



Freshvine

from the



News and Notes for Grandmothers from the Cherry Tomato Lady

www.cherrytomatolady.com

Making Summer Memories

Late Summer 2011



Sometimes I long for the simplicity of my childhood: fashioning dolls from hollyhocks on hot summer days, making frozen treats with Kool-Aid and toothpicks in the ice cube tray, lying in the shade of the giant oak reading *Misty of Chincoteague*.

I fret that my grandchildren might miss those simple pleasures. So I do my best to introduce them to some old-fashioned fun.

The warm weather isn't over yet so here are ways to make memories with your grandkids. I'm sure you have lots of ideas too. Do send them my way.

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Sweet Competition

Everyone got in on the cupcake-decorating act one summer day at our house: six grandchildren, six parents, two grandparents and neighbors too.

I baked the cupcakes, assembled the decorating supplies and let the creativity fly. Here are a few tips for your family's contest:

1. Ignore the protests of macho fathers or grandpas who try to bail out, and make sure everyone participates.
2. Arrange baked cupcakes, small bowls of frosting and decorations on a big table or kitchen island: sprinkles, gummy worms, berries, raisins, M&Ms. Use your imagination.
3. Keep a couple of wet wash cloths near by for wipe ups.
4. Provide dollar-store prizes – card games, big candy bars, kitchen gadgets, silly hats. I wrapped up each one and put them in a grab bag.
5. Establish categories for prizes: cutest cupcake, most colorful, oddest, etc. Have enough prizes so everyone gets one. To add to the fun, let winners trade prizes if they wish.



6. Choose impartial judges. We called in our neighbors to help.

7. Take lots of pictures so you have a record of the day for years to come.



Riddles & Giggles

How did the egg get off the freeway?
(Answer on back page)

Strike up the Band

Did you happen to see the *CBS Sunday Morning* TV show that featured the vegetable orchestra? If you missed it, Google "Sunday Morning Vienna Vegetable Orchestra" so you can see the segment and share it with your grandkids.

What started as a whimsy has become an international phenomenon. The orchestra has been giving concerts for twelve



years – and all the instruments are vegetables!

The musicians toot and thump and rattle with dried beans, pumpkins, onion skins, zucchini and red peppers. They use 70 pounds of vegetables per concert.

Now you don't have to go that far – but wouldn't it be fun to turn your grandkids loose with an eggplant or carrot or turnip and see what kind of music they can make? Maybe they'd even eat a veggie or two along the way.

Did You Know?

An average chicken lays 250 to 300 eggs a year.

Eggs are one of the few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D.

An ostrich egg can feed a crowd: one is the equivalent of about 2 dozen chicken eggs.

Grandmas Do The Darndest Things

Grandmothers can get away with wild and crazy ideas that kids are sure to remember.

Grandma Susan Punger is a master of the unexpected with her grandchildren. One sweltering summer day she proposed to a pre-teen granddaughter that they spend the whole day inside in the air conditioning – in bed. They stayed in their jammies, watched every TV show that caught their fancy, played games on the iPad, read to one another, had meals on trays and had thoughtful grandma-granddaughter conversations.

Gerri Arvanites knows how to create memories too. She stocks up on Reddi-wip and lets the grandchildren blast away at one another in the yard. She lives on the lake so they can jump in to clean up the mess.

Gail Vail, admittedly, is a magical grandma. She suggested to little Lauren that they grow a lollipop tree. They chose a bare branch and “planted” it in the yard. Then Lauren watered it a bit, per Grandma’s suggestion. Sure enough, by the next morning, that “tree” had produced a lollipop. A little more water each day, and lo and behold, they harvested a flavorful crop of lollipops.



Two-ingredient Dessert

Most any grandchild can stir up this light summer dessert. You need two ingredients:

1. a box of angel food cake mix and
2. a 20-ounce can of crushed pineapple. (Don't drain the pineapple.)

In a big bowl, mix the cake mix and pineapple with a spoon (not a mixer) until very well blended.

Turn into a lightly greased 9x13-inch baking pan, and bake in a preheated 350-degree oven about 30 minutes (or according to the directions on the box of cake mix). Cool and cut into squares. If you wish, serve with a dollop of whipped topping. Makes 12 to 16 servings.

Food Fun

A hit at our family gathering was a cherry pit-spitting contest. The kids marveled that we actually encouraged them to spit and they vied for long shots with their moms and dads. They liked eating the fresh cherries too.

An egg toss is easy, but potentially messy so make sure you have the hose ready.

A spoon race is another competitive event for all ages – along with bobbing for apples. (Why wait for Halloween?)

First Cooking Lesson

Eggs are the perfect food for starting cooking lessons with grandchildren. They are a good source of protein for youngsters and grandparents alike.

A friend tells me that a simple scene stands out in her mind: “I couldn't have been more than three years old, but I vividly recall my grandmother teaching me to crack an egg.”

To a toddler, cracking an egg is a big adventure. Kids also take delight in trying their hands at peeling boiled eggs.

Cooking comes next. Start with something simple: a microwave scrambled egg. I learned this recipe from one of my granddaughters when she was five:

With a whisk, beat one egg in a custard cup (no oil needed). Place in microwave and nuke on high one minute. The results are fluffy and tasty.



Seeds of Joy

Year after year, I plant my grandmother's cherry tomatoes and take joy in giving seeds to friends. I have an ample supply so if you'd like a few to plant with your grandchildren, please contact me with your name and mailing address.

This newsletter embraces the spirit of my grandmother, the original “Cherry Tomato Lady.” She passed down life lessons through her home cooking and by sharing her seeds. She always reminded me there were no guarantees with her seeds, but they haven't failed me yet.

Her recipes for desserts, main dishes and breakfast items are among 200 recipes in the book I wrote to preserve family memories. You can order the book, “Cooking with the Cherry Tomato Lady,” from www.cherrytomatolady.com or www.amazon.com.



Table Topic

The next time the family gathers around your table, start a conversation that engages everyone from toddler to grandpa.

A good question: **If you could watch only one TV show every week, what would it be?** And why? You might have guessed that mine is the CBS Sunday Morning show. Why? Because it is inspiring and informative.

Riddles & Giggles

Answer: He took the next eggs-it.

I'd love to know what you think about *Fresh From the Vine!*

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