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The Country Register of Colorado & New Mexico

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The Country Register began in Arizona, in the Fall of 1988, to provide effective, affordable advertising for shops, shows, and other experiences enjoyed by a kindred readership. Since then the paper has flourished and spread. Look for the paper in your travels.

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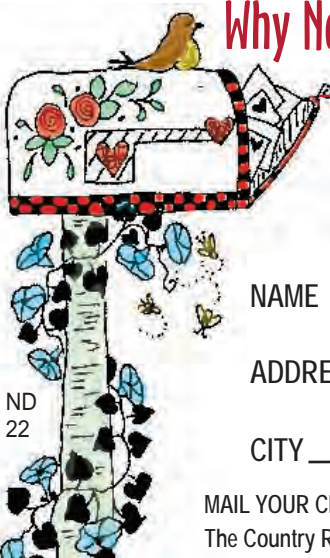
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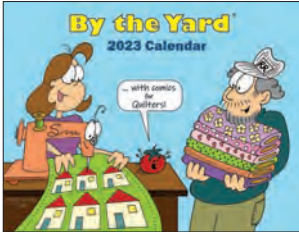
From all of us at The Country Register!

Congratulations Calendar Winners!

BY THE YARD 2023 CALENDAR

Colorado: Arthena Witt, Flagler, CO

New Mexico: Lynda Visage, Edgewood, NM



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Lyla Rauchenecker of Golden, CO, a regular reader of The Country Register, is the lucky winner of a \$25 Gift Certificate to her favorite advertiser, Wooden Spools in Englewood, CO. Lyla says, "The people who work at Wooden Spools are always helpful and kind! The store also stocks a wide variety." Congratulations Lyla! Please enjoy your \$25 Gift Certificate when shopping at Wooden Spools!

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Do you tell the shops you saw their ad in the paper? (Circle One) Always Sometimes Never

What stores would you like to see in The Country Register? (Include Town): _____



Random Acts

by Maranda K. Jones

December Rose

In the many blocks we walked, we saw and heard the Christmas spirit in many forms. Window displays in every store, sharing the spirit of the season. Festive songs choreographed dances with lights above our heads, strung from building to building. Kindness among strangers in a city reputed to be rough seemed to be running rampant. Then we experienced that for ourselves celebrating in New York City.

J. M. Barrie said, "God has given us our memories, that we might have roses in December." This quote from Peter Pan's author comes up in books and online so much that I began to take notice. It even showed up in a cookbook I was using. For some reason, this phrase kept appearing. I could not ignore it. I used it to embellish a scrapbook page that is now hanging in my parents' dining room.

The background is a decorative sheet of paper full of red roses from corner to corner atop a square clipboard. On top of that, photos from a girls' trip my mom planned for my sister and me show our cold smiling faces. We are bundled up in coats, scarves, stocking hats, and boots as we visited New York one December.

The camera captured so many fond memories from that week in the city. One photo shows us on the ferry to Ellis Island. The Statue of Liberty holds her torch high above her head and ours, but little warmth is felt from that light source while we are on the water. Surrounded by buildings with even more lights around us, we are standing next to each other in Times Square, admiring the glow of billboards, screens, and flashes everywhere. Rockefeller Center hosts ice skaters and its huge evergreen elegantly dressed for the holidays.

Another photo zooms in on my sister and me posing next to celebrity headshots after our dinner at Sardi's, the best place to eat before a Broadway show, known for its caricatures of movie stars. We are smiling next to drawings of Hank Azaria and David Hyde Pierce, stars in their own right, who were currently starring in the production of Monty Python's Spamalot. We enjoyed the show and wanted a picture with its stars. We were not sure ours were going to turn out...



As we exited the theater the night before, our mom said we should watch for celebrities. Knowing that we should always listen to our mother, we heeded her advice and took our time making our way through the crowd. Sure enough! Outside the door, Hank Azaria took some photos and visited with fans. A few minutes later, David Hyde Pierce arrived and did the same. We asked for a photo, and he welcomed us next to him. Another woman offered to take the picture, and I handed her my camera. We smiled, waited for the flash, and nothing happened. My camera was frozen.

I froze too. It felt like time stood still while I stood there flustered. All of these thoughts were forming in my mind as I tried to warm the camera just enough to take one more snapshot. I did not want to waste this man's time. I did not want to detract from anyone else's celebrity sighting. A crowd was forming. I felt rushed. I was so disappointed that my camera was too cold to work. I was wondering if anyone would ever believe that we met these actors while we were in NYC. I was sad that my TV-watching mom would not have photographic evidence of meeting the Niles Crane from Frasier, one of her favorite shows. Her celebrity-sighting skills created an experience that would be turned into a memory. A rose in December.

Then the woman offered to take our picture with her camera and email me the photo. We posed again with a gracious and patient actor, remembering every second of this exchange. I shared my email address and wondered if I would ever hear from this woman. Maybe she just wanted us out of her way so she could have a turn. Maybe she saw how much it meant to us and would follow through. She did not owe us anything. She would not have to go through of all the steps it once took to upload and download photos. We were simply strangers walking up and down the same street.

Fast forward a few weeks, and mail from an unknown sender arrives in my inbox. Through blurry eyes, I see what I think is a picture taken on Broadway. Tears were welling up as the image downloaded. Sure enough! It was our photo. The photo we did not expect to develop. Staring at my screen, I saw what most often is only felt with the heart. I now have photographic evidence of the Christmas spirit and faith in humanity.

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Maranda Jones' new book **Random Acts** is now available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)
The book includes her reader-acclaimed articles from the last decade



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Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

Clippin' Through the Holidays

In this season of holiday grocery shopping and inflated prices we're all focused on ways to save. Maybe my confession will help. My name is Nancy and I'm a coupon clipper. Yes, I admit it. For most of my adult life I've been addicted to picking up a pair of scissors and clipping coupons I think I might be able to use from any and all sources. BOGOs are a definite trigger for me (buy one get one free!), so those never go unclipped.

Do I use these coupons? Well, sometimes! I organize them by category and keep them in a small purse in my car. On a good day I remember to sort through the food coupons before going into the grocery store and take the ones correlating to something on my list. (Of course I'm also guilty of buying something I didn't really need just because I have a coupon for it, so that may negate some of the savings I've accumulated over the years.)

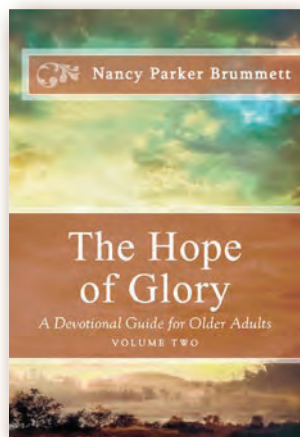
Always I try to avoid the two downfalls of the coupon clipper: letting the coupons expire before using them or forgetting to turn valid ones in to the cashier when you check out! I confess to being guilty of both and yes, I've been so frustrated with myself for not using a coupon that I've gone back to the store with the receipt and coupon in hand and asked for a refund. It's not the money, it's the principle!

With food prices skyrocketing, coupons have become more of a necessity. But to all coupon clippers everywhere, may I say the times they are a changin'! When I took a friend recovering from surgery to do her grocery shopping, she was vigilant about finding the items for which she had a coupon, but I never saw her hand over the coveted clip-outs to the cashier.

"Did you forget to use your coupons?" I asked, hoping to spare her the coupon clipper's contrition. "Oh, they're all on my phone so they went through automatically," she said. What? Yes, I'd seen the grocery store ads for mobile apps that allowed you to access coupons, but I never imagined that practice would be so easy, or that it could replace having clipped-out coupons completely. I stood amazed.

So now that's my goal. Sorry, scissors. I may not be needing you as much. This holiday season I, too, may waltz through the grocery store coupon-less, phone in hand. I know the people behind me in line will be glad I'm speeding up the check-out process. They'll no longer have to overhear the clerk telling me, "Sorry, you had to buy three to get one free," or "this one's expired" as she hands the coupons back to me. My, oh my. What will they think of next? Happy clippin' through the holidays!

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. "Like" her author page on Facebook, or to learn more about her life and work, visit www.nancyparkerbrummett.com.



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Clutter Happens

by Julie Pirtle

Holiday Hoopla



Aah! Remember the days of long ago when the Holiday Season actually had separate holidays? A person could settle in and relish each celebration in its own time. Halloween was Halloween. Thanksgiving was Thanksgiving. Christmas was Christmas. These days, the retail industry might as well just mash them all together and call it Halthankmas!

If you are succumbing to the pre-holiday push, you are not alone—and it isn't your fault. Halloween décor assaults you in June. Christmas starts ringing its bells in August. Thanksgiving (the neglected stepchild of holidays) falls somewhere in between. As consumers, we are being pushed, enticed and cajoled into buying Christmas stockings before we've even answered the first doorbell from trick or treaters. It's just madness!

It is easy to avoid getting caught up in the holiday vortex if you have a plan. Here are a few thoughts that might be helpful this season.



Chances are high that you no longer decorate your bedroom with rock star posters and record album covers. (Am I right?) Your tastes have evolved over the years and your home reflects the new you. The same idea can be applied to decorating for the holidays.

If your holiday decorations are handy, I encourage you to take a peek at them way before the time you will be using them. Take a mental inventory of the items you have and be ready to be ruthless. While some decorations are sentimental, not all of them are.

What about the elaborate floral centerpiece you put on your table years ago in a home that you no longer own? You know, the centerpiece that hasn't been used in years because it no longer fits your needs. It is really just a memory if you aren't using it and it only comes to mind when you open the box once a year and see it amongst the collection of holidays past.

Items such as the centerpiece need to be released into the world. If you have grown children, snap a picture of the items you no longer will be using and let them decide if there is anything they want. If there are no takers, let them go. Keep the décor that fits your design tastes of the moment.

Next, look at the items you purchased at the end of each season last year. Post-holiday clearance sales that slash prices to 90 percent off are difficult to pass by. While you are in a moment of sanity, assess if you bought them because you couldn't pass up the price or because you had specific plans for them. Now ask yourself if you STILL have plans for them. If the answer is no, they must go!

Christmas wrap is one of those collections that I see time and time again in my clients' homes. I was guilty of having a collection like this myself for most of my adult life. I would buy a bunch of wraps at the end of the season, usually picking up items that I was settling for because the choices were limited. Then I would store all that wrap for an entire YEAR.

When you look at my behavior from a practical standpoint, it doesn't make sense. To store an abundance of product that is only used once a year is crazy. I stopped doing that about ten years ago and I am so glad I did. Now, I decide how I want my gifts to look. Then I enjoy the preparation of specifically shopping for the wrap and package décor that I WANT, rather than making do with the sale items I settled for last year.

