

Making Memories in the Kitchen

FAMILIES SHARE TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY FOODS By Rachael Carnes

Whether it's tamales, suet pudding or even lutefisk, many Eugene families keep memories alive by preparing their favorite holiday foods.

"We eat mushroom soup every Christmas Eve, in keeping with the Polish tradition of my husband's family," says Leigh Christiansen, who co-owns Eugene-based Calypso Fly Fishing Guide Service with her husband, Barrett Christiansen. "We gather chanterelles in the fall, and dry sauté and freeze them for our soup. This ritual is very dear to us."

Many holiday foods originate in religious traditions, elevating simple ingredients to symbolic levels.

"Hanukkah isn't Hanukkah without latkes," says Karen Luks, who works at the UO's Prevention Science Institute. Latkes are made from potatoes, onion and ground matzah meal. Attorney and mom of two Julie Manela adds, "I associate latkes with sour cream and applesauce with the holiday — my mom trying to keep up with frying enough of them, and the smell of frying potatoes."

For Briana Parra, a full-time UO student who holds down three jobs while raising a teenage daughter, the holidays mean seafood. "We do a shrimp and oyster fry every Christmas Eve," Parra says. "We invite our friends and neighbors. It's a tradition that goes back to my great-grandparents."

Then there are the sweets, a seemingly endless collection of delectable morsels made from flour, butter, eggs and sugar. For Greg Schofield, who sells and dispatches rock out of Knife River's Springfield quarry, the holidays are all about stollen, German yeasted bread studded with candied fruit and nuts. "Sliced and toasted and slathered with butter, it's very yummy," Schofield says.

For lots of folks, it just doesn't feel festive without the flavors their families have enjoyed for years.

"We've made nut tossies for generations, and my Grammy always used to make kiffles," says Kristy Munro, who owns and operates the GlassRoots Glass Shop. Hungarian pastries, kiffles and tossies are like tiny pecan pies. "Both are eaten faster than I can make them," Munro says.

Food connects us to the past. The tastes and smells

remind us of sharing time in our kitchens and around our tables with loved ones and friends.

"My mom's parents came from Naples in the early 1900s, and brought this delicious cookie recipe with them," says Lisa Christon, author and director of local non-profit Josephine's Closet. Each year, Christon's family churns out hundreds of tasty mostaccioli, or Italian chocolate spice cookies.

"My mom passed away a few years ago," Christon says, "and making this cookie makes me remember all the happy memories of making them with her." ♦



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