



Freshvine

from the



News and Notes for Grandmothers from the Cherry Tomato Lady
Spring 2012

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Spring Appreciation



I've been cleaning drawers around the house and came across a journal I started in 1998, but set aside without finishing it. Called "The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude," the book is designed for its owner to jot down five things each day she is thankful for. I penned in only one every day, but how sweet those memories are to read 14 years later. Many involved grandchildren. A couple of samples:

"Cuddling Cameron while watching Teletubbies together." (He's almost 14, and I'm sure he'd be embarrassed now by that entry.)

"Frosting Jim's birthday cake with Kyra." (At 16 now, she's an accomplished cook.)

Those brief notes gave me such pleasure that I've re-committed to jotting down a simple note each evening.

What are you thankful for right now?

I'm thrilled about spring – thankful the bluebirds are nesting in our boxes, the hummingbirds have returned, and my cherry tomato plants are thriving. I'm also appreciative to each of you who has bought my cookbook and have followed the newsletter. I'm devoting much of this issue to a sample of heartwarming notes from readers. Thanks so much for sharing your joy in the kitchen and activities with grandchildren.

Your friend,

Joan, The Cherry Tomato Lady

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Kitchen Math



Several readers suggested the kitchen is a good place for kids to practice fractions – and that the newsletter should contain some problems for the grade school grandchildren to solve. Here are a couple of questions; make up your own tailored to the ages of the children.

1. Which is more: 12 cookies divided among 3 kids or 15 cookies divided among 3 kids?
2. Your soup recipe calls for 2 ½ cups of chicken broth and 1 ½ cups water. How much total liquid does that add up to?

Did You Know?



Did you know that radishes are ready to eat about a month after planting? They are good starter vegetables for young gardeners. Also, there's some healthful stuff in those little veggies – Vitamin C, calcium and potassium. Even the radish greens have Vitamin C; in fact, more than in the root. The kids might like a crunchy sandwich of sliced radishes on pieces of buttered bread.

Mea Culpa

I asked readers to let me know of any errors they found in "Cooking with the Cherry Tomato Lady." Typos seem to be inevitable in a self-published book. **Chris Burnham**, from California, was the first to respond – she knows how to spell "garbanzo" beans, and now I do too. (page 43 in the hummus recipe) Incidentally, you might want more garlic in this recipe if you like a stronger flavor.

More changes to note in your copy:

The **Pineapple Cookies** (page 93), are among the favorites in the book. However, the results may vary according to the type of flour you use and the extent to which you drain the pineapple. You may need **up to 4 cups flour** to make the dough appropriately stiff (so the cookies don't end up too flat).

Ohioan **Maxine Lavender** suggests baking the **Cream Puffs** (pages 63-64) for **30 minutes**. I agree that's enough time.



Oops, I left out the oven temperature for the **Secret-ingredient Cake** (pages 87-88). Bake in a preheated **350-degree** oven. By the way, even though the secret ingredient is prunes, the cake is delicious. Give it a try!

The recipe for **Sweet Cornbread** (page 224) calls for a 4-ounce package of instant vanilla pudding. The actual weight is **1.34 ounces** in most brands. It's the small package. I left out the temperature in this one too! **Bake it at 400 degrees** for best results.

There's *What* in This Cake?



I iced each little cake with cream cheese frosting, as Florence suggested, and then garnished them with teensy cherry tomatoes that I grew. These special little tomatoes come up naturally in Nancy Mittendorf's yard every year. Next year I hope to have a supply of these seeds to share with you.

As soon as I got **Florence Mazzaferri's** letter about one of her mother's favorite cakes, I whipped up a batch of cupcakes using the recipe. I took them to my writers' group and asked everybody what they thought was in the cakes. The treats were a big hit, but no one guessed a major ingredient was tomato soup.

Try making it with the grandkids. They'll love dumping a can of soup into the batter – and finding out how good it tastes.

- 2 cups **flour**
- 1 1/3 cups **sugar**
- 4 teaspoons **baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon **baking soda**
- 2 teaspoons **cinnamon**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons **ground cloves**
- 1/2 teaspoon **nutmeg**
- 1/2 cup **margarine**
- 2 **eggs**
- 1 can (about 11oz.) **condensed tomato soup** (do not dilute it)
- 1/4 cup **water**
- 1 cup chopped **walnuts** or **pecans** (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. To make a layer cake, grease and flour two 8-inch pans; for cupcakes, use liners or grease the pans. This recipe will make about 20 cupcakes.

Measure dry ingredients into a large bowl. In another large bowl, use an electric mixer to blend the margarine and eggs. Add the soup to this mixture. Beat two minutes. Then add water and blend another minute. Finally add the dry ingredients and blend two more minutes.

Spoon batter into pans. For layer cake, bake 35 to 40 minutes; for cupcakes, bake 17 to 20 minutes.

Frost with cream cheese frosting. (There's a recipe on page 85 in "Cooking with the Cherry Tomato Lady.")

Table Topics

Let's keep the kids in the conversation around the dinner table. How about asking, "What do you like best about spring?" I'd be curious about their answers. Another idea: "If you were a bird, what bird would you be?"