Once you have finished sorting through your décor, the fun part awaits! You get to shop. SMART shop. Make a list of areas in your home that you'd like to spice up this year and keep the list handy when you are out and about. When you happen upon an adorable Christmas Gnome or a creepy skeleton, it will be easier to assess if it's a purchase that fits your needs. You will be less likely to make impulse buys that you may regret later.

While we have no control over what the commercial/retail industry throws at us, we can make the choice to not live in the insanity. I personally don't wish to celebrate Halthankmas and I encourage you to join me in this non-celebration. Let's bring back some calm. Some joy. Some peace. (Hey! I see you! I know it's on sale...but keep walkin'. Just keep walkin'!)

C'mon, we've got this. I know we do!

Julie Pirtle is a Professional Organizer and owner/operator of Clutter Happens in Mesa, AZ. She also works with clients nationally through Video Consultations. The Clutter Challenged can reach her at: clutterhappens@gmail.com, Facebook:/clutterhappens or her website www.clutterhappens.com.

COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

2 Hour French Bread

Submitted by Wendy Grover, Las Animas, CO

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1/2 cup warm water | 2 cups hot water |
| 3 tablespoons sugar | 3 tablespoons shortening |
| 2 packages yeast | 6 cups flour |
| 1 tablespoon salt | |

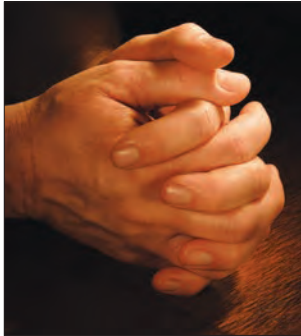
Dissolve yeast in warm water. Combine remaining ingredients, using 3 cups of flour. Beat well. Add yeast and beat well. Add rest of flour to make a soft dough. Leave spoon in batter and allow dough to rest for 10 minutes. Stir dough down every 10 minutes five times.

Divide dough into two parts. Form loaves or rolls. Put on greased baking sheet (or loaf pan) and let rest until doubled. Bake for 30 minutes at 400 degrees.



Life on Breezy Manor Farm

by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress



Just Flat Out Thankful

Sitting at my kitchen table on the last day of September it's hard to visualize November. The past few fall days here in south central Indiana have been story book, nearly perfect. Dry breezes to hasten the crops, one more hay cutting, no frost yet. Roses, asters, sunflowers and mums still flourish. You want a heavy wool sweater for morning chores, a tank top at noon and the sweater again at eventide.

Of course, with fall approaching winter, comes the very long list of chores to be done NOW. Windows to close, winter curtains to hang, wood stove and flue to check, another load of firewood, barn to tighten up, one more load of hay. Then there still are fleeces from the spring shearing to skirt, wash, dye, spin and then knit, hook, and weave. Plotting the last few warps for Lady Mary in the loom house before the weather turns too cold to weave in there.

For the chickens—the window needs replaced, more plastic on the door, clean out and new shavings on the floor, new straw in the laying boxes. Dress those three young roosters.

The sheep list includes barn cleaning and tightening up, roof check, hoof trim, water tank heaters checked.

Bunny barn needs wind proofed, cages cleaned, winter water dishes washed and put out.

Dog houses need cleaned and new winter beds.

And as for me, check canned goods and staples, air out wool blankets and flannel sheets. I am the end of the chore list. Farmeresses always are.

Yes, there is a great deal of activity but there is also gold in Indian Summer days, the winding down of fall, the call of winter. The fogs and mists are denser, deeper shadows. Pumpkins and dried corn stalks decorate porches. We pause and should give thanks.

Being mindful of our blessings is nearly a lost art these days. Oh, I can hear my grandparents in those words. False sense of deserving and greed seem to be upper most in the minds of most people. They have forgotten how to understand and appreciate simple blessings. The vivid colors in a leaf as it floats down to the ground, big fluffy clouds on the horizon, the fragrance of decaying leaves in the crisp morning air. And I am so thankful for my animals, those big eyes, tail wags, soft baas, and snuggles. The old phrase, may you always have enough, resonates through my soul and for the most part has been lost in the echoes of time.

In the eyes of the world I have very little. I am extremely thankful for what I do have and the life I have made. Hasn't been an easy path. My animals, my health, my talents, my friends and family see me through. One of my guild sisters on my birthday (yes 73....) said, a life well lived. I am trying my best.

Every night I thank Mother of All for my blessings, and I count them. Most nights I fall asleep before asking for anything. I am simple, my wants and needs are few. And I smile when my sheep call me to the barn for breakfast and supper.

I do hope each day is a bit better than the last. There is promise in the sunrise and may the sunset bring you peace.

As the years pass the holiday season becomes less holiday. More like a time to just get through. Living alone with my animals, our daily routine remains. I will spend a bit with friends, a meal with family. With only the woodstove for heat I can't be gone long. I am needed here. During the covid lockdown I made a Christmas list, got it out the other day and read it again. Nothing to change. I am either very boring or content.

The end of 2022 will mark a new year coming. The weather this year has been a horrid challenge for many of us. Perhaps the disbelievers will come to understand the harm they are doing to our world, our home.

If anything, Santa please fill their stockings with common sense.

And now a recipe:

APPLE BUTTER BREAD

Use any banana bread recipe, mine is from the 1966 Better Homes and Gardens cookbook. Instead of bananas use 1 cup of apple butter and ¼ cup of applesauce. Mix as directed. Pour into a parchment lined bread pan, bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. I sprinkle extra cinnamon sugar on top before baking.

Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/operator. Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.

COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Stir-Fry Sauce

Submitted by Irene Thompson, La Junta, CO

2-3 Tablespoons cornstarch

1/4 cup brown sugar

1/4 teaspoon ginger

2 cloves garlic

1/2 cup soy sauce

1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

1/2 cup water

1 1/2 cups beef broth

Heat before pouring over beef that has browned 3-4 minutes. Add broccoli, bell pepper, carrots and garlic. Stir 2 minutes.

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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Applesauce Salad

From Linda Prettyman, Brainerd, MN

2 C. applesauce
1 large pkg of red jello
2 C. 7-Up

Heat applesauce, stir in jello. Add 2 scant cups of 7-Up. Pour into pretty bowl and chill until set.

COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Pumpkin Bundt Cake

Submitted by Rachel Manuszak, Colorado Springs, CO

Makes 16 servings • Prep 10 minutes • Bake at 350° for 57 minutes

CAKE:
3 cups cake flour (not self-rising)
2 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
1 1/2 cup granulated sugar
3 large eggs
1 cup milk
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup (2 sticks)unsalted butter, softened
1 1/4 cups solid-pack pumpkin puree
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

GLAZE:
4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese
4 tablespoons milk
1/4 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup sifted confectioners sugar
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat 12-cup bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a medium-size bowl, stir together flour, baking powder and pumpkin pie spice. Beat together the butter and sugar in a large bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in the pumpkin, eggs and vanilla. Into pumpkin mixture, alternately beat in flour mixture and milk. Pour into prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 57 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center of the cake tests clean. Cool the cake in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove cake to wire rack to cool completely.

GLAZE. Beat together the cream cheese, confectioners sugar, milk, lemon zest, lemon juice and vanilla in a medium bowl until well blended and a good glazing consistency. Pour the glaze over top of the cake, letting it drip down the sides.



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Countryberries Designs Woodland Christmas



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Designed by Kathy Graham

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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Cranberry Bread

Submitted by Barb Mc Call, Hesperus, CO

2 cups flour	2 cups sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder	1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons vegetable oil	3/4 cup orange juice
1 egg, well beaten	1 tablespoon orange peel
1 1/2 cups fresh cranberries, chopped	1/2 cup nuts

Mix together all ingredients and stir in nuts and cranberries last. Pour batter into a 9" x 6" baking pan that's been greased with Pam. Bake at 350 degrees for 55 to 60 minutes. Cool before serving.



The Country Register

Colorado & New Mexico
November/December 22

Have yourself a Merry Little Christmas!

A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia Harris

The Gift of Tea

Christmas and gifts go together like a cup and a saucer. So why not give the gift of tea this holiday season? Your tea gift could be an invitation to come for tea, to share tea in a tearoom, to deliver tea, or to mail a tea party in a box. I enjoy giving and receiving tea in all these ways.

COME FOR TEA

Sharing hospitali-TEA in my home is my favorite way to give the gift of tea. My recipe for a memorable teatime includes: a pretty setting, tasty tidbits, and a relaxed time to chat.

For easy hosting, sometimes I order the food from a local tearoom. Other times I buy special foods from the market such as mini croissants, chicken salad, and fancy desserts. This gives me more time to set a lovely table and relax with my guests.

No time to invite someone for a festivi-TEA this December? Consider a coupon gift for a cuppa' tea in the New Year. That will extend the holidays for both of you. For a very dear friend, you could even give the coupon in a teacup.

GO OUT FOR TEA

Taking someone to a tearoom for tea makes a sweet and generous gift. My husband and I have enjoyed taking our granddaughters to tea since they were old enough to hold a teacup—and now they're 12 and 19!

During the holidays, my Sweet-TEA and I gift each other with a jaunt to one of our favorite tearooms. Their festive settings, special menus, and our time together create warm, lingering memories. Plus, I gather ideas for serving tea at home, such as the recipe included for Tree-mendous Treats made with pretzel sticks and melted mint baking chips.

PAR-TEA TO GO

Brighten the life of someone who is unable to get out by delivering a par-TEA. Make arrangements with them, and pack everything you need in a basket or box. I use a soft cooler with straps and fill it with teacups, delicious foods, tea, and a tablecloth or placemats. Sometimes I bring a small gift or flowers. Then we enjoy tea together.

I've delivered and served tea to friends in their homes, in hospitals, and in retirement communities. It cheers their day and mine.

MAIL A PAR-TEA

This fun idea works well for out-of-town friends or relatives. Last Christmas I mailed my Arizona pen pal a tea party in a box. It included a few decorations, holiday paper plates and napkins, assorted teas, hot chocolate mix and candy-cane stirrers, her favorite cookies (see recipe for Everyone's Favorite Cookies), a scone mix and jam, and a book of Christmas stories, which included one of mine. The note inside said: "Wish I could serve you tea in person. Since I can't, here's a tea party in a box." I added my teatime blessing: "Dear God, as we fill our teacups, fill our hearts with love, joy, and peace. As the tea warms our bodies, may Your presence warm our hearts and friendship."

