - where to find food,

where to find shelter, and where to call home.

Authors note: Someone recently asked me if I had a favorite Christmas memory which brought this story to mind. Although this took place many years ago, I will always remember it as one of the best Christmas days of my life. Each year I reflect on what my family deemed as my impossible wish and what I fondly recall as my furry Christmas miracle.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls," for tips and inspiration. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770429649800457/>. Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>.

Visit Deb's website at www.Debcatsnquilts.com.



Meowy Christmas

3 Ingredient Peanut Butter Cookies

Thanks to Deb Heatherly for sharing this easy and delicious recipe!

- 1 egg
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar

Mix all 3 ingredients. Roll into walnut sized balls. Flatten with a fork dipped in flour or sugar, crisscrossing on the top.

Bake at 350 degrees for 13-15 minutes.



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Building Harmony

Harmony Christmas - The Effort

by Jeff Cappis



Well, it’s Christmas again. I love the traditions and the way it brings people together. Usually you know what to expect. Snow on the ground, a big turkey dinner, family and friends dropping by, and the usual collection of Christmas songs playing over and over. (And over and over...) There are presents to buy and excited children. Inevitably some one knocks over the Christmas tree. Despite all this I find the routine very comforting.

It is a lot of work. Every year, Cathy and I pull out the boxes marked “Christmas” from storage and decorate the house. On this particular day we put up garnishes, set out ornaments, stockings and wreaths. After hours of decorating and drinking eggnog, we finally got to the main event: the Christmas tree. I have to admit, by that time I just want to sit back and watch a good horror movie, but the boss keeps me going.

We were just about done when I asked Cathy, “It’s a lot of work and we’ll only be pulling it all down and putting it away in a couple of weeks. Why do people go to the trouble to put up a tree in the house anyway? When you think about it, this is a very strange tradition.” Somehow I wasn’t sure Cathy heard me. “Do you think this is all worth the effort?”

Cathy just smiled as she pulled the very last tree ornament from the box. The ornament appeared to be made of crystal. The lights from the tree danced sparkles all different colors through the glass. The ornament had its own small rainbow around it. This wasn’t any ordinary ornament and Cathy always put it on last.

You see, Cathy grew up as one of six children. Every year her mother would make six shopping trips (one with each child) so that everyone could keep their presents secret. Cathy loved that time with her mother. You can imagine that being one of six children doesn’t afford you a lot of personal alone time with her.

When Cathy was five, her mother bundled her up with a scarf, coat, snow pants, mittens, boots and a hat for the trip to the department store. It was a chilly day and the trip would take two different buses. Cathy could see her breath on the bus’ glass window as she watched the houses go by. It was exciting!

When they got to the department store, she found it was filled with wondrous things. There were clothes and toys and jewelry. They looked at it all. Just her and her mother. Cathy thought she was having the best day ever. But it wasn’t over just yet.

They finished shopping and were heading to the door when something caught her mother’s eye. There was a small crystal ornament sitting in the middle of a bunch of other odd Christmas items. It somehow stood out. Cathy thought it was beautiful. They both admired it.

“Can we get it for the Christmas tree mommy?” Cathy asked with wide eyes and a big smile. Her mother puzzled for a moment.

“Sorry sweetie. We only have enough money for the bus. If we get this,

we’ll have to walk home.” Cathy didn’t think about it, she just put on a great big smile and hugged her mother.

So, they set off. It was probably only a half hour walk, but the air was cold. To Cathy it felt like they were going on an expedition across the north pole. The sun would be going down soon. She had to keep her little legs going faster so they’d get home in time. Their breaths hung in the winter air. The snow crunched beneath their feet. All the while Cathy clutched the bag with the ornament in it. Her mother carried the other twelve. She still managed to hold her daughter’s hand.

“It’s O.K.,” Cathy thought. “Mom is with me.” The last ten steps were the hardest. The sun had just gone down, it was cold, snow had blown across their front steps. That front door couldn’t get close enough. But they made it. Stepping into the warm house, her mother put down all the bags then smiled at her.

She saw Cathy was still clutching the bag with the ornament. Cathy smiled back at her proudly. They pulled it out and thoughtfully hung it on the tree.

“Was it worth the effort?” her mother asked.

“Oh yes!” Cathy replied. She stroked the ornament then she turned to look at me as if she’d just come back from somewhere. I could tell it all from the look in her eyes. We clinked our eggnog glasses, she curled up in my arms and we admired the Christmas tree.

Yes, it’s all worth the effort.

Merry Christmas from Jeff and Cathy at Harmony Acres.

© Jeff Cappis 2023 jcappis@telus.net



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Answer on Page 12

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Kirby's Korner

Wood You Or Woodn't You?



Regular readers of Kirby's Korner know I dabble in carpentry and remodelling. This past year has been my busiest since I started my company, The White City Woodworker, 10 years ago.

This year started with playing catchup from all the jobs I acquired from my short advertising stint in these very pages of *The Country Register*. I could see the light at the end of the tunnel in early May as I watched the names on my waiting list slowly get checked off one by one. Then, the renovation jobs started to pile up. Anyone who knows me knows I have difficulty saying “no” to anyone needing help. I am no different when it comes to my business practices. If someone approaches me and asks if I will work for them, I see it as they trust me and want my help.

I have had to use the word “no” more than once this year. I have resigned myself to only working for existing customers of my woodworking business. I broke that rule once this year to help out a charming senior citizen who is a regular at the hardware store and needed some help doing some patchwork around his home. Besides publishing the *Country Register* with my wife, Colleen, I also work 4 days a week at the local hardware store, so you can understand my need to keep my client list as small as possible. I am not getting any younger, and lifting full sheets of plywood and drywall is not as easy as it used to be.

This all brings me to my current renovation job I am tackling. I use the word “tackling” because I am renovating a garden shed for a former client and a former football player. This reno has taken me partially away from the other complete house reno I am also doing at the moment, and by at this moment, I mean for the last seven months.

I had to start this reno before it was too cold outside to work. This is ironic as the reno is to convert the shed into a sauna. Something I have never done before, and there lies the rub.

I have built garden sheds before.

In fact, our own garden shed is quite the structure. Our friends say it looks more like a guest house than a shed. It even has an attic for extra storage. What I haven't done before is build a sauna. I understand the building part and find it relatively easy to complete. The hard part is understanding how a sauna works and how it has to be designed and outfitted. I have had to do a lot of research on proper airflow, insulation, seated bench arrangement and placement of the wood-fired stove that will provide the heat and stream from said sauna. Even the height of the seating benches, in relation to the height of the furnace, is essential.

