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FOOD THEMES FOR HOLIDAY GIVING

The most wonderful time of the year is here, so bundle up and join friends and family to get into the holiday spirit. Last year celebrations had to be virtual so I plan to indulge in all the activities my calendar can hold. There are endless options starting with Candlelight Tours at the Seton Shrine and ending with the Houses of Worship tour on December 26. You can find a complete list at <https://www.visitfrederick.org/holidays/holiday-events/> Tickets go fast, so don't delay!

Meanwhile you might be searching for some creative gift ideas. Consider a food theme, which offers so many possibilities and might be the start of a career as a chef, food chemist, recipe developer, or maybe even a registered dietitian nutritionist. I have been asked why I chose nutrition as a career and believe my grandparents food customs and religious beliefs had a big influence.

Here are 10 ideas to get you started:

- Make aprons or purchase them at a craft store and have their names engraved to encourage everyone to get into the kitchen.
- Purchase a children's cookbook. My first one was *Betty Crocker's New Boys and Girls Cookbook* received at the age of 10, from my grandmother. I still recall the yummy treats I made, not especially nutritious but sweet and tasty.
- Give them an *Easy Bake Oven*. Created in 1963 it was a favorite toy of mine and I made sure we had one in our household full of boys. My son Alex is the primary cook in his family and remembers using it.
- Make a video of yourself creating family favorites in the kitchen. A gift money can't buy!
- Purchase a copy of the children's book, *How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World*, by Marjorie Priceman and placemats imprinted with a world map. This fun silly book takes readers around the globe to gather ingredients for an apple pie. You could include a suitcase, baking dish and go make a mess in the kitchen and a nostalgic memory.

- Rummage through grandmas' cookbooks and see what treasures you can find. We have one titled, *Hay Springs Community Cookbook*, published in 1937. It includes recipes from homesteading families in Nebraska who settled the land in the 1800's. What joy it will be to pass on recipes from a Great-Great Grandmother to the next generation.
- Make a family cookbook and have all members contribute. So very often the cooks' secrets are stored in their creative mind and no one can even begin to replicate them. If the recipe isn't recorded then it might be lost. There are personal blank recipe books you can purchase to make the process easy. We all imagine family will be with us for years to come, but time and pandemics prove we do not have forever.
- Ask a new family member to bring a treasured dish from their family of origin. Brittany, my daughter-in-law, always brings the pumpkin pie, created by her deceased grandmother Naomi from Ohio. It's delicious and is a constant at the Rhoades holiday table. The recipe is a secret, otherwise I would include it now.
- Teach your grandchildren or nieces and nephews how to create ethnic recipes from your family lineage. Pat, a close friend, makes the Italian Cookies Pizzelles and Biscotti which her mother taught her how to bake. She makes Kolache Cookies for her husband's family who is of Czechoslovakia decent.
- Give cooking lessons either zoom or in-person. Some options are The Kitchen Studio, and Frederick County Parks and Recreation, Frederick Community College, and the Common Market.

I close this article listening to Immanuel, by composer Tony Anderson, which puts me into a holy space and the real meaning of Christmas. This is my very last article as I am retiring at the end of this year. My years in Frederick County, which began in 2004, have truly been unforgettable.

Within the first month of working in this community, I could tell I had arrived at a very special place. People and organizations really do collaborate to serve the citizens in the county. I plan to stay involved as a Master Gardner volunteer and hope to see you out and about.

My last piece of nutrition advice is to always be open to a new food experience and support your local farms, restaurants, and businesses to keep Frederick the magical place that it is. I will do my part by having the most delicious dessert I have ever tasted, Coconut Pound Cake, at Monocacy Crossing. Godspeed!

SUGARED & SPICED PECANS

Pecans, a staple from my home state of Georgia, make a favorite gift to make for the Holidays

1 pound pecan halves
3/4 tsp. salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup or less sugar
1 egg white
1 tablespoon water

Beat egg white and water with wire whisk until frothy but not stiff. Stir in salt, cinnamon, and sugar. Add nuts and mix well until completely covered. Place on a large cookie sheet and roast for 45 minutes on 200°F. Stir every 15 minutes during roasting. Store in a plastic bag or airtight container. Great gift item!

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