Would you like to gift someone with tea—in person, in a tearoom, to go, or by mail? Or give a coupon to share one or more of these tea gifts in the future? Whenever you give a gift to someone, you're also giving yourself a gift, because "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). God bless us everyone!

Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast, grandmother of five, and author of *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together* and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*. Her books are available at Amazon.

From Lydia's Recipe File: Tree-mendous Treats

These pretzel Christmas trees taste yummy and make cute mini-cupcake toppers, muffins, tarts, or even a birthday cake for Jesus! Fun, festive, and easy to make.

Ingredients:

- small pretzel sticks (about 3 inches long)
- mint baking chips or green candy melts
- sprinkles or crushed candy canes for decorations

Directions:

Line a baking sheet with waxed paper. Lay pretzel sticks on sheet at least four inches apart. Melt mint chips in a small microwave-safe bowl for 30 seconds, then stir. Continue to heat, 15 seconds at a time, until chips are completely melted. Place a small plastic bag in an empty coffee mug and fold the top of the bag over the side to hold it in place. Carefully spoon melted chips into the plastic bag. Remove the bag and twist-tie it closed. Cut off the tip of a bottom corner of the bag to make a very small hole. Gently squeeze melted chips onto a pretzel to create Christmas tree branches. Start halfway up, leaving 1 1/2 inches for the tree trunk. Use a back-and-forth motion to make a triangle shaped tree. Immediately add sprinkles or other decorations. Refrigerate pretzels until firm, then peel off the paper. Repeat the process to make more trees. Use trees for cupcake toppers or eat them as a treat. If you frost cupcakes white and add grated coconut and stand the trees in them, it looks like the trees are standing in snow.

YIELD: 1/4 cup baking chips makes about 5 trees. 18 candy melts make 8 trees.



What Happened to the Turkey

by Deb Heatherly

The Thanksgivings of my childhood were amazing days. Bountiful food, playtime with cousins, gathering pecans from my grandmothers' tree to use in all of the holiday recipes that would be made in the weeks ahead, and best of all, getting to spend the night with my grandmother to help put up her wonderful silver Christmas tree. I delighted in pulling each branch out of its paper sleeve and then placing it in the correct hole. I felt a special pride as I decorated the tree with her unusual ornaments. I was in awe of the colorful round rotating light that we placed under the tree that made the branches magically change from red, to blue, to gold, and in my mind, I can still hear the little church that played Holy Night that was always placed under the tree. The church's steeple had been broken and glued back together many times, but I still thought it was wonderful.

Through the years I've often wondered what happened to that little church. I know it was probably tossed by someone cleaning out my grandmother's house, who saw its many repairs and thus thought it worthless, but what I wouldn't give to wind it up and listen to it just one more time.

My grandmother lived just ten minutes from my house and anytime with her was special but Thanksgiving was my favorite. She cooked numerous things for Thanksgiving Day, my mother always insisted on making the Turkey. My mother had once confided in me that my aunt's turkey was too dry, my grandmothers too bland, and if we wanted a perfect turkey, then she needed to make it. Preparations started the day before and I would always wake up on Thanksgiving morning to a wonderful aroma coming from our kitchen. Mother timed it perfectly so that once it came out of the oven, it could be wrapped tightly in tin foil to make the short trip to my grandmothers, then unwrapped, displayed, and carved to the delight of all. This happened every year without fail...except one.

It started like a normal Thanksgiving Day. I woke early, watched the Macy's parade on TV, dressed in nice clothes, (with play clothes packed for later in the day), and was ready to depart as soon as my mother's loaded folding chairs, and boxes of food into the car. My dad was busy elsewhere that morning and would meet us at my grandmothers.

Down the road we went with the usual excitement of the day. Everything was perfect until I asked, "Why don't I smell the turkey?"

With that my mother, whirled the car to the side of the road, jumped out and came around to look in the back. Mortified, she realized that she had left the turkey sitting on a bench in the garage. The car quickly turned around and headed back home. Arriving in record time, she pulled into the yard and snatched up the garage door.

It was then that I heard a strange gasp and the words "oh no!" The turkey was there alright, but the tin foil had been ripped open on one side and a large chunk of the bird was gone. Tiger, our orange tabby, had snuck out of the house and into the garage during the excitement of the morning and now lay on top of the washer, purring contentedly, his belly bulging with his own Thanksgiving treat.

"You will not breathe a word of this." She said. "Not to your father, not to your grandmother, not to anyone. Do you understand?" With eyes wide, I nodded and wondered what she would do now.

Hurriedly, her beautiful serving platter was retrieved from the car. Both it and the turkey were then taken inside where she frantically started carving what was left. Each slice was placed neatly and carefully on the tray and a sprig of parsley was added for garnish. I had to admit that it really looked pretty and told her so. She just gave me 'that look.'

The platter was soon covered with fresh foil and away we went again. The entire trip she continued to swear me to secrecy. Arriving at my grandmother I received one final warning in the form of a glare. That look was enough and there was no way was I telling anyone.

My grandmother greeted us, my dad came out to help bring in the contents of the car, and once inside my grandmother glanced at the things we'd brought in and asked. "What happened to the turkey?" I could feel my mother tense.

Another glare from my mother was directed at me assuring my silence. Smiling sweetly, my mother stated, "I decided to save time this year and carve it at home."

"What a wonderful idea," my grandmother said. "Everyone is hungry and we now can eat a little sooner."

Opening the tinfoil, my mother presented the platter with a great flourish and set it in its place of honor. My grandmother told her how wonderful it looked and then called everyone together.

Holding hands, a prayer was said and we all began to fill out plates. It wasn't long before the adults complained about eating too much and my father told my mother this was the best turkey ever. My mother smiled sweetly and I looked out of the window so I did not meet her eye. It was our little secret and I was keeping it that way. Not until today, almost 50 years later, do I dare tell what happened to that turkey. It's

one of those funny memories that I tucked away and only think of occasionally. What happened to the turkey? Nothing I would have answered if asked back then. Today I would say, just a cat being a cat, my mom saving the day, and no one ever being the wiser.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and tools. When not in her studio, she is on the road doing Creative Grids® lectures and workshops for guilds and shops across the country. She is the designer of the Creative Grids Cat's Cradle tool, Strippy Stars tool, Turbo 4 Patch, Ultimate Flying Geese tool, and the new Cat's Cradle XL. She is the author of the books 'Cat'titude, Strippy Stars, 4-Patch Panache, The Ultimate flying Geese Book, and Catitude XL. Visit her website at www.Debcatsnquilts.com and her Facebook page using the link www.Facebook.com/DebscatsnquiltsFranklin. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group entitled "Grids Girls" for tips, inspiration and mystery quilt fun. The next Grids Girls mystery will begin right after Christmas so join now to be included.



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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Walnut Zucchini Muffins



Submitted by a Reader

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 cup all-purpose flour | 3/4 cup whole wheat flour |
| 2/3 cup packed brown sugar | 2 teaspoons baking powder |
| 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 2 large eggs, room temperature | 3/4 cup 2% milk |
| 1/2 cup butter, melted | 1 cup shredded zucchini |
| 1 cup chopped walnuts | 1/2 cup raisins |

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl whisk the first 6 ingredients. In another bowl, whisk eggs, milk and melted butter until blended. Add flour mixture; stir just until moistened. Fold in zucchini, walnuts and raisins. Fill 12 greased muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Cool 5 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack. Serve warm.

COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

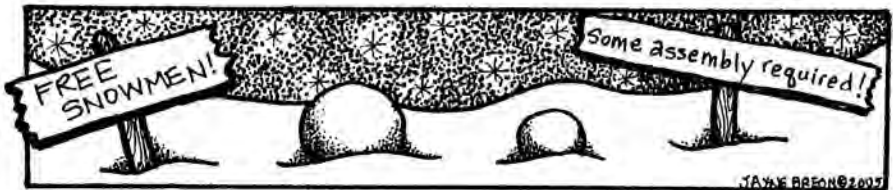
Bread



Submitted by Karen Chabot, Alamosa, CO

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 3 cups flour | 1 1/2 teaspoons salt |
| 1/4 teaspoon instant yeast | 1 1/2 cups water |
| 1 teaspoon other spice, if desired | olive or vegetable oil |

Mix dry ingredients. Add water and stir until incorporated. (DO NOT KNEAD) Coat top of dough with light coat of oil. Cover and let stand 8 to 24 hours. Flour table. Carefully spoon dough onto floured surface and gently prod. Coat another bowl with oil, leaving extra on bottom. Fold dough into a ball and place in bowl. Let stand 1 to 2 hours. Preheat oven with cast iron skillet or cake pan inside to 450 degrees. Remove pan from oven and slide dough into pan. Slice top with knife or scissors to give dough an artesian look. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and enjoy.





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Make Your Own Scrap Fabric Bowls & Containers

by Judy Sharer

This is a way to use up your scrap fabrics and make a usable container. Here is what you'll need: coordinating fabrics for the inside and outside of the container, or just use all scrap pieces. The product you will want to purchase is Elmer's Art Paste. It comes in a 2 oz. box and you can mix the entire package or half a box at a time. It will stay useable for three or four weeks if kept in a tightly sealed container. This is a messy project so you might want to put down an old vinyl tablecloth to work on first for easy clean up.

This process is similar to Papier Mache except with fabric and Elmer's Art Paste. Instructions: You can use a blown-up balloon which you will pop when finished to make a bowl or find a mold to use that the finished container can slide off of such as a flared vase or square glass container. I used a square jar once that worked very well and a tall olive bottle worked well too. Curved shapes will not work. Wrap the mold with clear plastic wrap and make it as smooth as possible. Tape to the glass surface if necessary.

Next, cut enough fabric into strips or pieces to wrap around the mold. Dip the fabric and coat it completely with the art paste, but not dripping wet. Remember the first layer of fabric you use will be the inside of your container and be visible when you slide the dried container from its form or pop the balloon. If you are color coordinating the inside and outside of your bowl make this fabric match or contrast with your final two layers of fabric. After the first two layers are applied let it dry completely before adding the next two layer. Drying takes time, and overnight is best. I make several bowls or containers at the same time. Then I usually have one that is dry to work on.

Once you have two layers of your inside fabric completely covering the form with no holes showing through to your mold you can start the next two or three layers with not so pretty or as nice fabric. This fabric will not be seen and can be of any cotton or cotton/blend. If you are using a thinner fabric you may want to add another layer.