As I write this, I am resting after a full day of installing a chimney. Something that takes a lot of planning, research, and work, even if it is only in a small garden shed with a low roof.

All of this has got me thinking about how heating our homes on the prairies has changed over the past hundred or so years and how, in the past year or so, the old adage about everything old is always new again has become true.

Burning wood was the only way to heat a home at the turn of the last century. Wood was scarce on the prairies, and sometimes alternate fuels, such as cow pies, had to be used. Once coal became an easier way to have an entire winter supply of heating fuel on hand, wood-burning appliances were only kept by those with easy access to the wood for fuel. Wood as a heating fuel could be labour-intensive and messy. Coal used a lot less labour from the homeowner, but it was dirty and was soon replaced with heating oil, which could also be messy but not nearly as bad as coal. I have never been to a home that used coal as a heating fuel, but I have been in a few that still had the coal shoot on the side of the house and the blackened portion of the basement where the coal was once stored.

I grew up in a home that was heated with kerosene when I was very young. I remember the large tin heaters being in the house, but I do not remember what kind of heat they gave off. However, as one of my first memories, I can recall the day the diesel fuel furnace was installed in our farmhouse. The new furnace, with its forced warm air that went to every room in the house, was a significant

improvement on the old heaters that truly only warmed the rooms they were in. I will never forget the smell in the fall when the furnace would come on for the first time. The smell of diesel would fill the house. This smell of diesel would permeate the house and everything in it. Every now and again, I run into the smell of diesel as a piece of heavy equipment labours its way along a highway or work site, and my mind always races back to the farm and the smell of the furnace firing up for the first time. I can almost feel the warmth from that old furnace surrounding me just from this smell.

Even though today's natural gas furnaces are clean, relatively cheap and easy to run, I have seen and heard a lot of interest in people wanting to heat their homes with wood again. Usually, when you

see someone buying a wood stove or stove pipe, it is for a fishing shack. However, this year, it has been for home heating that people are purchasing wood stoves and the accompanying accessories. The only reason I see for this trend is a way to circumvent the carbon tax. As far as I know, there is no carbon tax on firewood except for the fuel it would take to access it.

We used to have a wood-burning fireplace in our old house, and I miss it dearly. However, I would never pay for installing one in our new home. I will stick with the excellent flick-of-a-switch natural gas one we currently have with its relatively cheap insurance premiums. If I want to enjoy the smell of wood burning, I can always fire up our wood-burning adobe oven I built in our backyard.

Turkeys replaced peacocks on the Christmas table

Before turkeys were brought to England over 500 years ago, people used to eat geese, boars' heads and even peacocks during the festive season! Henry VIII was the first English king to enjoy a turkey on Christmas Day, and the bird was still regarded as a luxury until the 1950s, with many choosing goose instead. Thanks to the invention of the fridge and the ability of the large turkey to feed a whole family, it soon took the top spot on many Christmas tables.



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Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.

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Y T O H S M V T J T O T S N S A E X N Y
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L R H G E D R N T U K I E S D A C S B T
E I G B N N D P N Y R U M A D O O D N N
T P I G E A I U N C I F T E T R I I T V
I S E D H O R P W Y I X R S F A M I L Y
D G L B V Q R E I N D E E R B W Z A G B
E F S T U C M P S C E L E B R A T E K A

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|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Angel | Frost | Nativity | Season |
| Carol | Frosty | Ornament | Sleigh |
| Carols | Fruitcake | Pinecone | Snowman |
| Celebrate | Gingerbread | Presents | Spirit |
| Chestnuts | Holiday | Reindeer | Tidings |
| Christmas | Holly | Rejoice | Tinsel |
| Family | Merry | Santa | Tree |
| Feast | Mistletoe | Scrooge | Yuletide |



What Rhymes with Gratitude?

by Becky Van Vleet

We started a Thanksgiving tradition in our home more than forty years ago for each person around the table to share something they were thankful for. In more recent years, I have asked our grandchildren what they are thankful for at other random times, not just a national holiday. It does my heart good when I hear the Grands say they are thankful for dress-up clothes, dinosaurs, pets, and books. Smile!

What rhymes with Gratitude? Attitude!

Tecumseh, a Shawnee Indian chief, stated, “When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.” Pretty strong words here, right? I believe he’s saying attitude is part of gratitude.

Cultivating an attitude of gratefulness is one of the best ways to remind ourselves of all the good around us. We foster a heart of gratitude when we count our blessings for what we already have. I’ve noticed the more I choose contentment, the easier it gets. When I exercise an appreciative attitude, my gratitude muscles respond.

When I was a young girl, my father was the song leader at our church.

One of my favorite hymns he led our congregation in was “Count Your Blessings.”

When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one,

And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. (Lyrics by Johnson Oatman)

In our home, it was not at all unusual for our mother to say to all of us, “Count your blessings.”

With the Thanksgiving and Christmas season upon us, and in our materialistic culture, I hope we can all look around at our blessings and cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

What are you thankful for?

Becky Van Vleet, a retired school administrator, lives near Colorado Springs with her husband, Troy. They are the parents of four grown children and enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren. Becky is a children's picture book author, and her website is devoted to family stories and creating memories: www.beckylvanvleet.com.

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AND
Merry
CHRISTMAS**

**Answers to Suduko Puzzle
on Page 10**

1	8	7	9	3	2	6	4	5
3	9	5	4	1	6	7	8	2
6	4	2	5	8	7	1	9	3
7	5	6	1	2	4	8	3	9
9	1	3	6	5	8	2	7	4
8	2	4	7	9	3	5	6	1
5	6	8	2	4	9	3	1	7
4	7	1	3	6	5	9	2	8
2	3	9	8	7	1	4	5	6

Pucker up!

Mistletoe, which is popularly associated with Christmas traditions, has a not-so-sweet origin. Mistle thrush birds eat the plant’s berries, digest the seed, and help the plant germinate with their droppings. The Germanic word for mistletoe literally means “dung on a twig.” This might make you think twice before puckering up under the mistletoe!

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Alfajores (al-fuh-haw-rayz)

These cookies take some time to assemble, but they are delicious as they contain dulce de leche (caramelized condensed milk). The recipe has the safest way to caramelize the condensed milk, but the alternative method is in this month's story on condensed milk on Page 20.

