



Fresh from the vine

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**News and Notes for Grandmothers
from the Cherry Tomato Lady**

Gifts from the Heart

Dear Fellow Grandmothers,

What gifts do you remember receiving over the years? I treasure the ones that were offered "from the heart." Among them:

- ♥ a homemade cookbook written especially for Jim and me by neighborhood children Robin and Jill
- ♥ the English teapot my young children proudly presented to their tea-drinking mother over 30 years ago
- ♥ glittery chip clips grandson Cameron made when he was a toddler

When it comes to buying gifts for my grandchildren, I get frustrated. Like all kids, they fill their birthday and Christmas wish lists with princess castles, electronic games and gift cards. I don't want to deny them the joy of owning trendy toys, but I want to give them gifts they will remember long after the plastic toys are broken.

When Kyra was 10, I gave her a children's cookbook; it was a hit. Three years later, she mentions that book every time I visit her. She and 10-year-old sister Tess love to report on the dishes they've prepared.

Here are a few ideas I'm going to try out on the children this year:

- ! a football cake mold and some cake mixes for our aspiring gridiron star Scott, age 8
- ! a set of sprouting tops, jars and seeds for 14-year-old vegetarian granddaughter Adriana
- ! a hummingbird feeder, recipe for sugar water to feed the birds, and a bird-watching book for 8-year-old Olivia, who is thrilled by the tiny hummers at my kitchen window

I welcome your ideas for keepsake gifts for the grandchildren. I'll share some with our readers.

Your friend,

Joan Thomas Ungerleider, the "Cherry Tomato Lady"

Featured Recipe

from "Cooking with the
Cherry Tomato Lady"



Carol's Spinach Salad

- Torn spinach greens (about 12 ounces)
- ¼ pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
- ½ red onion, sliced
- ½ cup vegetable oil, such as canola
- ½ cup sugar or sweetener, such as Splenda
- ¼ cup catsup
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire

Combine spinach, mushrooms and red onion in a salad bowl. In a small saucepan, mix together oil, sugar, catsup and Worcestershire and heat slowly until sugar dissolves. Pour over vegetables and serve immediately. Serves four.

See inside for more ideas for spinach!

Pasta Tasting Party

When children turn into teens, they are so involved with friends that you may have to lure them to visit. You might, however, get their attention if you invite them and a couple of their friends to dinner.

Plan to keep the get-together short and let the guests help cook. Buy three types of pasta; angel hair, bowties and tortellini are good selections. Provide several sauces, such as traditional spaghetti sauce, pesto and a light cream sauce. The sauces don't need to be home-made; bottled versions are fine. Offer a variety of toppings as well: toasted pine nuts, fresh chopped herbs, grated Parmesan.

Complete the meal with salad and bread sticks, and let the tasting begin. You might find yourself the most popular grandma on the block.

Pop Quiz: Do you know your pasta?

Pasta is fun party fare because it comes in many shapes and sizes. See if you or your older grandkids can match types of pasta with the shapes they resemble.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| ___1. Rotelle | a. Bow ties |
| ___2. Conchiglie | b. Little wheels |
| ___3. Farfalle | c. Spiral twists |
| ___4. Ravioli | d. Small grains |
| ___5. Penne | e. Stuffed pockets |
| ___6. Orzo | f. Seashells |
| ___7. Tortellini | g. Filled rings |
| ___8. Fusilli | h. Tubes with ridges |

Answers appear on the back cover.

Riddles & Giggles

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Why did the boy ask his dad to sit on top of the freezer? | 2. What do you call a stolen Hershey bar? |
|--|---|

Answers appear on Page 3.

Easy Cream Sauce for Pasta

Neighbor Cindy Lutini makes and sells delicious fresh pasta. She advises folks to go light on sauces and keep preparation simple. Here's how she taught me to make a simple cream sauce for ravioli:

Melt three tablespoons of **butter** in a heavy saucepan or skillet. Add one cup of **half-n-half** and heat on low or medium low, stirring often. Let the mixture simmer until it coats the back of a spoon. Season with **salt and pepper** to taste. Toss cooked pasta in the sauce.

I like to top the pasta and sauce with a dusting of **nutmeg** and a sprinkling of **pine nuts**. This makes enough sauce for about four small servings.

Fun with Spices

Child-Tested Treat

Teach your grandchild to make these easy-to-prepare cinnamon rolls for the family.

You need one can of **refrigerated biscuits**, half a stick of **butter or margarine** (melted), and about four tablespoons of **sugar** and one tablespoon of **cinnamon**.

Separate the biscuits. Mix the sugar and cinnamon together. Then roll each biscuit in the melted butter and then in the cinnamon-sugar mixture. Place the biscuits in a prepared 8- or 9-inch round cake pan and bake according to biscuit instructions. Eat while warm.