The last two layers are the designer fabric or the coordinated fabric you will see as the outside of your container. Make sure all the layers are dry before applying the last fabric added, which is the binding around the top so no raw edges are showing. I make my binding just like I make binding for a quilt with a double edge on both sides. Pop the balloon or slide from the mold before applying the binder around the top edge to finish your bowl or container. Make sure the binding is coated in paste completely before fitting to the top edge. Apply and let dry. Add one last coating of paste to the entire outside and inside of the bowl and let dry once more and you're done!

I hope you enjoy making a scrap bowl or container today and I bet you can't make just one. A great way to use up fabric scraps and have fun!

Judy Sharer is the author of *A Plains Life* series published by The Wild Rose Press. Book One, *Settler's Life*, Book Two, *Second Chance Life*, and Book Three, *Civil War Life* are now available wherever online books and eBooks are sold. Judy's sweet historical romances have a thread of quilting that runs throughout the family saga series. Visit Judy's website for more details. judysharer.com Judy's fourth book in this series, *Love Challenged Life* will be released fall of 2022.



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A Special Christmas Gift

by Gayle Cranford



Being the first grandchild on both sides of my family, I was spoiled by grandparents, aunts and uncles. One aunt was only five years older than me and we actually played together as children. Merle was a shade older than she.

He doted on me, giving me gifts that encouraged my creative side and lovingly teased me constantly. His nickname for me was to reverse my first and middle names, calling me "Annie Gayle." Of course, he was my very favorite indulgent uncle.

I grew up in a musical family that had organized a blue grass band that played for square dances and local radio stations. Merle played a dobro, what we kid used to call a Hawaiian guitar. The whole family encouraged my taking piano lessons, but Uncle Merle's encouragement meant the most to me. He occasionally bribed me to play the piano for him with coins, but I would have gladly done it without the monetary enticement.

I began taking piano lessons when I was nine years old. About three years into taking lessons, Uncle Merle asked me "The Flight of the Bumble Bee." He promised a five-dollar bill if I would master that piece. If he was teasing me, I didn't know and considered his bribe.

That Christmas, my parents bought me a two-wheeler bicycle that was complete with saddle bags on the back rack. Inside one saddle bag was the sheet music for "The Flight of the Bumble Bee." Imagine the surprise of receiving that particular sheet music! I got the message and was encouraged to learn it with the help of my piano teacher, Leo O'Brian.

Memory prevents me from remembering just how long it took me to learn it, but learn it I did...much to the surprise and amazement of my piano teacher and, most of all, my Uncle Merle, who paid the promised five dollars which was a lot of money in the mid nineteen forties.

About that time, my mother (who was a pianist) was asked to perform a piece at a local Protected Home Circle family get-together. She was encouraged to ask me to perform as well and for both of us to have encores prepared.

That PHC meeting was held in the large second floor ball room and the attendees were seated mostly along the walls opposite the piano. Mom played her piece and encore. Then, it was my turn and I was very nervous.

My first piece was an appropriate piece for a beginner to play, Minuet in G by Ignacy Jan Paderewski, a simple but lovely piano piece. Polite applause followed and I bowed and sat down again to play my encore, "The Flight of the Bumble Bee," which totally took the audience by surprise. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see many of the attendees were straining to watch my young fingers accomplish that difficult piece.

Thanks to Uncle Merle and his bribe, I had persevered to learn it.

Many years later, then widowed, after having fifty years of marriage, I received a very surprising phone call from Uncle Merle and Aunt Doris, his wife, from New Mexico where they had lived for many years, raising their six children.

Uncle Merle got on the phone and asked me if I still played "The Flight of the Bumble Bee." When I answered that I hadn't even played the piano for years, he, laughing, remarked that my learning that piece had cost him twenty dollars!!!

In his mind, the five-dollar value through all those years was the equivalent to the current twenty dollars. And, in his growing dementia, he had truly remembered our deal from so long ago.

-Gayle writes from her home in Florida, where she lives with his daughter. At the age of 87, she is often referred to as "the energizer bunny." She enjoys writing letters to the editor and spending time with her daughter and granddaughter.

Country Register Recipe Exchange Corny Crunch Bars

submitted by Patti Lee Bock of New Ulm, MN



2 cups light corn syrup
2 cups sugar

2 cups crunchy peanut butter
2 - 10.5oz packages of corn chips

In a large saucepan combine corn syrup and sugar. Bring to a boil over medium heat stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in peanut butter. Place corn chips in a large bowl coated with non-stick vegetable spray. Stir in peanut butter mixture. Gently press into a buttered 8"x12" baking pan. Cool in pan on a wire rack until firm. Cut into squares.

One Big Gift

by Becky Van Vleet

With close to seventy Christmases behind me, I have many memories of this special holiday that have been set aside to celebrate the birth of our Savior. My parents, from the Greatest Generation, started some traditions that carried over to my own family. And you can imagine my delight to watch my adult children carrying out some of the same traditions in their families today.

One such tradition stands out as I go down memory lane. In 1993, my husband lost his job. When Christmas rolled around, money was tight. What little we had was earmarked for food, clothing, and shelter. Only the necessities.

Instead of fretting about the lack of Christmas presents, I decided we needed to be positive and focus on what we could do, not what we couldn't. Out of prayer, thanksgiving, family love, and creativity, I birthed giving gifts from our hearts that Christmas. Always the teacher, I used this time for teachable moments for our four daughters, ages five to fifteen.

We traded out store shopping for homemade presents. No Pinterest back then. We didn't even have the internet. But we had our imaginations, no cost involved. I was amazed at the ideas our daughters came up with, even helping one another, and talking about their secret gifts behind closed doors.

We got creative when we planned our own family recital with singing and musical instruments. Our voices, violin, clarinet, and saxophone came together for the best Christmas songs I've ever heard, even with "off notes" and a mistake here and there. But it didn't matter. Our recital endeavor came from our hearts. We even made a plan to go Christmas caroling and take our voices to others.

Our idea to make our own Christmas presents and focus on our hearts was not original. No, it wasn't. Our parents had learned to give gifts from the heart and make things from home during the Great Depression. Simple and homemade gifts repeated again during World War II with the government mandated rations and push for the war bonds.


Cloth dolls and teddy bears created from socks delighted little children. Grandpas whittled toys from wood. Lip smacking could be heard a mile away when popcorn balls, straight out of the kitchen, were made, even when sugar rations pinched holiday baking.

Yes, our Christmas of 1993 still stands out to me. Our family discussions surrounding the true meaning of Christmas ramped up. We were focused on Christ's birth and His plan of salvation more than the usual glitz, glitter, and glamour of the commercialized holiday. The tradition of homemade gifts continued in our family after that particular year as our daughters grew up.

Today, almost thirty years later, instead of store-bought gifts in our much bigger extended family, we make contributions to missionaries and other good works in honor of each other. Volunteering for Operation Christmas Child through Samaritan's Purse and making goodie bags for the homeless keep us busy around the holidays. We continue to visit nursing homes and sing Christmas carols as we reach out to others.

The heartache of a lost job in 1993 turned from ashes to beauty. Fortitude, family love, and a can-do spirit wrapped us up together in one big gift, and it still does to this day.

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.



What does the Gingerbread Man use to make his bed?

Cookie Sheets
Riddle submitted by Shirley Ross

COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Poor Mans Cake

Submitted by Lyla Rauchenecker, Golden, CO
Depression Era Cake — My Dad's Favorite

2 cups raisins

3/4 cup liquid shortening

2/3 teaspoon salt

2 cups boiling water

Boil all of the above ingredients for 3 minutes and cool to luke warm

Sift together:

4 cups flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Mix wet and dry ingredients and add

Bake in a greased and floured 9 x 13 pan at 350° for 35 to 45 minutes.

2 cups sugar

4 tablespoons cocoa

2 teaspoons cinnamon

2 teaspoons baking soda

2 teaspoons vanilla





Thankful for My Blessings

by Tammy Page

At the time of the year when we are celebrating being thankful for our many blessings, and yes, I have many to be thankful for, blessings and the celebration of Jesus, I reflect back on my career in social services. Helping people with food, rides, a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear has always come easy for me. I enjoy making people happy and don't we all need some more happiness in today's world?

I have no idea how I became an advocate, what road I took or why I do what I do but, none the less I am one. One for the battered wives of over the road truckers, one for children who don't learn their colors before kindergarten because mom is too busy trying to keep the home calm and happy for her partner's sake. How I got here is not as important as to why I continue to work long, tireless hours, running back and forth to hospitals, police stations, and shelters. I guess I've always had the "middle child syndrome" of being the independent thinker and doer, and to plead another's cause so I shouldn't be surprised that I ended up being an advocate for those less fortunate. I suppose being an independent thinker I feel that everyone deserves a certain level of care, a peaceful home and school life and help at times when they so desperately need it.

I didn't start my career as an advocate, but in a way, I've advocated for someone or something most of my life. As a child I was always making sure classmates were included in school activities. In high school I advocated for those who were left out or mistreated so it must have been a quality I already possessed and didn't know it. After high school I got a job working at a bank returning non-sufficient funds checks which was not all that glamorous, but it gave me a chance to advocate for customers who might have made a mistake in their accounts. I always felt bad when I had to charge people who I knew were struggling financially so at times I would give them a call in hopes they could rectify it and not get charged a fee.

After having our third child, I went back to work part time in the "people business" again. For the next 24 years I've problem-solved, assisted, maintained, and planned for people. If you look the word, "advocate" up in the dictionary (do people still use those?), you will see it means to defend or maintain a cause. That's me to a T! My husband always tells me I can't save everyone nor can I bring them home. He knows me well. I would, if permitted donate more of my time, my money, and myself to those who need a helping hand once in a while. Now I know in my head I cannot do all these things but, in my heart, I want to help each and every one without crossing the boundaries of being an advocate instead of being a friend. There are times when feelings of worry and helplessness overcome me and it's very frustrating that others don't feel the same way I do. Why can't others lend a hand or give someone a ride or donate to a good cause? I must obey boundaries as an advocate but as a human being I do not. Why can't I help a single mom with two children who could use transportation to the food stamp office? Or donate some of my own blankets and home goods to a family having to start over? Again, as a child of God, I will offer what I can, when I can.

So, during this holiday season, please think of others and the troubles they may be facing. Say hello to a stranger in the fast food line, hold a door open for the lady with bags, her purse and her child in her arms. Give generously to the bell ringers or the local Christmas Giving Tree and be an advocate that you and God can be proud of.



—Tammy lives on a working farm with her family in IN, farm animals and many pets. She enjoys writing, decorating and collecting vintage homewares.