Makes about 30 cookies

DULCE DE LECHE

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- Boiling water

COOKIES

- ½ cup butter
- ¾ cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 ¼ tsp grated lemon peel
- 1 ¼ cups cornstarch
- ¾ cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder



- Caramelized sweetened condensed milk
- ½-¾ cup thread coconut

Dulce de Leche: Empty the sweetened condensed milk into an 8" glass pie plate. Put ¼ inch of hot water into a 2 quart (2L) shallow casserole. Set the pie plate in hot water. Bake at 425°F for about 1.5 hours to caramelize.

Cookies: Cream the butter & sugar in a medium bowl. Beat in the egg and egg yolk. Add the lemon peel, cornstarch, flour and baking powder. Stir. Mix with your hands until the dough sticks together.

Let the dough rest for 15 minutes. Roll the dough ¼" thick on a floured surface. Cut into 1 1/2 " circles. Place on a parchment-lined cooked sheet. Bake at 325 for 10-15 minutes. They should be cooked through but not brown. Cool.

Sandwich 2 cookies together with a layer of caramelized condensed milk. Spread a thin layer of caramel around the edges of the cookies. Roll the edge in coconut.

Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski



Finishing the Work

This past calendar year, I have taken on a number of projects which were started by a stranger. The first was a plastic baggie full of quilt blocks, accompanied by a computer print-out of a patchwork quilt throw, two smaller shapes of quilt fabric, six 10" squares of solid fabrics, and one 5" square cardboard template with notations on how to cut more of the smaller shapes.

I had selected the plastic baggie from a counter of fabric "donations" displayed at my local quilt guild's January meeting. I didn't find the courage to tackle the contents within the plastic baggie until May; I didn't actually finish it, though, until August.

If you are feeling a bit of déjà vu, thinking, Jeanette, I've heard about this project before, you could be right. I spent a good eight or nine months of my life obsessing over it, because I was scared of it.

Scared of fabric? Yes.

I haven't had too many opportunities, up to that point, to tackle someone else's unfinished projects. I approached this one with fear of doing a disservice to the original owner of the fabric. What did the original quilter have in mind when starting this project? What would it have been used for? (What happened, that it ended up for donation to the quilt guild members?) So yes, scared of fabric because I wanted to honor the intent of the original owner of the baggie.

Finishing the project (which is now stored in the trunk of my car, for random summer picnics I hope to use it for) has actually inspired me to tackle other such orphaned quilt blocks I have acquired from strangers. For instance, the set of 5 nearly-matched 8" quilt blocks have morphed into an autumn table runner with two placemats; the 12" red-and-green block grew into a 19" holiday table square which I mailed to a friend; the other four 8" and 9" random blocks are still waiting for inspiration.

Those accomplishments gave me the confidence, then, to take on the greatest challenge to date: my mother mentioned how a friend of hers had sorted through a fresh donation of fabric to the church. Another quilter had passed, I guess, and the "stash" was donated. The donation had been sorted for acceptability by the lead church quilter—and "a box" was designated for the trash. "No, no, no!!" I practically screamed into the phone with my mother. "No fabric should be thrown into the trash! It should be thrown my way, instead."

Was it a joke, when I initially stated those words to my mother?

A number of days later, my mother said, "That box of fabric is here for you, the next time you come." Yep, she had told her friend about my reaction—so when an apologetic custodian met the lead quilter at church the next time, with an "I'm sorry I forgot to get that box out," he was forgiven. And I gained new projects!

© Jeanette Lukowski 2023. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Mankato, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women.

Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com

Wacky Definitions:

DIET

A short period of starvation preceeding a gain of five pounds

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Wacky Definitions:

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Christmas Creche

The Christmas creche, or crib, in its present form and its use outside of churches, is credited to St. Francis of Assisi. He made the Christmas crib popular through his famous celebration at Greccio, Italy, on Christmas Eve, 1223, with a Bethlehem scene including five animals. It is variously reported that on this occasion Francis, then a humble priest, changed the village church into a manger, filling the chancel with hay and pulling the oxen and an ass down the aisle. Then he persuaded a young mother to sit beside them with her baby. It is reported that the clergy considered it crazy, but people regarded him as a saint.




BABY CABLES KNIT BABY BLANKET

EASY

Finished Size: 35 ½" x 46" (90 cm x 117 cm)

MATERIALS

Light Weight Yarn 

White - 21 ounces, 1,930 yards (600 grams, 1,765 meters)

Pink - 11 ounces, 1,010 yards (310 grams, 924 meters)

29" (73.5 cm) Circular knitting needles, sizes 10 (6 mm) and 10½ (6.5 mm) or sizes needed for gauge.

Entire Afghan is worked holding two stands of yarn together.

GAUGE: With larger size needle, in pattern, 16 sts and 28 rows = 4" (10 cm)

STITCH GUIDE:

CABLE (uses next 3 sts)

Slip next 2 sts onto cable needle and hold in back of work, knit next st from left needle, K2 from cable needle.

AFGHAN

With smaller size needle and White, cast on 141 sts.

Rows 1-7: Knit across.

Change to a larger size needle

Row 8: (Right side): K9, work Cable, (K5, work Cable) across to last 9 sts, K9.

Row 9: K4, purl across to last 4 sts, K4.

When instructed to slip a stitch always slip as if to purl.

Row 10: Drop White; slip 4, with Pink K5, (slip 3, K5) across to last 4 sts, leave last 4 sts unworked.

Row 11: Turn; K5, (WYF slip 3, WYB K5) across to last 4 sts, WYF drop Pink, slip 4.

Carry yarn not being used loosely along inside edge.

Row 12: With White K9, work Cable, (K5, work Cable) across to last 9 sts, K9.

Row 13: K4, purl across to last 4 sts, K4.

Repeat Rows 10-13 for pattern until Afghan measures approximately 45" (114.5 cm) from cast on edge, ending by working Row 12; cut Pink.

Change to smaller size needle.

Last 7 Rows: Knit across.

Bind off all sts in knit.



Pumpkin Muffins with Walnut Streusel

I served these muffins with a fall-flavoured coffee and a homemade pumpkin spice creamer. I took the leftover creamer into work with me, and the next day, one of my coworkers was looking for it in the fridge. So, I guess he liked it!

Makes 18 muffins

STREUSEL TOPPING

- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1/3 cup sugar in the raw
- ¾ cup chopped walnuts
- 1/3 tsp cinnamon

MUFFINS

- 1 ¾ cups flour
- 1 ½ tsps. cinnamon
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 ¾ cups pumpkin puree
- 1 can of Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract



Preheat the oven to 375°F and place paper baking cups in a muffin pan.

