

Stirring Up Memories

Readers recall the flavors they savored in the good old days.

Gingerbread Barter

IN THE EARLY '50s, Woman's Day magazine had a detailed article on how to build, bake and construct a gingerbread house. I thought it would be a great centerpiece for Christmas Day, so I made it and have made one every year since.

At the same time, I taught my six children how to make them. The tradition was that on January 1, they could break them apart and eat them. This was to be their dessert for their school lunch every day until they ran out. I found out years later that they had bartered their gingerbread for their friends' lunches!

—Regina H., Summerville, South Carolina

A Coke and a Smile

IN 1947, when I was 11 years old, I won first prize for my original costume in a contest held for the Winter Carnival in St. Paul L'Ermite, Quebec.

In order to get enough Coca-Cola caps, Dad collected them from a restaurant in our small community and Mom, Dad and I drank many Cokes 2 months prior to the carnival. The cork from the bottle cap was placed on the back of the material; the cap was placed on the front, fixed and stabilized. Naturally, the costume was very heavy.

—Marjorie L., Galt, California

Cake-Baking Tips

WHILE going through a 1908 cookbook from my Aunt Alice, I noticed the introductory pages to cake baking. There was a special table for "Baking by Temperature," written "for the benefit of housewives who follow the new method of temperature cooking."

It also advised that "before starting to mix the cake, the heat of

the oven should be regulated. The fire should be in such condition that the fuel will not have to be replenished during the time the cake is in the oven.”

—Nancy C., Portersville, Pennsylvania

Tomato Soup on Tuesdays

DURING the Depression, the Colorado Theater in Pueblo showed serial movies on Tuesday evenings. These serials consisted of 10 to 12 cliffhangers, such as The Lone Ranger, Tarzan of the Apes and Buck Rogers. My parents, my brother, two sisters and I could all get in for 60¢.

As soon as we got home, Mother made her delicious tomato soup. I've tasted none better, and to me, the best part of these Tuesday evenings was the tomato soup

—Sylvia B., Spokane, Washington

Potato Slices Shared

IN late February, 1945, during a lull in the battle of Iwo Jima, I was standing last in line aboard the destroyer, USS Gregory, waiting to partake in my evening meal. I watched as the officer's mess steward strolled by with a bowl of sliced potatoes browned in delicious meat drippings. He saw his buddy and allowed him to take a slice and also gave a piece to the sailor ahead of me.

There was still a piece left, which the kind steward relinquished to me. I remember this piece as the tastiest morsel of food I have ever eaten and I'll never forget the generosity of that mess steward.

—William B., Youngstown, Ohio

Succulent Cinnamon Strips

IN 1942 sweets were a scarcity, as well as lard and sugar. But when my grandmother brought out her rolling pin, I knew a pie was in the making. When there was pie, there was also another treat... rolled out strips of dough, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon and

baked until they were brown and crispy.

This simple treat was better than any candy and always welcomed.
—Virginia S., Indianapolis, Indiana

Nonie's Secret Ingredient

MY beloved Grandma, "Nonie", was a kitchen whiz, whose specialty was homemade sausage stuffing. My job was to hold the gigantic turkey while she stuffed it. Because of her sensitive hands, she always wore a pair of rubber gloves for unsavory household chores.

One year, while she was stuffing and I was holding the bird, the phone rang. She rushed to the phone, greeted the wrong number with "Happy Holidays", hurried back, trussed the turkey and popped it into the oven.

We finally sat down for the feast, eagerly waiting for Dad to carve the golden bird and to scoop out the stuffing. As the third spoonful of stuffing emerged, so did the molten remains of Nonie's rubber glove! Nonie gasped, Dad removed the gooey souvenir and wedged inside one finger was Nonie's engagement ring. After bursts of laughter, we all decided the stuffing was better than ever.
—Kathleen D., Westerly, Rhode Island

Sweet Snuff?

IN 1940 sweets were forbidden in our house because of the danger of cavities. I especially loved chocolate icing which my mother made from scratch and I was always there to lick the bowl.

Can you imagine my delight when, one day I found a tablespoon, resplendent with what I thought was a large portion of icing, left forgotten on the telephone table. I made sure Mother wasn't about and with mouth wide, ready for chocolate, deposited the glob in my mouth.

What a shocking surprise! Mother dipped snuff and this tablespoon

that day had been used to transport snuff! I spit for what seemed hours, but the taste still remained. Amazingly, I didn't get punished but I can still hear mother saying, "Well, young lady, I bet you don't try that again."

—Jean P., Camden, South Carolina

Tapioca ala Cream of Wheat

MY brothers, quite a bit older than I, grew up during the Depression and our family had to make do. Everyday, during the cold winter days, Mother made cream of wheat for breakfast, which they hated. After they left for school, she took the leftover hot cereal and added whatever sweet ingredients she had on hand and made a pudding out of it. If she had jam, she garnished the bowls with a dab on top. Then she called it tapioca.

Years later, when we sat around and talked about the "good old days", I divulged this secret and my brothers couldn't believe that cream of wheat was disguised as delicious tapioca.

—Diane K., Villas, New Jersey

Three-footed Chicken

SOUPS were standard and plentiful for many meals in our home during the '50s...chicken with Mom's homemade noodles, beef barley, navy bean, potato, green bean with dumplings and more.

Chicken was the favorite. After the whole chicken cooked in the soup pot, it was removed, baked in the oven until the skin was crispy, then served after the soup course.

Each of us had our favorite parts and those parts always ended up in our soup bowls. We savored the heart, the tender neck, the gizzards and liver, but delighted most in the chicken feet! Our Dad was a butcher and our chickens came with three feet so we could each eat one.

—Elaine G., Detroit, Michigan

Lutefisk...an Acquired Taste

AT the end of WWII, one of the many GIs I had corresponded with came to see me in Omaha, Nebraska and wanted me to meet his parents, who lived in Page, North Dakota. The snow was so deep, the train had to back into the station.

I was welcomed by the family and they were anxious to introduce me to one of their ethnic delicacies. So off we went to Fargo, more than 50 miles away, to shop for the ingredients needed for Lutefisk. It was served simply with plain boiled potatoes...an acquired taste, they told me.

—Grace V., San Bernardino, California