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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

Following Her Lead

I have a friend I met a few years ago who never ceases to inspire me. We met at a quilt guild meeting (my first time attending), and now we mostly visit and share via cell phone messaging.

My humble beginnings as a quilter started with flannel baby quilts I would make for friends' children. Then I expanded to incorporate leftovers—which my mother called remnants—from whatever garment I had sewn, inspired by my grandmother who had crafted tied quilts for her family. (My mother has one in a closet; the few others which still exist are distributed among my grandmother's other children.)

Unlike my friend, who is a third or even fourth generation quilter, I regard myself as a self-taught quilter. Ergo, I attended that first guild meeting to find out why quilt guilds exist.

Only able to attend for three meetings before the world shut down with Covid, she and I would frequently chat on the telephone; then one day she invited me over to her front yard for a quilt show. I returned home from the visit with one of her leftover quilt blocks, and a new design and inspiration to chase after.

Months later, I moved out of state. Time to locate a new quilt guild!

The more I have been quilting, the more I have been learning. I feel like I could have a trunk show for beginners, walking them through my many experiments: the polyester-blend half-square triangles throw I made from a bag of unfinished projects rejected by others before reaching my lap after an aunt passed; the denim-and-flannel rag-style throw I made from a bag of someone's denim discards; the corduroy-and-flannel rag-style throw salvaged from another's bin of remnants; the flannel-and-heavyweight cotton quilt I made from fabric passed on from somewhere. And the table runners. And the wall hangings. And the myriad of other projects made and gifted.

The challenges I am presented with are the most fun, though. One quilt store held monthly meetings to share the newest fabrics, patterns, and products with us. In exchange for attending, we were each given a coupon for a percentage off of our purchase for the next three days. I bought a bit of fabric that way. And, I participated in the contest-challenge of creating a project using a fat-quarter she provided. (We each got different fat quarters. I assume they were from bolts she had already sold out of.) Although I didn't win the contest, I love the project I created!

Back to my friend. The projects she makes are masterpieces which makes my projects feel all the more amateurish. She won a blue ribbon this past summer at the guild's quilt show; the photo she shared reveals its beauty.

Last week, my friend shared the photo of a bargello table-runner with lacey crotched doilies she had tatted to represent falling snowflakes. Stunning!

I sent back a photo of my first Log Cabin block.

Will I ever reach her level?



Of Apple Pies & Kitchen Windows

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Always, around this time, it somehow surprises me that another year is almost over. It shouldn't. My brain regularly conjures up memories from the previous ten months that remind me of both how busy it was and how lovely it was.

The year 2022 has many highlights—from family get-togethers to enjoying grandchildren's music and sports. January started with beginning a stash of hats and scarves for a Giving Circle later in the year. In April, we all gathered together, from the youngest at 5 to the oldest at 101. At the end of June my husband, Wayne, retired after 49 years as an auto mechanic. We traveled both to visit family and for Wayne to repair grown children's cars. A mechanic can retire but a Dad never does. I began to knit and crochet handmade Christmas gifts in August. With a family of eighteen, it helps to begin early.

Since I often look ahead to upcoming deadlines, I take time to remind myself to fully focus on the present. For it is all too easy to be channeled to the next thing that needs doing—or how quickly the last two months of a year can pass by.

It is in these moments that I turn to autumn and winter activities that comfort and inspire me at the same time. One of these things is baking. For nearly three decades I have loved to bake pies, mostly fruit pies. No one in the family seems to mind. Fifteen year-old grandson, Isaac, particularly likes them. Sometimes an apple pie appears at their house just because he has a baseball game coming up.

I savor the whole process of making a pie from scratch. Whatever kind of pie I make, the most important ingredient I add is love. For preparing food is a way of giving of ourselves to the people in our lives. The work of our hands is one of the most tangible ways to show others how deeply they are treasured.

When I peel, core and slice the apples, I like to look out the kitchen window. It seems that I can feel beyond the view of the yard to sense the plethora of people who came before me and worked the very same way. I think that, for all of the technology we have, there is still something inherently amazing about how a piece of fruit evolves. I pay attention to the motion of my hands. I say thank you for being exactly where I am, right in that very moment.

I try not to add too much sugar—just enough of a blend of white and brown and then some cinnamon. My nose always awaits the addition of the lemon juice as its acidity blends with the sweeter ingredients. If Wayne is nearby, he helps by tasting the apple mixture to make sure it is just right. No sacrifice is too great.

I truly enjoy preparing pie crusts and I have three or four recipes. When I spread out the dough, I use my great-grandmother's rolling pin. I think of her, even though I had never met her. She passed away fifteen years before I was born. I think of my mother and grandmother who taught me by example that food is love.

This holiday season I remember being with my 101 year-old mother-in-law in her Wisconsin kitchen. The same kitchen where she baked when Wayne was growing up and where she still bakes for her family. We stand at the kitchen window and we wash and dry the dishes together. We look out and I watch the land through her eyes, seeing all that has gone before and so much that still is. All of which is love.





THE MAILBAG

Fall is in the air and what a delight to receive my subscription copy of *The Country Register* in the mail. Thanks to the many advertisers. Thank you for all of the free patterns for embroidery, especially in the Sept/Oct edition.

Irene Thompson, La Junta, CO

Personally, I love all the articles and ads in *The Country Register*. If your readers do any cross-stitch or needle-point, **The Stitching Shop** in Denver is the best! It's a great place to shop and everyone is so helpful! Keep up the good work with *The Country Register*!

Gloria Wodzinski, Littleton, CO

I enjoyed attending Shop Hop in Colorado with my college roommate. We always go to Ruth's Stitchery in Colorado Springs — Shop Hop or not! I receive *The Country Register* from my roommate as a gift. Wish we had an edition in Louisiana!

Joan Albright, Metairie, LA



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Mountain Ridges

by Marlene Oddie



When Island Batik announced the Blue Ridge Mountain collection, I was excited to design with it using AnglePlay® templates to get some wild ridges! Look for this collection at your local quilt shop.

The fabric collection has leaves, pine needles, berries, trees, bark, pebbles, raindrop spots and wildlife—including forest animals, dragonflies and hummingbirds. The colorations are all shades of brown and blue, some tone on tone and others with both colors.

On one beautiful blue-sky day here in Washington, our 'Coulee walls' had to double for 'blue ridge mountains' so I could photograph this quilt in the wild.

This quilt pattern is a reward to the person who has collected all the AnglePlay® templates and would like to use more than just one or two in a single project. There are seven templates used (from Sets 1, 2 and 5). Two AnglePlay® borders give it the unique framing.

The Mountain Ridges pattern and AnglePlay® templates are available at KISSed Quilts.

Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA, at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus, but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>.



Salted Carmel Apple Spice Mug Cake

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp apple pie spice
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 3 tbsp sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 1/2 tbsp unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tbsp milk
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp water
- Carmel sauce

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients.
2. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients
3. Add the wet ingredients.
4. Whisk everything together (excluding the carmel sauce) until combined and no lumps remain.
5. Pour batter into a microwave-safe mug. You want enough space for the cake to rise without pouring over.
6. Microwave mug cake for 1 minute and 50 seconds on high.
7. Remove from microwave.
8. Drizzle with carmel sauce on top and enjoy!



Recipe by Table for Two by Julie Chiou



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Ann's Lovin' Ewe

by Ann Stewart

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

One December my daughter Christine received an unusual Christmas present she didn't know what to do with. If I told you the gift was a hand-embroidered tea towel framed in an embroidery hoop, you might think that sounded sweet and that somebody put a lot of work into it. You might even question Christine's judgement and appreciation for the handiwork.

But if you saw the pattern, you'd wonder who originated the design, and who put the time into embroidering it. And why had someone found and rescued the antique towel, appliqued over the holes, and then framed the "art."

The real problem was the design. The former tea towel featured a lady wearing a dress pushing a vacuum cleaner with little appliqued potted flowers nearby to cover the worn fabric. That wasn't all: the woman had a tomato for a head. That part was downright frightening.

I don't know if tomato-headed vacuuming women were a popular vintage look in their day, but it wasn't something my twenty-something daughter planned to hang in her apartment. Oh, what to do with that gift?

Then I remembered a long-forgotten joke I'd always wanted to "give."

Christine's cousin Emily had just married and moved into her new home in a new state. Perhaps she needed a homemade wedding gift for her home decor. An additional wedding gift. And perhaps the gift card would be slightly smudged so that she didn't recognize the giver. Perhaps the mystery would amuse and befuddle the young couple. And perhaps it could be mailed from an unfamiliar state.

My friend Barb was driving to Texas at Christmas, so the timing was perfect for a postmark from an unfamiliar location. Barb wrapped the package, wrote a cheery Christmas greeting, smudged a signature, posted the envelope, and sent it from Texas. Emily and Jim would have to wonder who could EVER give a gift like that. And how did the giver know their new address? The card read:

*Merry Christmas dear ones,
Sorry I couldn't get this mailed sooner.
Blessings, and ho-ho-ho.*

The signature was illegible.

It took months before the subject was ever broached. But when Emily finally acknowledged receiving a gift so questionable her husband Jim said it had to remain hidden in the closet until they figured out who sent it, we finally fessed up. Jim had felt the gift was creepy. Who would take the time to embroider something so odd? The "ho ho ho" and "loved ones" troubled him greatly. And who knew their address? He was happy and relieved to learn it was a joke.

Needless to say, they didn't want to keep it, so we happily took it back, ready to re-gift the white elephant. After all, there was another upcoming cousin's wedding and Barb was once again driving to Texas and could post the package.

The next couple's spring wedding was lovely, and after the bride and groom went on their honeymoon, Operation Tomato Head went into effect. This time it didn't take months before inquiry. Just days after the bride and groom returned from the Maldives, Kenzie the bride immediately brought the gift to her mother-in-law for investigation. The name was smudged. It was sent from Texas. Could anyone identify the giver?

When no one fessed up, the "gift" was tucked away until it mysteriously reappeared at a housewarming for Lena, another cousin. She exclaimed, "Oooooooh! Who is this from?" looking around the gathering of family gift givers, including the two brides. Nobody in her festive circle of family and friends fessed up, curious themselves who would donate such a decoration. "It could go in my laundry area," she proposed with great tact. At last, we told the entire story with both brides now in the know about the tomato head.

And now, the tomato head vacuum lady hangs in the laundry area of Lena's new home, awaiting another gifting to the entertainment of all. Maybe a white elephant gift exchange, bridal shower, or housewarming. After all, it is homemade and it's in the spirit of giving and re-gifting. Look out.