TOPPING: Combine the flour, butter, sugar, and chopped walnuts in a small bowl. The mixture will be quite wet. Set aside.

MUFFINS: In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, spices, baking soda and salt; set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the pumpkin puree and the sweetened condensed milk. Beat in the eggs, vegetable oil and vanilla.

Slowly whisk in the flour mixture. Fill the muffin tins ¾ full.

Top each muffin with streusel topping.

Bake the muffins 18-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean.

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Turkey Tetrazzini

This is a good recipe for using up leftover turkey, especially if you get a turkey that is a bit tough. I confess that I just use this recipe as a guideline and don't really measure too precisely, and I've used evaporated milk instead of cream. Also, if you're turkey-ed out, it does freeze well.

- 1 lb. spaghetti or fettuccini
- 6 Tbsp butter, divided
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can of mushrooms with juice.
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 ½ cups chicken broth
- 1 cup whipping cream
- Freshly ground pepper
- 5 cups of leftover turkey, chopped
- 1 cup shredded cheddar
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan

Preheat the oven to 350°F and grease a 9"x13" casserole dish with cooking spray. Cook the pasta according to package directions in boiling salted water. Drain.

In a large skillet (or Dutch oven) over medium heat, melt 2 Tbsp of butter. Add in the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add in the can of mushrooms with juice and cook until most of the liquid is absorbed 4-5 minutes.

Add remaining 4 Tbsp of butter to the skillet, then whisk in flour and cook until golden, 3 minutes. Slowly add in the broth and cream and whisk until no lumps remain. Simmer until thickened (5 minutes). Season with pepper.

Add turkey, cheese, peas and oregano and toss until combined. Add cooked spaghetti and toss to coat. Season with pepper (and salt if required) then transfer the mixture into the prepared dish.

Top the baking dish with the parmesan and panko crumbs.
Bake until the top is golden. About 30 minutes.

Humboldt, SK

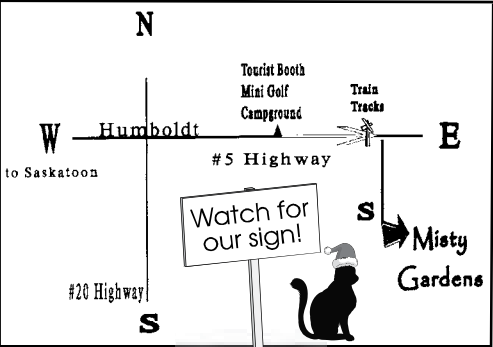


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Turkey Pot Pie

Lorraine T, Weyburn

- 2 cups mashed potatoes
- 3 cups cooked vegetables such as peas, carrots and green beans
- 2 cups chopped, cooked turkey
- ¾ cup gravy
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
- Biscuit dough
- 1 egg slightly beaten

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Coat a shallow baking dish with cooking spray. Spread potatoes in bottom of baking dish. Toss vegetables and turkey with gravy until coated.

Spoon mixture into dish over potatoes; sprinkle with cheese if you want cheese on it.

On a lightly floured surface, roll dough out 1” wider than baking dish. Using 1” cutters, cut several small shapes out of dough. Place dough over baking dish, trimming pastry to fit dish as necessary. Gently press to seal. Crimp edge if desired; brush with egg. Place cut-outs on pastry; brush with egg.

Bake 20-25 minutes until heated through and pastry is golden.

Serves 6

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It’s December 31st.

I was going to quit all my bad
habits for the new year ...
... but then I remembered that
nobody likes a quitter.

Moose Jaw, SK

Wacky Definitions:

Grandfather

A grandchild’s press agent.

Grandparents

People who come to your house,
spoil your children, and then go
home

Mistatim, SK



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at Christmas

&
Joy in the New Year

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Christmas Origins

Christmas Crackers

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by: Kirby Gust

Borderline Gift Giving

Christmases have changed for Carl and Mary over the years. When they were first married and just starting out, they needed things, making gift-giving easy. Back when they got married, it was different than it is today. Today's young married couples start with almost everything they need to run a household. This was not the case when Carl and Mary began their life together.

To put things into perspective, one gift they received as a wedding present was a plastic patio dining set. It consisted of a plastic table and four plastic chairs. Carl and Mary used this set as their primary dining table in their kitchen for the first 5 years of marriage. One present they received as a wedding gift changed Mary's life forever. An electric tea kettle with self-shut off. The kettle sat on a corded stand, and once the water boiled, you could remove the kettle to pour out the water without worrying about the cord getting in the way or toppling something over on the countertop. Mary has replaced this kettle and every other one like it with a similar model. As an active tea drinker and cook, she finds this type of kettle irreplaceable.

Other wedding gifts included practical things like bath and or dish towels, so when it came time to come up with Christmas gift ideas, it wasn't a matter of what to purchase for each other; it was more a matter of what they could afford to give each other that they needed.

For their first Christmas together, Mary gifted Carl with a housecoat, or bathrobe, as some call it. Carl had never had the luxury of wearing a robe fresh out of the shower to wick away the excess moisture from his skin or around the house in the late evenings just before bed, and Mary felt odd in hers as Carl got ready for bed, doing such things as brushing his teeth, still dressed in the clothes he had worn all day.

Carl's gift for Mary that first year was a set of good pots and pans. Something he had found listed

in a Christmas flyer for 50% off the regular price. Mary was sure grateful for that sale because, without it, Carl would have never been able to afford the set. Until then, Mary had been getting by with odds and ends of cooking sets that her mother didn't use and given to her instead of throwing them in the trash. Some of the pots were made of such light aluminum that when empty, the weight of the wood in the handle would tip them over. Shortly after they were married, Mary made boiled baby beets one night. They had harvested the beets from their first garden together for that night's supper. When it came time to do the dishes, there was nothing Mary could do to get the red colour off the sides of the pot. By Christmas that year, they were still eating orange-pink potatoes, pink rice, and purple broccoli. Each time she used the pot, a little of the red colour from the beets would leach back into the cooking water. At Christmas lunch that year, Carl joked with Mary that she could have used that pot one last time to give a red Christmas tinge to the mashed potatoes.

In the following years, Carl filled Mary's kitchen with the things she needed to make the kitchen her own. These gifts included a stand mixer, good heavy-duty cookie sheets, a set of lovely mixing bowls and a proper kitchen table. The chairs, however, had to wait for another year.