Room Perfume for Mom

The scent of cloves takes me back to the day in elementary school when my classmates and I made pomanders for our mothers to hang in their closets. Make one for yourself while you help your grandchild craft one for his mom.

You will need oranges (or lemons or limes for a smaller version), a box or two of whole cloves, and some pretty ribbon. One at a time, poke the cloves into the fruit, covering the entire surface with them. Tie with a pretty ribbon, creating a loop for hanging.

P.S. If the cloves are difficult to insert in the fruit, first make a small hole with a needle or toothpick; then insert the clove.

Vinegar Sampling

I like to experiment with the numerous types of vinegar available on today's grocery shelves. Here are a few that I buy:

Balsamic vinegar – This strongly flavored vinegar is aged a long time -- 12 years, or longer. The longer the aging, the higher the price; but, thankfully, a little goes a long way. To use it as a dipping sauce for bread, pour two or three tablespoons of olive oil in a small dish and spoon a teaspoon or two of balsamic vinegar on top. Use a hearty bread for dipping, such as five grain or Italian.

White balsamic vinegar – I prefer this mild vinegar for salad dressings. Mix equal parts of vinegar and honey and drizzle it over a combination of romaine lettuce, sliced red onions, toasted pine nuts and orange wedges or sliced strawberries.

Red or white wine vinegar – Peel and slice a cucumber, add a few thin slices of sweet onion and top with half a cup of red or white wine vinegar mixed with two or three packets of sweetener. Mix thoroughly and chill two hours before serving.

Rice vinegar – Commonly used in Asian cooking, this vinegar is nice and light. Substitute it in your favorite salad dressing recipes and see if you like the difference.

White distilled vinegar – I use it chiefly for cleaning. Try soaking a sponge in this vinegar; then wipe down your shower doors to remove soap scum.

The Internet has lots of sites with ideas for using vinegar. You can "Google" the Vinegar Institute for a few.

Times Past

When I was a girl, we had only one kind of vinegar in the pantry – apple cider vinegar. Besides using it in recipes, my frugal mother and I regularly rinsed our hair in it to make it shiny. First we washed our hair with Lustre-Crème Shampoo while singing the jingle "Dream girl, dream girl, beautiful Lustre-Crème girl...."

Then we mixed half a small glass of water with an equal amount of vinegar, poured it over our hair, rubbed it in thoroughly, and rinsed with clear water.

I told my granddaughters about the homemade conditioner, but they declined the opportunity to try it.



Veggie in the Spotlight

Spinach

When son Greg and daughter Jenni were preteens, they turned up their noses at spinach -- until they visited their Aunt Carolyn in



Boston. She invited them to pick fresh spinach from her little garden, rinse it off with a hose and nibble on it right there. The fresh, crisp taste surprised them and after that, they gladly ate it in its raw form.

Slip some fresh spinach into the next salad you prepare for your grandchildren. They might like it.

Spinach ranks super high on the list of veggies that are good for you. While it's full of nutrients for the growing children, it's especially important to grandmothers. Harvard studies have shown its value in promoting eye health. Dark, leafy vegetables contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which appear to reduce the chance of developing cataracts.



Fill our Mailbox

We want to hear from you! Do you have a quotable grandchild, have a tip to get your grandchildren to eat their veggies, or know a good joke? If so, send us your ideas, and if yours is chosen, we'll send you a small gift.

Send an email to:
cherrytomatolady@plantationcable.net

Send a letter to the Cherry Tomato Lady at:
100 Camak Place
Eatonton GA 31024

Answers to Riddles & Cigiles, found on page 2.
1. He wanted a cold pop.
2. Hot chocolate

Toddler Choice



Grandson Evan considers raspberries the perfect finger food. They supply important antioxidants and fiber. So do blueberries and strawberries – but unfortunately they don't have those neat little cavities that fit so well on kids' fingers.

Quick Take

Instead of keeping a dish of candy or cookies on my kitchen counter when the grandkids visit, I set out a bowl of cherry tomatoes. The grandchildren dip in freely, and I'm pleased they are taking in healthful vitamins instead of sugar or fat.

Past Quiz answers (from page 2)

1. **Rotelle:** b - little wheels
2. **Conchiglie:** f - seashells
3. **Farfalle:** a - bowties
4. **Ravioli:** e - stuffed pockets
5. **Penne:** h - tubes with ridges
6. **Orzo:** d - small grains
7. **Tortellini:** g - filled rings
8. **Fusilli:** c - spiral twists

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The Cherry Tomato Lady
100 Camak Place
Eatonton, GA 31024

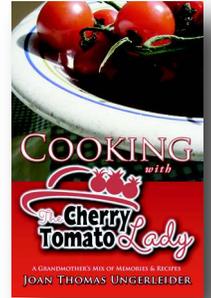
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Marie Weghorn Schillo
The original "Cherry Tomato Lady"

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 a bounty of cherry tomatoes.