The PERFECT gift for Christmas? Ann's newest book *All is Calm, All is Bright for the Heart of Christmas*, will inspire readers throughout the month of December. Support your Lovin' Ewe author and make them your gift of choice this holiday season.

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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Blonde Brownies

Submitted by Betty Strange, Clovis, NM

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 cups all-purpose flour | 2 teaspoons baking powder |
| 1/4 teaspoon salt | 1/2 cup butter or margarine |
| 2 cups packed brown sugar | 2 eggs |
| 1 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped | 1 teaspoon vanilla |

Grease 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking pan. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Melt butter, remove from heat and stir in sugar. Add eggs and vanilla and stir until combined. Stir dry ingredients and nuts into sugar mixture. Spread in pan. Bake at 325° F. for 20 to 25 minutes. Cut into bars while warm.

Recipe given to me by Pat Kralicek, a very dear friend, now deceased.



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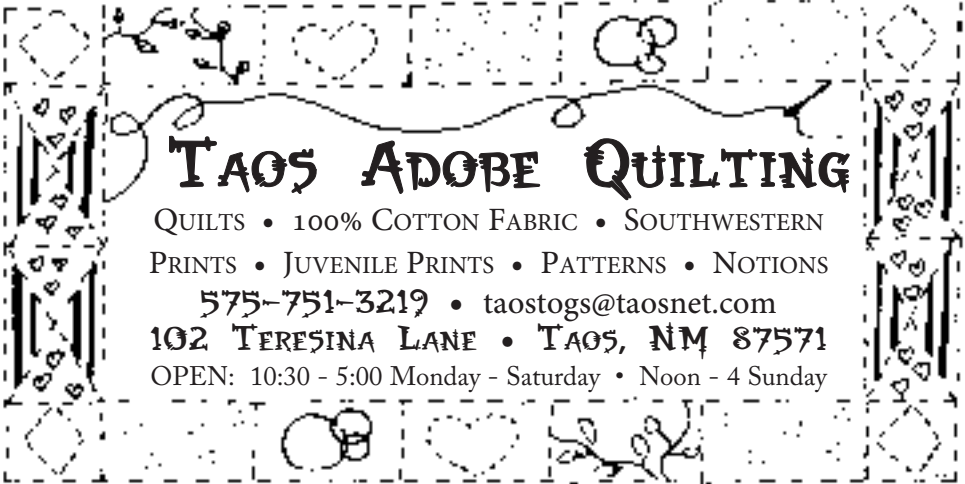


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It's Party Time with Lesley

by Lesley R. Nuttall

The holiday season is approaching, and as we haven't been able to do much partying over the past couple of years, I suggest it's time for us to start by easing back into some fun! The magic of Christmas can be fun, the excitement and above all else, the memories we make! Entertaining should be fun! I've always been known to be a very organized person, which is likely because I'm a Capricorn, and lucky for me, that's one of the traits of a Capricorn!

As Christmas is on Sunday this year, I would like to suggest a mingling cocktail party on Thursday, December 23 from 7 to 11 p.m., or a time of your choosing. The reason I am suggesting this, is as some families plan their traditional customs on Christmas Eve, or Christmas day.

Planning is a big part of any successful party. Sit down with a pen and paper and plan how many guests you intend to invite. The biggest decision is usually what food to serve. Here, I would suggest finger foods, as guests are able to serve themselves from a special table or counter you set up.



Any number of foods are suitable for this type of party, hot or cold such as: Assorted crackers and cheese; a tray of bite size vegetables and dip; a cold meat tray with buns; you could add some appetizers from the frozen section of the supermarket to heat and serve; if you have time, it is always nice to have some homemade choices, such as deviled eggs; or bacon and cheese balls. (recipe included.) You could add some of your own choices as well.

Plan your beverage list to include, wine, a non alcohol beverage, soft drinks and bottled water.

A plate of homemade dainties would be perfect to satisfy anyone craving sweets! A good time to serve the food would be around 8:30 to 9:00 P.M.

For a decorative edible table center, I have used the following arrangement: It looks like a ball of different colored fruit. Use an orange or an apple for the base and place it in a low bowl.

Arrange bite size pieces of fruit—such as, grapes, strawberries, pineapple or melon balls on a fancy cocktail pick, or a plain toothpick, and stick each one in and all over the apple or orange. It makes a beautiful table center and people can nibble throughout the night.

To be completely organized, now would be the time to sort out your serving trays or platters. For a festive, more Christmas like look, you could cover them with the silver tinfoil. Will you use your good china side plates, or use Christmas paper plates. Decide on the glassware you want to use as well. Of course napkins are a must, as well as silverware and condiments.

On party night, arrange to have some low Christmas music playing and soft lighting for ambiance, and enjoy your own party too!

I'm always so thankful for the love and friendship of family and friends! Enjoy a blessed Christmas with your loved ones, and Merry Christmas to all!

BACON CHEESE BALLS

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 cup mozzarella cheese | 1 cup cheddar cheese |
| 2 tubs/ bricks (227 g) Philadelphia cream cheese | |
| ½ teaspoon onion powder | 1 cup bacon small bits, cooked |

Leave cream cheese out for an hour to soften. Whip to make smooth. Grate mozzarella and cheddar cheese and add to cream cheese. Add onion powder and bacon bits, combine well. Form into small balls. It helps to have your hands damp to keep from sticking. If it's too sticky, add more grated cheese. Cover with plastic wrap, and chill. Will last for several days. Yield: 25 to 30 balls

Lesley is the Author of *Secrets of Party Planning*. She also loves to write poetry, and lives in Thunder Bay ON, Canada with her husband.



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Christmas Soup
recipe by Alton Brown

- 1 pound Kielbasa, sliced
vegetable oil as needed
8 cloves of garlic, minced
1 pound dried red kidney beans,
soaked for at least 4 hours overnight
2 quarts unsalted chicken broth

2 tsp kosher salt
1 pound red potatoes, cut into cubes
6 ounces fresh kale,
washed, rinsed and torn into 1-inch pieces
2 tbsp red wine vinegar, plus more to taste
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Brown the kielbasa in a 7-quart dutch oven and set over medium-low heat until it has rendered most of its fat, about 15 minutes. Remove the kielbasa from the pot and set aside. If you do not have at least 2 teaspoons of fat, add enough vegetable oil to make 2 teaspoons. Cook the garlic in the fat for 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly to prevent the garlic from burning. Add the beans, chicken broth, and 2 teaspoons of salt. Cook, covered, for 45 minutes. After the 45 minutes, stir in the potatoes, cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Toss the kale into the pot, cover and cook for an additional 10 minutes, or just until it is tender, but not mushy. Sprinkle with the vinegar and pepper and stir to combine. Return the kielbasa to the pot and cook just until heated through. Taste and adjust seasoning, adding more vinegar and salt as desired. Serve hot.

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Designed by Kathy Graham

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COUNTRY REGISTER RECIPE EXCHANGE

Tomato Chutney

Submitted by Shari King, Brighton, CO

This is my go-to recipe when tomatoes are coming in faster than I can use 'em!
Compare to a chunky catsup with a 'kick' or a thicker sweet & sour salsa. I can it for
long-term storage. Great with Mexican dishes. It's served at The Sloger in Crested
Butte with cottage cheese. From CO Restaurants and Recipes by Benjamin Bennis.

7 lbs. tomatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped	1 cup sugar
2 medium onions, coarsely chopped	3 cups apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon salt	2 oz. garlic, finely chopped
2 oz. ginger, finely chopped	1 - 1 1/2 teaspoons Tabasco

Throw everything in a pot and cook until desired consistency.



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Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

Turkey Talk

Turkeys wouldn't win the prize for being God's most beautiful creation. They're really a rather disgusting and ornery creature, even while prancing around the barnyard. Their highly praised fanned tail feathers are actually tattered and torn—if any remain after the bird fights through all its initiated squabbles. Does the poor turkey even realize that behind its puffed chest is a ragged rear?

The turkey is the perfect example of false pomposity so it's no wonder the word turkey has become a synonym for a jerk.

The turkey that will grace holiday tables across our country hardly resembles the scavenger birds eaten by our forefathers, which were exceptionally thin—weighing a meager 10-pounds. When a pilgrim was fortunate enough to kill the critter, eating the gamey, stringy bird became a real trial. If not careful, a tooth could be broken on bits of buckshot.

Even though today's turkeys are injected with butter, wired with timers, stuffed full of dressing, and scientifically groomed to weigh up to 40 pounds, they remain foul fowl because they're also injected full of artificial chemicals and drugs to speed growth while living in their ultramodern artificial environment.

In spite of all the advanced technology that's designed to improve and perfect the turkey, the poor critter still must endure the humiliation of a caste system. In the grocer's freezer case, exposed for all the world to see, turkeys are divided according to apparent quality. The extra-fancy double-breasted birds command a greater premium than the pitiful and pathetic generic 'Grade C' fowl that could be missing a portion of its wing or has a small nick cut into its skin.

Who are we mortal humans to be so demanding of ultimate perfection in our turkeys?

Who among us is perfect—lacking any physical or emotional scar, impairment or deformity?

If I were coldly and nakedly displayed for the turkey that I am, my imperfections and scars not only would be visible, but glare out with blinding intensity!

This holiday season, because I know myself to be a fallible turkey, I am grateful God loves and accepts me ... just as I am!

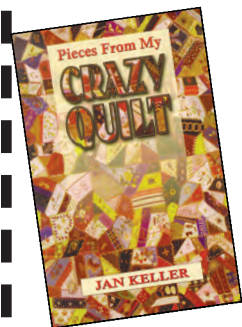
When I realize I've been pompously strutting around with a puffed chest and a ragged rear, I find consolation in the following little anonymous poem:




If God can love turkeys, then He can love you,
Cause you are a turkey, and I am one, too.

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Poppyseed Bread

Submitted by Karen Collins, Fort Collins, CO



3 cups flour	3 eggs
2 1/2 cups sugar	1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoon salt	1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 teaspoon almond extract	1 1/2 teaspoon butter flavoring
1 1/2 cup milk	1 1/2 teaspoons poppyseeds
1 1/8 cup oil (canola, sunflower or similar)	

Mix all ingredients together and beat 2 minutes on medium speed.
Fill 2 greased loaf pans. bake 350° for 1 hour. Cool. YIELD: 2 loaves

GLAZE:

3/4 cup sugar	1/4 cup orange juice
1/2 teaspoon almond extract	1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon butter flavoring	

Mix all ingredients well. Spread over loaves.