Over these years, Carl found things under the tree like a good set of wrenches, both in imperial and metric, a good handsaw and, one year to Carl's amazement, a router. Mary, however, had neglected to add a router bit to go along with the router, and Carl had to wait until the next time he visited a hardware store before he could use it.

Over the years, Mary gifted Carl enough tools to take good care of their vehicles and do the renovations that their new home desperately needed.

It took quite a few years of hard work and watching their

pocketbooks before they could add what they considered luxury items to their gift-giving. One year, Mary gave Carl a nice pair of what were called house socks. She thought it would be a treat for him to wear them around the house instead of his usual tube socks that came in a package of 10. Then, one year later, she went one better, and Carl found a pair of leather slippers under the tree. Before this, Carl had only ever had homemade knitted slippers that lived up to their name because you had to be very careful walking on tile or linoleum with them to prevent slipping and hurting yourself. Carl had never had leather slippers before and now doesn't know how he ever lived without them.

Over the years, Carl tried to spoil Mary with gifts like electric blankets and heating pads. Mary, who is forever "freezing," as she puts it, enjoys these gifts greatly.

One gift that Mary gives Carl every year is still, to this day, a bit puzzling to Carl, to say the least. Carl has lost track of how many years this has been going on and has no idea how it ever started, but Mary gifts Carl a box of brandy bean chocolates every year, and every year, Carl takes the brandy beans down to his workbench in the corner of the basement and sets them down and forgets about them. That is until he is working away at his workbench fixing something or other and catches a glimpse of the box out of the corner of his eye. This usually happens in early winter after Carl has finished the outside chores for the year and has time to fiddle away in his workshop. Carl will get up off of his stool and wander over to where the box of Brandy beans has been for 11 or so months untouched by him since he set them down shortly after Christmas. Every time, he will find that the box has not only been opened but that the plastic tray inside with little individual indents for each brandy bean is entirely void of any remaining chocolates.

After this had gone on for about 10 years, Carl decided one year to surprise Mary with her very own box of brandy bean chocolates. He

Borderline Good is a series of fictional stories written by Kirby Gust. The stories are set in a fictional town on the Saskatchewan Manitoba boarder. All the characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. A special thanks to my former high school principle, John. O. Smith, who has graciously and painstakingly edited these stories.

was sure Mary was only buying them for him because she wanted them for herself and wasn't willing to miss out on them by taking the chance that Carl would remember to get them for her.

That particular Christmas morning, Carl waited with bated breath for Mary to open that one special gift. He was sure her face would light up like she was a child again. The type of smile a child has when seeing a new toy for the first time. What Carl found on Mary's face instead was a look of complete and utter confusion. She looked at him and asked, "What are these for?". "Those are those brandy bean chocolates you love so much!" said Carl. "That I like so much?" said Mary. "you're the one that likes them, that's why I give them to you every year. I admit I may snitch a few now and again from your workbench when I'm downstairs doing laundry, but really, let's not be kidding ourselves; they are much more your thing than mine."

Mary still buys Carl "his" box of brandy bean chocolates every year. Carl has learned to check on them more often now. He has noticed from his observations that the box usually stays unopened until around late February. Then, one by one, they slowly disappear until late October, and then, with only one or two chocolates left in the box, they go untouched for about a month. He assumes this is because once Halloween arrives, there are other candies readily available around the house. Carl has no idea when the last few chocolates disappear from the box. Carl knows that every year, the box is empty sometime before Christmas and that the empty box stays there until it is replaced with a new one shortly after Christmas.

Mary's motto, "Everything is better when it snitched," explains her gift to Carl every year. Carl has not worked up the courage to tell Mary that he has somewhat adopted her motto and sometimes, just sometimes, mind you. has one of "his own" brandy beans.

The Origins of Eggnog

There is no official confirmation on who invented eggnog, but most historians agree that eggnog originated in medieval Britain. The drink was a luxury of the upper class since they were the only ones with access to the milk, sherry, and eggs required for the original recipe. Monks in the Middle Ages added figs and eggs and called the drink "posset," while the wealthy used the simple recipe for toasts or significant events. Eggnog became associated with the holidays due to a lack of refrigeration, and it became a popular drink among the commoners in America because of the greater farming opportunities and access to cows and chickens.



2 Minute Lift

TWO MINUTE READS TO FLIP OUR SCRIPT

BY: KATHY J. SOTAK

The Ordinary Path to Becoming Extra-Ordinary

I’ve worked around 46,000 hours in my professional career thus far, or around 2,760,000 minutes (Note: exclusions include standard annual vacation time and my *pre-Corporate America* jobs).

If every hour equaled a mile, I would have walked across the Earth twice. Or, driven from Florida to Utah back and forth around 18 times.

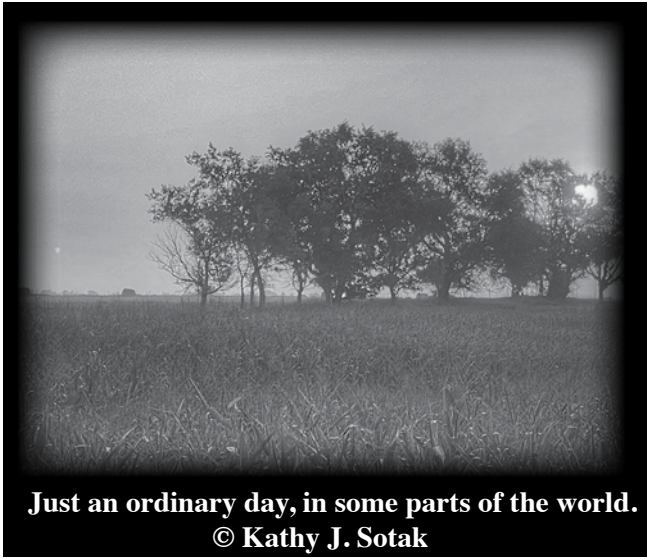
If every hour was an ounce of metal, I’d have \$1,058,000 worth of silver or \$91,402,000 worth of gold.

For the majority of those hours – I’ve been pretty ordinary. I haven’t done anything truly special. Keys to any “success” are that I work hard, I try to improve every day, and I’m consistent.

Think about someone you admire. What makes them extraordinary? I bet they are for the most part – normal. Perhaps their extraordinariness is that they are **Consistent. All. Of. The. Time.**

Dolly Parton has written 800 songs thus far in her life. **Stephen King has published 12,390,490 words** in his life. I have to think they would not have had the “success” they have had if they weren’t consistent in their every day.