Good eating

I really got a chuckle from an email from **Martha Anne Bigler**, who lives in Louisiana: "I made **Tom's Tomato Pie** for dinner tonight and there is less than half of it left. My husband and I were the only two eating it and we also had green beans, new potatoes and squash casserole. I am pretty much too full to lie down. I made the pie with low-fat Hellman's mayo and reduced-fat cheese, but stuck with real butter for the crust. Absolutely delicious!" The tomato pie recipe in On Page 20 of the book.



Cooks' Comments

There is great diversity among the cooks who use my cookbook as noted by comments I've received.

Two cookies that everyone raves about are **Cathy's Fudge Squares** on page 102, and **Nancy's Graham Cracker Pralines**, page 109. The pralines are sooo easy – only three minutes in the oven.

Hands down, the most frequently made salad is **Karen Bain's Cashew Salad** on page 149. I have heard more about it from folks who live at Reynolds Plantation than any other salad in the book. The dressing that goes with it is good on almost any salad. Karen is my neighbor here in Great Waters in Eatonton.



The **Chocolate Chip Cake** recipe on page 92, given to me by my other immediate neighbor and good friend, **Susan Punger**, has been prepared by many good cooks. In fact, several people bought the book just to get that one recipe! One reader says she likes to make the cake a day ahead of serving it. That gives it time for the flavors to take hold. Many cakes are like that, you know.

Making Connections

I am convinced we really are all connected – if not by our common interests, by our past experiences. I continue to be amazed that my anecdotes about my growing-up years arouse the memories of so many readers.

Cheryl Taylor, who grew up in Tennessee, recalls, "My grandmother wrung the chickens' necks and hung the chickens on the clothesline too."

Ohian **Laurie Franz** writes that her parents called green peppers "mangoes" too. "I didn't know what a mango was until I was in college," she said.



Caryl Sternberger of Vandalia, Ohio, writes that her husband Johnny took her to the restaurant owned by my husband Jim's family. "He took me to Sully's on one of our early dates and I was so shocked to have a whole steak served to me. At home we always shared a large sirloin. When we did have steak, everyone got one piece."

New Yorker **Signe Sheldon**, a West Virginia native, was surprised I spent my summers at Indian Lake in Ohio. She recounts a vacation there with her family. "We stayed in a little house like the picture of the one in your cookbook, and the name Orchard Island really rings a bell for me."

Eating in Eatonton

Baking enthusiast, **Mary Sherwood Eaton**, reports from South Carolina about granddaughter **Julie**, who lives in Jacksonville, Florida. She says that Julie “got a kick out of your address in Eatonton.”

Funny – I never thought about that myself – the Cherry Tomato Lady who loves to cook and eat lives in “EATonton.”

The note written by Julie shows that the youngster loves to draw and bake cookies with her “grannie.”



Veggie Time

I sent our youngest grandchildren little “bunny gardens” and “pizza gardens” for Easter in the hope that if they grow vegetables, they’ll eat them too.

Where did I find such appealing seed kits? Online, of course. I am so excited about the website www.backyardsafarico.com. If you are looking for ways to get your grandchildren closer to nature, please check it out. The website belongs to the daughter of one of my friends, **Jean Herrero**. I can almost guarantee you will love the fresh ideas her daughter has developed. She also has a line of spices and rubs that are tasty too.



Thanks once more

I wish I could share all the recipes and notes from readers, but space doesn’t allow it. I even received recipes from another woman named Joan Ungerleider. Can you believe there’s another woman with my name? One day she surprised me with a phone call and we had fun getting acquainted. My namesake lives on the East Coast. Thank you again for your responsiveness. I welcome your emails and hope you continue to enjoy “Cooking with the Cherry Tomato Lady.”

Love Letters

I’ve filed all the notes from readers under “love letters.” I cherish one from sorority sister **Nan Tussing** in Connecticut saying she remembered fondly the homemade cookies my grandma mailed to me to share with my college friends. (She usually sent oatmeal cookies, kept soft with a piece of bread on top, page 94.)



Here are a few more excerpts, which might guide you in recipes you might want to try.



“Your **Pumpkin-Cranberry Loaves** have made me famous with my little crowd,” says **Karen Fleece** from Greensboro, GA. “Page 27 is stained and bent like a long-treasured recipe.” She explained she altered the recipe a bit by using fresh cranberries she put into a food processor. (Now you all

realize, that I can’t take any credit for the recipe. It came from **Joan Miles** who also lives in Greensboro.)

Karen also cited her affinity for **Ned and Mooshie’s Broiled Salmon** (page 180), **Penny’s Lokshen Kugel** (page 218), and **Bev’s Prime Rib Roast** (page 170).

Although her recipe is in my book, I’ve never met Mooshie, who is a jeweler in Cleveland and a friend of my daughter and son-in-law. I just know she’s a good cook.



Linda Maples of Eatonton writes that her top recipe choices are **Horseradish Halibut** (page 177) and **Chilean Sea Bass** (page 178).

Patty Kraut of Worthington, Ohio, likes **Horseradish Mashed Potatoes** (page 201). “They’ll forever be on our Thanksgiving table,” she writes.



Bringing families together
in the kitchen™

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