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My Christmas Wish Is for Tradition

by Barbara Kalkis

I'm a great believer in change. Change kicks us out of the ruts of old habits. It forces us to see things from a new perspective. It stretches our imagination. In business, it is essential to survival. Yes, change is good. I'm all for it. But not at Christmas time.

At Christmas, I want tradition—like heirloom family ornaments on a green tree that is real or fake, as long as it's green! Not red, blue, metallic silver or gold. I crowd my house with red and (full disclosure) white poinsettias and pinecones nestle in evergreen boughs and wreaths on every flat surface. Angel ornaments dangle next to bells just in case Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life* was correct about bells ringing every time an angel got its wings.

I love houses cloaked in red, green, blue and yellow lights, interspersed with strings of white fairy lights. (Thank you, holiday clearance sales.) These traditional colors comfort as well as cheer me. They symbolize the enduring constancy of the Christmas message: Peace and goodwill.

However, change has invaded Christmas holiday culture. Designers have introduced decorations in colors that don't symbolize the season. Blues morphed into aqua, turquoise and navy. Red faded to cotton-candy pinks. Yellow invaded nature's rich blue-greens to become drab olive tones. Gold darkened to burnished brass and brown. Not to be left out—white must include hints of mint, blue, yellow and every other hue imaginable. It's like trying to select a paint color for the house.

At the same time, technology has bequeathed us with programmed flashing electronic lights. They dance in dizzying designs against the house. It's like staring at a broken neon sign.

Buzzing fans—busily bloating electric bills—pump up gargantuan plastic snow people, larger-than-life elves (always scary) and deer with blank stares. Forget the kids, it's enough to give adults nightmares.

Technology has even consumed the Christmas card tradition. Tired of selecting the perfect image and saying for the annual greeting card? Do you find that nothing extraordinary happened in the year to make letter-writing worthwhile, let alone having someone read it? No problem! Simply visit a website, select a picture with moving images and a message to match. Type the recipient's name and address, add your credit card number and voila! Instant card. No stamps, no hassle printing labels, no jogs to the post office. Click, click and you are finished. Easy-peasy.

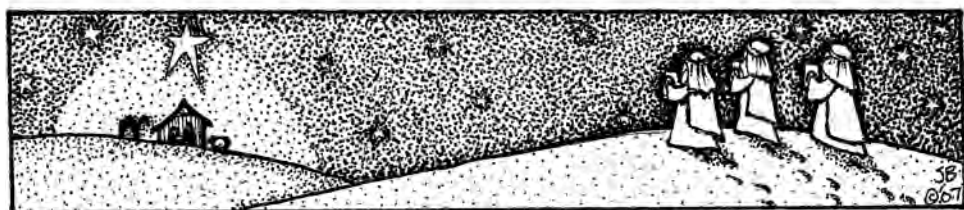
I look at these cards once, email a thank-you and delete them. They are not real. They are convenient.

How's this for a change: Traditional paper Christmas cards—purchased or handmade—that can be taped to walls and doors, creating a collage of holiday images that reflect the personalities and tastes of friends and family. I keep and re-read Christmas letters that talk about the everyday events that made the year memorable. Photos of the kids, the dogs, cats and—yes—horses that relatives and friends have acquired over the year create a link that closes distances.

It's trendy to be innovative, bold, attention-getting but traditions 'center' us. It's like trying a new recipe for company dinner. You can use exotic new ingredients but underneath the spices, garnishes and gravies, guests can relax knowing that they are eating good old familiar chicken.

We live in a constantly changing world. We must adjust every single day. That's life. But, maybe this Christmas, we can cherish tradition: like making a card, crafting decorations, or writing a Christmas letter about the routines that are life's real blessings.

© Barbara Kalkis. Barbara is a teacher, high-tech marketing consultant, and author of *Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.



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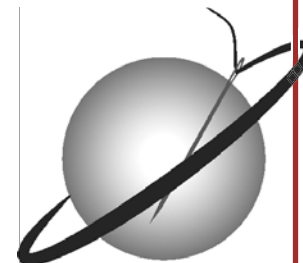
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Who's Ready to Hibernate?

by Deb Heatherly

As the temperatures cool and the days grow shorter, I look forward to all of the wonderful things that accompany this season. I find great joy in wearing comfy sweaters and boots, eating goodies made with apple or pumpkin, and watching the glorious changes of color on the trees all around me. And, while all of these things are wonderful, I particularly look forward to what my husband calls my hibernation period.

As a designer and speaker, most years I am on the road teaching and lecturing from mid-March until late October. Once home, it's time to hunker down and sew nonstop during the cold winter months. All of the designs flitting around in my mind plus those hastily sketched in the occasional spare moment between events can finally come to life. Like a squirrel gathering acorns to prepare for the approach of the cold days ahead, I gather my fabric and start to prepare.

My husband has watched this cycle for years and tends to stay out of my way when the gathering begins. He is always amazed that the madness that ensues eventually takes the form of new quilts and patterns. While hibernation to a bear means a period of sleep, my hibernation and the days leading up to it are full of activity.

How do I get ready? First, I tidy up fabric and take mental inventory of the colors I plan to use. Bits and pieces as well as yardage get folded and sorted by color. Some pieces get returned to their original storage locations, while others are set aside to be used in a new hibernation project. Next, I sort my thread to make sure there is plenty on hand. If needed, spools are purchased to add to the stash. In step three, all of my rotary cutters get fresh blades and scissors get moved back to where they are supposed to be. (As opposed to where they have ended up in the previous months.) Finally, bobbins are wound and design sketches are placed with fabric stacks, each ready for creation to begin.

The entire process really does make me think of the squirrels outside my studio window as they busily go back and forth adding to their supplies. (If only I had



their never-ending energy.) In a recent article, Jamie Allen stated that a new study from professors in the Department of Psychology at the University of California at Berkeley claimed that tree squirrels use a mnemonic technique called "spatial chunking" to sort out and bury their nut scores by size, type and, perhaps, nutritional value and taste. When they are hungry later, it is theorized they can remember where to find what they want.

Hmmm...sounds a bit like sorting fabric to me. Now if only I could remember where I put the blue floral and the teal companion print.

For our friends the squirrels and for this quilter, it's an exhausting process but one that is necessary to get prepared. I might be tired from the preparation but I'll be ready and truly enjoy my time when hibernation begins. The hardest part of the entire process will be deciding what new design to sew first.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers. When not in her studio, Deb is normally on the road doing Creative Grids® lectures and workshops for guilds and shops across the country. She is the designer of the Creative Grids Cat's Cradle tool, Strippy Stars tool, Turbo 4 Patch, Ultimate Flying Geese tool, Cat's Cradle XL, and the new Kitty Cornered tool. She is also the author of the books: *Cat'titude*, *Strippy Stars*, *4-Patch Panache*, *The Ultimate Flying Geese Book*, *Catitude XL*, and *Creatively Yours*. Visit her website at www.Debcatsnquilts.com. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, Grids Girls, for tips and inspiration. Grids Girls members have the opportunity to participate in exclusive Grids Girls mystery quilts two times each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7704296498004571>.

Quilt Shop Owners, you are invited to join the group above and Deb has an additional Facebook group just for you. "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only". <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524/>. You can contact her at Debscatsnquilts@aol.com or call the studio, Deb's Cats n Quilts Designs, 828-524-9578.

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Yvonne Hollenbeck CHRISTMAS GIFTS

A poem from Yvonne's new book,
A Stitch in Rhyme

*The kids nowadays at Christmas
usually rake in quite a haul;
it seems however long the list,
that Santa brings it all.*

*Then parents help ol' Santa out,
and sometimes search in vain
for G-I Joe, a special doll,
or fine electric train.*

*Then here comes Christmas morning;
it is almost like a sin,
because gifts that children like the most
are "boxes" they come in.*

Order *A Stitch in Rhyme* at www.yvonnehollenbeck.com!

© Yvonne Hollenbeck; 2022

Yvonne Hollenbeck, from Clearfield, SD, performs her original poetry throughout the United States, captivating audiences in her wake. She is one of the most published cowgirl poets in the West and is not only a popular banquet and civic entertainer, but also co-writes songs with many western entertainers. Yvonne also pens a weekly column in the "Farmer-Rancher Exchange" and writes articles about life in rural America in various publications throughout the West. For more information, visit <https://www.yvonnehollenbeck.com>



Become Inspired!

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

SETTING THE STAGE FOR JOY

As the year advances and the holidays approach, there is a natural excitement in the air as we begin to prepare for a season of joy. Crisp, cold sunlit days are the perfect time to host a wreath-making event with family and friends. From gathering evergreen boughs in the woods and foraging for red berries and cones to finding the perfect Buffalo plaid ribbon to make our own bows, creating festive wreaths for our own home or to give as gifts is a day well-spent. A late fall evening might be an ideal time to create joyful memories making deliciously scented homemade gingerbread ornaments to be hung on the family Christmas tree. When we fashion pieces by our own hand surrounded by people we love, we all feel a special connection to the season.



SPLendor OF THE SEASON

As our favorite Christmas carols play in the background, we can happily plan to prepare our home's interior for a season of giving. Cozy new arrangements of our wing-back chairs and country antiques can make an inviting new spot to gather. An early dry sink in original blue can be used to hold a petite Christmas tree alight with a string of lights and handcrafted coverlet stockings. A six-board blanket chest in a red wash might now hold an early trencher with cedar boughs, southern pinecones and fresh-clipped rose hips from the old stone wall. The ideas for how to cultivate a naturally warm ambiance of Christmas seem to be endless when we give ourselves the sacred time to create.

GLEEFUL GATHERINGS

Our anticipation for the season is always enhanced by knowing we will be sharing it with those we hold dear. Hosting a special evening meal as a prelude to Christmas is a special country joy. Creating candlelit pathways to our country homes using glass mason jars filled with sand and white votives provides a perfect country welcome for our friends. Guests will be inspired by the snug and cozy appeal of the glowing candles in each window of our home as evening approaches. Piping hot mulled cider spiked with cinnamon, clove and allspice simmering on the woodstove is a perfect warming treat as guests arrive. Homemade hors d'oeuvres that we have always wanted to make can be enjoyed on this special night. A country dinner of pork tenderloin with our homemade cranberry-apple compote can be enjoyed alongside vibrant string beans from our summer garden dotted with butter and fresh herbs. And a satisfying dessert of apple pan dowdy with fresh whipped cream can be a delicious end to our country feast. Without a doubt, hosting a holiday open house is a gift to all.