Every year we work roughly 2,000 hours, or 120,000 minutes. How many minutes of those are we truly doing something extra-ordinary? No offense to all of us, but I think most of those minutes are ordinary.



I’ll speak from a corporate job lens, which is where my expertise lies. Translate the following into your own career language: Most of our minutes in our career are grueling minutes. They are boring minutes. They may be stressful minutes. Those minutes we are doing business. It may be listening to clients. It’s reading emails. It may be creating a presentation or crunching numbers in a spreadsheet. Perhaps its facilitating a conversation between two different parties to gain alignment. It’s you communicating, to create a shared understanding. It’s sending an Outlook invite. Its sitting in meetings with your teammates.

It’s these ordinary minutes that is retaining business. These ordinary minutes are growing business.

Today’s reminder is that **our greatness is derived from ordinary tasks, done consistently and expertly over a long duration** in our career. Add on top of that James Clear’s 1% better / Atomic Habits concepts, and that is the new definition of extra-ordinary in our world.

The next time you or I want to do something extra-ordinary, like Dolly Parton or Stephen King, I challenge us to **focus on the ordinary to be extra-ordinary**. I believe that if we can simply do this, every day – consistently – over time this is the gamechanger.

Give Thanks for Unknown Blessings Already on Their Way

by Kerri Habben

For some years I have kept a card on the refrigerator with the Quaker blessing, “Give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way.” My gaze seems to land upon it on those mornings I need it most. For those times, as a friend used to say, “When the whims of fate have pushed my mood to the bottom of the barrel.”

I have paid more attention these past two years since my mother’s cancer diagnosis and passing. It wasn’t that I was dejected or overwhelmed. I simply decided that if this less-than-positive painful thing could happen, then it had to be equally likely that an opposite change could evolve. That somehow, one day at a time, I would live my way to a wonderfully positive and affirming place when I least expected it.

I could call that faith and, in part, it was. It was both a release of expectation and an act of seeking all at the same time. Mostly, though, it was the realization that if I chose the shadows, I would never feel the full warmth of the light.

Last year at this time, it was my first holiday season without my mother. Understandably, people warned me about the difficulty of that first Thanksgiving and Christmas. In early November, I was in a store and was fine until I saw a simple wooden plaque that read “Christmas is Family.” My eyes filled and my nose began to run. I swiped at my face and finished my shopping.

About a week later, I was in another store and another decoration initiated the same reaction. My secondary response this time wasn’t sadness but quiet determination. I decided that if I sniveled my way through almost two months of life simply because of clever holiday marketing, all I would be by New Year’s Day was annoyed with myself and exhausted.

My grandmother’s memory patted my hand and her voice filled my ear. “You will always miss them but life is for the living.” Also, a mother and daughter were forever reunited. Thus the grief eased.

When the decorations were in full swing, I carried myself to the mall. I brought one of Daddy’s handkerchiefs and wandered the entire shopping space. I looked at everything that could remotely be considered Christmas— from the tiniest bit of holly to the fanciest, tallest tree. I silently sang along with the music and I waved to Santa. If tears rolled down my cheeks, I let them go until my neck was wet and I didn’t care who saw me. When I could read the ornament that said, “I’m spending my Christmas in heaven this year,” without blinking and with a wistful smile, I knew I was going to be okay.

Immersion therapy.

I could not have known the unexpected blessings that would come my way, but I am thankful for them. I have written of my life with Wayne and the joy of sharing the loveliness of ordinary days.

Christmas is about family but, most importantly, so is every day of the year. Throughout this autumn, I made gifts for Wayne’s grandchildren— hand-sewn pillow cases and crocheted blankets that celebrate Isaac and Hunter’s favorite

teams, doll clothes and blankets for Laurel and Naomi and a stuffed dinosaur for Quinn. Somehow they weren’t all saved for Christmas. I suspect you aren’t entirely surprised.

I immerse myself in these words with hope for what time will bring for the kids— “Give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way.”

Kerri Habben is a writer and preschool teacher living in Chapel Hill, NC. An enthusiastic crocheter and knitter, she learned these skills from her mother and grandmother. She donates many of her yarn creations to those in need. Kerri is currently working on a manuscript of essays and poetry. She can be reached at 913jeeves@gmail.com.

Curling

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.

V A T E P U S E C L F C G I P
S L H B H M S D S K C O R H V
W X G F F U S S C J Q S S D Z
D F I H O N M T R S H I K T I
E O E H G B A X A E W D I G L
N B T K L C E I E L Y Y P V B
D S O B P Z T T E J S A S M K
H S U R B K I C E T W G L X O
J U R W G M D P E N I U F P K
A P N T N L O G B X N N N N V
K E A H A L A O U O T H A A H
R E M N F R E F R N E W K R Y
O W E R C F G M P B R X W N G
X S N U E S F E B D V D N E T
N H T T R O P S T R I N G S X

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|---------|---------|------------|
| BROOM | PLAYERS | TARGET |
| BRUSH | RINGS | TEAMS |
| EIGHT | ROCKS | TEN |
| END | SHEET | TOURNAMENT |
| GRANITE | SKIP | TURN |
| HOUSE | SPORT | WINTER |
| ICE | SWEEP | |



Do You Want the Whole Story or Just the Condensed Version?

Condensed milk most definitely has its own identity and it's not interchangeable with evaporated milk usually. My husband used to get confused when he saw it on the grocery list as he was never confident that he knew the difference between condensed and evaporated milk. To this day, in our house, it's usually just called Eagle Brand® as he knew that meant the sweetened milk!

Sweetened condensed milk is milk from which about 60% of the water has been removed and then heated to 185-194°F, and sugar is added. It isn't a diet food as it is about 45% sugar, and this sugar actually helps extend the shelf life of the product. In some countries, evaporated milk is known as unsweetened condensed milk, so I can certainly understand where my husband's confusion comes from!

Condensed milk has been around for about 200 years. Gail Borden Jr. started manufacturing this long-lasting without refrigeration product after a trip from England after witnessing the death of several children from poor milk from shipboard cows. Borden also introduced the "Dairyman's Ten Commandments" as a condition for farmers to sell him raw milk. They had to wash the udders before milking, keep the barns clean, and scald and dry their strainers morning and night. Between the canning of the milk and the increased hygiene, Borden's milk (Eagle Brand) was well regarded as a safe alternative to raw milk.

Condensed milk is used in various desserts from many cultures – everything from key lime pie to tres leches cake as it adds a smooth, creamy texture.