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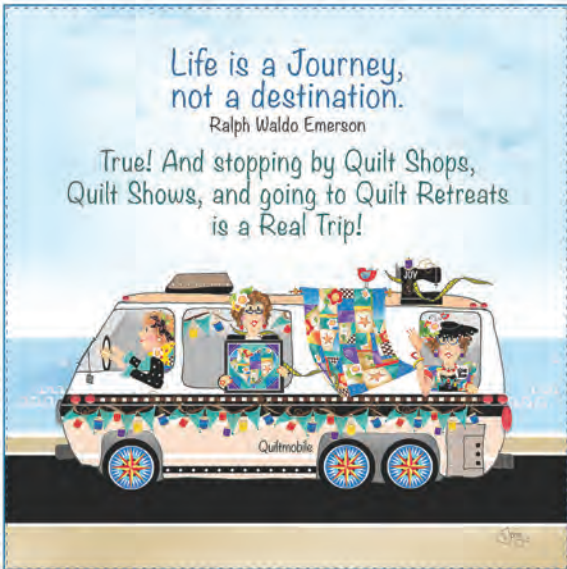
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GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



Joy in our day is a choice we make! Who we see, what we do, what we think about, can all effect our attitude and energy levels. If we hold the saying in our minds - **Too Blessed to be Stressed,** or, **I could choose peace instead of this....**we can find joy. I have read that we can't have two emotions at the same time so choosing Blessed, or thoughts of Gratitude will keep the stress away.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM: It is a fast pace world and things can get carried away. As soon as you catch yourself worry-ing about something, or complaining about something, quickly look at a picture of your grandchildren, or a beautiful flower, or hum a little tune. Choose a different thought, choose a peaceful thought, choose Blessed instead of Stressed. You will know when you have been successful because you will naturally take in a great big deep Breath of Life and you will feel Joyfully Blessed!

Joy & Blessings, Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written by Jody Houghton®. For color files of this writing contact Jody at: jodyhoughton@msn.com or www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com

TRADITIONS TO KEEP

Many of our most cherished memories of the holidays come from our long-held traditions. Whether it is keeping our tradition of hosting an annual open house to using our grandmother's special recipe for pork stuffing, we are in fact protectors of the past when we keep these traditions alive. They are soulful blessings to our family and to our friends and they are meant to be shared. Equally powerful, is the idea that we can keep the memory of ones we have lost alive through these tender traditions of love. Whether it is lighting a candle in their memory on Christmas Eve or giving to others each year in their memory, traditions keep us connected to our powerful past and they continue to shape us into exactly who we are meant to be.

Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques
She is currently working on her book, *New England Girl* NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com

Stories of a Farm Wife

by Tammy Page

Does Anyone Go Christmas Caroling Any More?

I grew up in a close-knit neighborhood before we moved to the country at the age of eleven. Everyone knew each other's name, their children's names and what kind of car you drove. The adults were friends, having backyard BBQ's, helped each other out when a car needed repair and babysat each other's children when they went to the A&P. One other thing our neighbors did was go Christmas Caroling together each December.

I can't remember the very first time I was able to go with the older kids and adults but I do remember the anticipation of hearing the carolers making their way down the street toward our house. I could hear them gradually getting louder as they went door to door. As they walked up our sidewalk, bundled in their winter coats, hat and gloves they gathered together in a circle and began to sing Away in a Manger, First Noel and Oh Christmas Tree. I remember mom and dad opening our wreath covered front door with me and my sisters in our pajamas as the carolers gathered together in a huddle.

The carolers urged us to join in if we knew the carols and my older sister and I would sing as loud as we could. Because this was a scheduled event for our neighborhood, we knew to expect them sometime that night. Mom would have hot chocolate and Spritz Christmas cookies to pass out to each one as they concluded their mini concert. Oh, how I couldn't wait to be a part of the group! I believe my sister was able to join them the next year after she turned twelve. My turn would soon come up in a couple of years.

Mom would bundle us up looking like the Pillsbury Doughboy. We had to be layered because we could be out for hours at a time and Indiana gets pretty cold by late December. No matter the weather, the economics that year or the war going on in Vietnam, the comradery and joy it brought to us carolers and the listeners was full of hope and happiness on Farrington Avenue.

CHRISTMAS SPRITZ COOKIES

Ingredients

3 ½ cup flour	1 1/2 cup butter
1 3oz. package jello (red and green preferably)	
1 teaspoon baking powder	1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla	

Instructions

Cream butter, sugar and gelatin. Add egg and vanilla. Beat well. Gradually add flour and baking powder. Blend until smooth. Refrigerate dough until firm. Roll into balls and press with bottom of glass or use a cookie press for prettier cookies. Bake at 350 degrees for 7-10 min.

—Tammy lives on a working farm with her family in IN, farm animals and many pets. She enjoys writing, decorating and collecting vintage homewares.



Bertha Corbett: Originator of Sunbonnet Sue

by Rachel Greco

Most historians agree that Bertha Corbett is probably the originator of the Sunbonnet Sue quilt pattern as we know it today. Born in Denver, Colorado in 1872, Corbett was a student in Chicago at the School of Normal and Applied Art. Afterwards, she studied with Douglas Volk in Minneapolis, Minnesota; then with Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1910, she moved to Los Angeles and married George H. Melcher.

Corbett stated that she first got the idea for the Sunbonnet Babies around the turn of the 20th Century. During a social gathering of artists, one of her friends observed that a faceless figure did not display emotional expression. She recalled seeing a small girl whose face was hidden by a large sunbonnet and remarked that she did not think a face was necessary in making a figure expressive. The other artists challenged her to prove her point. Bertha picked up a pen and the first Sunbonnet Baby was born.

In 1900, Bertha Corbett self-published her first book. In 1902, she collaborated with Eulalie Osgood Grove on *The Sunbonnet Babies Primer*, a series that continued for decades. In 1905, they published a second book and *The Overall Boys* came into being.

Corbett continued to illustrate her Sunbonnet Babies. They appeared in postcards, verse, a popular comic strip, and holiday greeting cards. They even adorned advertising and promotional literature, including the popular and still marketed Dutch Cleanser.


In an article written in the September 1907 issue of *The Housekeeper*, Corbett remarked, "The babies are so very young to be made to earn a living for me." She spent most of her time devoted to the creation and distribution of her "babies." Two of her babies, Molly and Mae, figured prominently in many of her sunbonnet illustrations.

Quilters have been using Corbett's Sunbonnet patterns for appliqué and embroidery work for well over 100 years. And though Bertha herself passed away in California in 1950, her designs continue to be a popular choice for many quilters today.

Rachel Greco owns Grandma's Attic, a traditional quilt shop in Dallas, Oregon/ A quilt historian and avid reader, she gives talks on needlework, the role of women in American history and their connection to fabric. Rachel has written several books and patterns, and runs Grandma's Quilt Club, a monthly quilt class where participants collection quilt block kits, learn about quilt history, and make new friends. Contact her at <https://grandmasattic-quilting.com>



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Wit and Wisdom Happy Holidays

by Roxahhe Ferguson

It seems that when autumn comes, so does the holiday season. The stores are putting up Halloween displays, possibly some Thanksgiving decorations, but before any of these are over Christmas decorations, candies, and gift items take over. It is a big rush and we have to work to not get caught up in it. It is almost a relief when January comes and we can take a deep breath and relax!

I like to focus on Thanksgiving and take time to be grateful to God for our many blessings. I am so thankful to have a comfortable home, plenty of food, clothing, and a bed to sleep in. I am blessed to have family nearby, children and grandchildren. Friends and neighbors are important to me, too. If we have good health today, that is an added blessing! I am also thankful for my church family and to know God who is ever-present in my life. There is so much to be thankful for in the beauty of nature around us.

When we enter the Christmas season, it is so important to stay focused on what the season is truly about and not get caught up in what the world around us has created it to be. All one has to do is look at the first six letters of Christmas...Christ, to understand the true meaning. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Christ. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as a baby over 2000 years ago. It is a beautiful story of a virgin birth, a baby born in a humble stable, his birth announced by angels to shepherds in a field. It might seem like a simple story, but it has a profound meaning. The sole purpose for Christ's birth was for him to die for mankind. God sent his Son, to take the punishment for the sin of mankind. If we confess our sin, believe that Christ died for our sin, and put our faith in him, then God's purpose for his Son is fulfilled in our lives.

Knowing this, then we can be prepared to truly celebrate the next holiday...Easter...when we celebrate Christ's resurrection from death. He died, but rose again in three days, his resurrected body witnessed by many, and not long after ascended to heaven. When we accept him in our hearts, we will one day join him for eternity in heaven.

So, it is not just Happy Holidays....it is Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and above all Happy Easter. We can be truly specific on why and how we celebrate our holidays when we know the God who is the reason for them..

If you enjoy reading articles from the Wit and Wisdom Writers such as Cheryl, you may also enjoy the books authored by the group. Contact the authors at: witandwisdomwriters@gmail.com.



The Artificial Tree

by Nancy J. Nash

On a marble-topped table near the bay window of her living room, my widowed grandmother displayed her house plants. I suspect that this stately and practical table came from the elderly man who owned the house before my grandparents. They were too poor to afford a house, but he gave them his in exchange for their taking care of him as his health declined.

Sometime during Advent, my grandmother would move the plants and replace them with a small spruce or balsam. Presents would mysteriously appear underneath. But one year, she supplanted the fragrant greenery with a tree that was less costly and easier to maintain. Realizing that she was aging, her son had thoughtfully brought her an artificial tree that could be displayed year after year during the Christmas season.

But as she grew older, so did the tree, and eventually, it fell apart. Years of use had taken their toll. Grandma declared that she would not have a tree that Christmas. It was too much work. She told us she just did not have the energy to set it up and decorate it.

One day, shopping in a nearby city, I happened to walk into a Salvation Army store and spot a very small artificial tree. It was slightly worn but still quite lovely, with red bows and tiny packages affixed to its branches. I don't remember the cost, but it could not have been more than a couple dollars. It did not require decorating and could easily be placed on the table in the bay window.

I purchased it and presented it to my grandmother, whose face lit up in joy and gratitude. The tree may have been artificial, but the love between us was real. As it turned out, she passed away the next February. The tree became mine.

Each December, the little tree finds its way to a table in my home. In October, a Christmas cactus finds its way from the porch where it spends its summers to a wooden stand indoors. The cactus was given to my grandmother in the 1920s when she and my grandfather first moved into the house with the marble-topped table in the bay window. During the Christmas season, the cactus diligently blooms. The tree and the cactus sit near each other, reminding me that I will see my grandmother again.



2022 Nancy Nash of Amherst, MA. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College, with two books listed on Amazon.com (Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story and Little Rooster's Christmas Eve).



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