In many parts of Asia and Europe, when drinking hot or cold coffee or tea, sweetened condensed milk is the preferred milk. That reminds me... cold condensed milk is always relaxed because it chills in the fridge.

Did you know you can boil a can of condensed milk in water for about 3 hours to create a dulce de leche (caramel sauce)? I have to share the information that the internet is full of warnings that the can could potentially explode. The secret to preventing that seems to be ensuring the can is covered with water when boiling. I've never had any mishaps,

and I've done this many times, but it is a danger. One year, for little Christmas favours, I boiled cans to create dulce de leche and made custom labels for the cans.



Dulce de Leche

1. Bring a large pan of water to a rolling boil. You will need enough water to completely cover the sweetened, condensed milk can.
2. Remove the label from the sweetened condensed milk can – it will come off when boiled anyway.
3. Submerge the sweetened condensed milk into the boiling water using tongs. Hint – if you place the can on its side, it can roll around, and set it right side up in the boiling water can cause it to roll around and make a rattling noise when it cooks.
4. Cook the can for 3 hours – make sure that the can remains covered with water at all times. Add more boiling water if necessary
5. Using a pair of tongs, remove the can from the boiling water. COOL. It's crucial to cool it down before opening it; otherwise, you could create a geyser of steaming hot caramel when you open the can.

I'll leave you with this recipe on how to make your own sweetened condensed milk.

Homemade Condensed Milk

1. In a medium saucepan, mix together 2 cups of whole milk and 1 cup of sugar.
2. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar.
3. Once boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered without stirring for about 45 minutes or until it is reduced to about 1 ½ cups.
4. Cool. Will keep about 1 week.

*If you want to use a 12 oz. can of evaporated milk, reduce the sugar to ¾ cup and cook for 30 minutes.

Easy Chocolate Truffles

We were gifted a Watkins® extract collection many years ago, and that's how I discovered that we enjoyed this with brandy extract. I don't think they carry that flavour anymore. The last time I purchased it, it was Club House® brand. Any intensely flavoured extract would work with this recipe.

- ¾ cup butter
- ¾ cup cocoa powder
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 tsp flavoured extract (brandy, rum, mint, etc.)
- ¾ cup finely chopped nuts (optional)
- Additional chopped nuts or cocoa powder

Melt the butter over low heat. Add in the ¾ cup of cocoa powder. Stir until smooth.

Add in the sweetened condensed milk. Stir constantly over the low heat until the mixture is smooth and glossy (about 5 minutes).

Remove from the heat. Stir in the extract and the finely chopped nuts (if desired). Pour the mixture into a flat pan. Refrigerate until firm, about 4 hours.

Shape into balls. Roll in nuts or cocoa. Refrigerate until firm – about 2 hours. Store in the fridge.

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ASPEN GROVE Quilting Stories with Sam

By Sam Hilhorst

Happy holiday season, quilty friends. This is my absolute favourite time of the year. I love many aspects of the Christmas season, from time spent with family and friends, to baking in the kitchen, to extra bonus time with my husband at home, to playing in the snow with the kids. With my love language being quality time, it is no surprise that I find immense joy in this holiday season.

As the busyness of the season approaches, I hope that you can take the time and are encouraged by my article to take the time to fill your cup as well. In the past I have also encouraged this, but never truly done it myself. So this fall, I did just that - here we go!

In October, a group of my girlfriends decided it was necessary to take some time and have a weekend with no kids, no partners, and no worries. This strong group of women were ready to have moments of peace, without kids asking if they could have a snack, or husbands asking where the ketchup was (in the fridge, left side door, middle shelf, of course - haha). It was about recharging and resting so that we could be the best moms, partners, and friends moving forward.

Leading up to this weekend, I found myself unable to commit. I am a creature of habit, so I was not sure that I wanted to go away for three days. Routine would be flipped, my list of things to do would only grow, and the two combined only increased my concern. I worried about how my husband would get the kids from one activity to another while keeping them fed, bathed and the dogs sane. In the six years since I had my first child, I had never left him alone for an extended period of time with all four kids. I knew my husband would be just fine, so I had to find another excuse.

Quilting! My long arm quilting business has very quickly grown, and with that growth comes many quilts. In October, I had a laundry list of quilts to complete, so what a great reason to stay home and keep with routine. I could utilize those three days to get a wackload of quilts completed. I compiled my list of quilts in a beautiful order, entertaining my idea of completing as many as I could. Checking my thread supply, batting supply, and needles, I knew that I was ever ready to tackle the pile of customer quilts.

In spite of my lack of commitment, this group of girlfriends added me to a group chat to plan meals for the weekend (and also talk about the pending snowstorm that was anticipated - hey look, another excuse haha). Still, unwilling to commit, I observed their conversation, as they patiently asked if I was going to join them. Hesitant, I skirted each question with an IDK or a "lets see what the week brings". Common avoidance replies - check!



Then came Friday, the day of departure. I don't know what it was, or the exact moment, but I recognized that I needed to take this opportunity with my girlfriends for some R&R. Like I mentioned earlier, it had been over six years since I had time by myself, sans kids. So I typed out that message "I'm coming" and hit send. It may have took some convincing, but I knew that my quilts would still be there when I got home, that my kids would love time alone with their dad, and that the dogs would get fed. Everything was going to be alright.

So off I went into the wilderness of northwest Ontario. Tagging along with a fantastic group of women we shared moments of laughter, encouragement, difficulties and even learned from YouTube how to become electricians. JK - we only switched out a Nest thermostat, but it was quite the moment of laughter and pride. Even when I questioned my decision as our friend was telling us about an encounter with a black bear on her deck; he ate her bird seed in a previous year, I was reminded that this was where I needed to be and the rest that I needed. Through the weekend and many great conversations, I realized that we are all doing the best we can and that we all need to take some time for ourselves, to be with ourselves, and put ourselves first.

This was my first weekend away. My first weekend of quiet (in the sense of noise kids bring). My first weekend since opening my quilt shop where I was gone for longer than 48 hours. I returned home to find everything and everyone was a-okay. My quilts were still hanging ready for the long arm, my kids were ever excited to have their mom back with tales of dad moments, and my house, dog and chickens were all happy with my return.

So, as the busyness of the season approaches, I hope that this message is relatable. We all have a to-do list and are eager to strike things off, but sometimes we need to take the time to rest so that we can attack our future with bright eyes, new ideas, and efficient movement. Especially in the season of the holidays where

we are pulled in many directions at one, these moments of rest are ever so necessary. When your friends ask you to take a weekend away, put that quilt aside and make sure you take them up on the offer. You won't regret it!

Chat soon - Sam.

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A Cup of Tea with Lydia

By Lydia E. Harris

An After-Thanksgiving Teatime

The holidays are here, creating such a happy time of year! First, we welcome Thanksgiving with feasting, football, and counting our blessings. Then the joy and excitement of Christmas quickly follow. Between these two holidays, why not plan and enjoy a relaxing “after-Thanksgiving” teatime?

A friend shared that after hosting their Thanksgiving dinner, she and her daughter create a simple teatime for the two of them and perhaps a friend. “It’s a time to slow down, relax, and make memories.”



The foods and flavors of Thanksgiving are ones that people love to gobble up beyond that holiday. So why not turn your Thanksgiving leftovers into a quick and tasty teatime? By doing so, you can extend the season of gratitude and serve up a festive prelude to Christmas.

As you count your blessings, here are some recipes to consider for your after-Thanksgiving teatime.

Turkey Sandwiches: Take Two Turkey-Salad Croissants

Delicious to gobble up with leftover, moist turkey.

- Gather**
- 2 cups diced turkey
 - 1/3 to 1/2 cup diced celery
 - 1/3 cup raisins
 - 1/3 cup mayonnaise (more if you prefer it moister)
 - 2 T. cream or milk
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - Lettuce leaves, washed

- Large or small croissants
- Directions**
1. Mix together the turkey, celery, raisins, mayonnaise, cream or milk, salt, and pepper. Chill the mixture for 30 minutes to blend flavors or until ready to fill the croissants.
 2. Slice croissants in half horizontally. Fill with a thick layer of turkey salad. Add a lettuce leaf.
 3. Wrap and refrigerate the filled croissants until ready to serve.
 4. For large croissants, cut the sandwiches in half. Serve smaller croissants whole.
- Makes 2 cups filling

Turkey-and-Cream-Cheese Sandwiches

My youngest granddaughter loves these made with raspberry jam.

- Gather**
- 6 slices white or wheat bread
 - 6 slices deli turkey (or leftover homecooked turkey)
 - 1/2 cup (about 4 oz) cream cheese, softened
 - 1 1/2 T raspberry jam or cranberry sauce (whole berry or jellied)
 - Butter
- Directions**
1. Mix together cream cheese and cranberry sauce or raspberry jam.
 2. Spread three slices of bread with the cream cheese mixture. Place 2 slices of turkey on each.
 3. Spread butter on the remaining three bread slices. Place them on top of the slices with turkey to close the sandwiches.
 4. Wrap and refrigerate the sandwiches until ready to serve.
 5. Before serving, trim the crusts. Then cut each sandwich diagonally in both directions to make 4 small triangles.
- Makes 12 tea sandwiches
- Variation: Turkey Rollups:** Substitute three or four 8-inch flour tortillas for the bread. Spread each with the flavored cream cheese, add sliced turkey, and roll up. Wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. Cut each rollup into six pinwheels.

Festive Cranberry-Orange Scones

My daughter-in-law transforms an ordinary scone mix this way.

1. Using your favorite scone mix, replace the liquid in the recipe with orange juice.
2. Add 1/4 cup white chocolate chips and 1/4 cup raisins.
3. Prepare and bake according to the directions.
5. Optional: While scones are warm, drizzle with a glaze made with 1/2 cup powdered sugar, 1 tablespoon orange juice, and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla. Garnish with small slivers of orange peel.

Praline Pumpkin Pie

Our son’s favorite pumpkin pie.

- Transform an ordinary pumpkin pie recipe by adding this praline layer on the unbaked crust.
- Praline mixture:**
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
 - 1/3 cup brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup pecan halves
- Combine butter and brown sugar. Cook and stir until the mixture bubbles. Mix in pecans.
1. Spoon the praline mixture onto the unbaked pie crust.
 2. Pour the pumpkin filling over the praline mixture in the crust.
 4. Bake according to recipe directions.
 5. Chill. Serve with whipped cream.
 6. Optional: For a new flavor twist, add 1/4 teaspoon maple extract to the whipped cream.

Teas to Please

Consider fall and holiday flavors of tea, such as pumpkin, cranberry, apple, Republic of Tea Ginger Peach, and spicy flavors such as chai. Brew at least one decaffeinated tea. Our family’s favorite herbal tea is Celestial Seasonings Country Peach Passion.

‘Tis the season to share a cup of tea with family and friends. Won’t you join me?

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast and the author of three grandparenting books: GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids (2023); In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories; and Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting. All are available online and wherever books are sold.

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Reader Submitted Recipes

Cream Cheese Coffee Cake

Cheryl Rosom, Regina

Coffee Cake: Gluten Free Version

- 2 ½ cups gluten free flour mix
- ¼ cup tapioca flour
- 1 tsp xanthan gum
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¾ cup butter, softened
- ½ tsp gluten free baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¾ cup coconut milk, stirred with 1 Tbsp vinegar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp almond extract

Filling:

- 8 oz soft goat cheese
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 cups cherry pie filling (gluten free)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 9” spring form pan with gluten free flour.

COFFEE CAKE: In a large bowl, combine and sift flours, xanthan gum and sugar. Cut in the softened butter using a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Remove 1 cup of crumbs for topping.

TO REMAINING CRUMB MIXTURE: Mix vinegar into the coconut milk, then add the gluten free baking powder, baking soda, salt, egg and almond extract to the crumb mixture. Stir well, batter will be thick. Spread batter over bottom and 2” upside of greased and floured 9” springform pan. (Batter should be ¼” thick on sides).

FILLING: In a small bowl, combine soft goat cheese, ¼ cup sugar and egg. Blend well. Pour over batter in the pan. Carefully spoon pie filling over cheese filling. Sprinkle the reserved crumb mixture over top of the cherry pie filling

Bake at 350°F for 55 to 60 minutes or until cheese filling is set and crust is a golden brown. Cool, then remove sides of pan. Serve warm or cold.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers. Serves 16.

Note: Use different fruit fillings of your choice – ¾ cup raspberry jam, ¾ cup apricot jam or 2 cups gluten free saskatoon pie filling.

*Dairy sour cream can be substituted for the coconut milk/vinegar mixture

*Gluten free baking “leftovers” taste better if warmed in the microwave when possible. The baking will become moist and not “dry” tasting.

*Recipe can also be adapted to regular flour, just substitute in recipe and omit the xanthan gum and tapioca flour, use regular baking powder.



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