

LIVING SECTION

Homemade Christmas spirit

by Monine Stebbins

Working on your Christmas spirit yet? There's kind of a delicate balance between too much pressure at Christmas and wanting to do nice things for your family and friends. If you're having trouble getting into a holiday mood, you may need to re-evaluate how much gift giving you can do.

I know that I tend to add a few new people to my list and seldom drop anyone, so some years I end up with more than I can do easily. This has been known to give me the "bah-humbugs" which are no fun at all. The other thing I've been tempted to do is to spend money ordering packages sent from fancy catalogs.

You may not be the only one feeling the pressure. Talk it over with family members—maybe you can come up with a solution that will help everyone. My family started a rotation system years ago. When you have five sisters it helps to be sensible. None of us wanted to completely neglect the family, but we couldn't keep up with remembering everyone either. We tried drawing names for a while, but that was difficult and we never got around to all the family members. Now we rotate, working from the youngest to the oldest.

You can often save money by doing gifts yourself—but you're trading time for money and you're the only one who can decide which is best for you. There are things from the store that can be put together easily. If you're mailing the items, try to keep the weight down to save on postage costs. Various flavored teas and unbreakable Christmas tree ornaments are easy to send. I personally feel that the battle is nearly won when I get my out-of-town packages ready.

I like to make homemade gifts from the kitchen, too, especially ones that use Oregon products. The all-time favorite is chocolate coated hazelnuts which are quite reasonable since we have a lot of nuts on hand. They're easy, too. Eight ounces of milk chocolate melted in a double boiler will coat about 2 cups of roasted hazelnuts. Drop the clusters of 3 or 4 nuts onto waxed paper

and let them cool until set. They don't need to be refrigerated or frozen; in fact the chocolate will bloom (get white on the surface) if you do. They probably do need to be out of sight, though, because they're a real temptation.

I also put walnut halves into dried prunes, which is easy and nutritious.

Since my time to do these homemade treats is usually limited, I've found that it helps to choose just one or two items that I make for everyone. I get all the ingredients and then double the batch or make one right after the other. Quick breads, yeast breads or cookies can be done this way. If you're avoiding sweets you might make cereal nibbles, cheese spread or even flavored vinegars. Last summer I made dill green beans and if I can bear to part with them, I may give some of those as gifts.

A jar of Russian Tea or other punch fixins' that are dry can be a nice gift, too. I've even made a big batch of buttered rum batter and put it in nice jars to give as gifts. If you have something that needs special care, like refrigeration, be sure to mention that when you deliver the gift. Include the recipe, too.

Get friends and family into the act. Last year we had great fun decorating the gingerbread cookies. We baked them one day and decorated them the next so we had a relaxed time together.

Here are a couple of recipes that make big batches and can be given as special homemade gifts. The applesauce cake can be simple or have lots of fruits and nuts added. It's been a family favorite for years. The cheese spread is great for gift giving or entertaining.

MOM'S APPLESAUCE CAKE

- 1/2 cup shortening
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 cups applesauce
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Spices can be varied. I use:
 - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1/2 teaspoon cloves
 - 1/2 teaspoon allspice
 - 1 cup raisins or cut-up dried prunes
 - 1 cup nuts, if desired

1 1/2 cups candied fruit, if desired

Cream shortening and sugar together. Add applesauce. Combine all dry ingredients in a separate bowl and then add to the applesauce mixture. Mix together just until moistened. Add nuts and/or candied fruit by stirring with a spoon, if desired. Put in well-greased bread pans, filling them 3/4 full. Regular loaf pans take 1 hour and 20 minutes at 350°. Smaller pans take a shorter time. Test by inserting a toothpick in center. If it comes out clean, the cake is done.

HOLIDAY CHEESE SPREAD

In a large mixer bowl, blend 1 cup softened butter or margarine with

about 1/2 to 3/4 envelope of dry onion soup mix. If you use the whole package, the spread will be salty. You can add more later if you want a stronger flavor. Add 2 tablespoons milk and 2 cups cheddar and 2 cups Monterey Jack cheese, but any favorite cheese may be used. Continue to mix with mixer until well blended. Then add about two tablespoons pimento stirred by hand.

You can form this mixture on little circles of cardboard, making them into the shape of a Christmas tree, then sprinkle with parsley and decorate with pimento bits. Chill to make firm. It can also be put in pretty jars or plastic containers and given as gifts. Makes about 5 cups cheese spread. Store in refrigerator.

INTERESTING FACTS

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The average American man is five feet, eight inches tall. The average American woman, five feet, four inches tall.

The blue whale can go up to half a year without eating—it's maintained by its blubber.

Because their eyes are on the sides of their heads, most birds have excellent fields of vision.

A "Santa Claus School" was opened in 1937 in Albion, N.Y. to train men to play the part of Santa Claus. Six students enrolled for the one-week course.

We do not do business with South Africa.

ASB

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'TIS THE SEASON,



TO GIVE TO PROJECT HELP.

Once again this winter we want to help make sure no one goes without heat. Last year, thousands of folks combined their efforts through PROJECT HELP, the energy fuel assistance fund, to help 1600 people keep warm in Oregon alone.

Because donations from Pacific Power customers and our own employees were matched with dollars from stockholders,

PROJECT HELP raised over \$275,000. ALL of that went right back into the community to help people who needed financial assistance to weather a fuel emergency.

Look for PROJECT HELP donation envelopes enclosed with your next utility statement.

Your generosity will help those in our community who might be left out in the cold this winter.

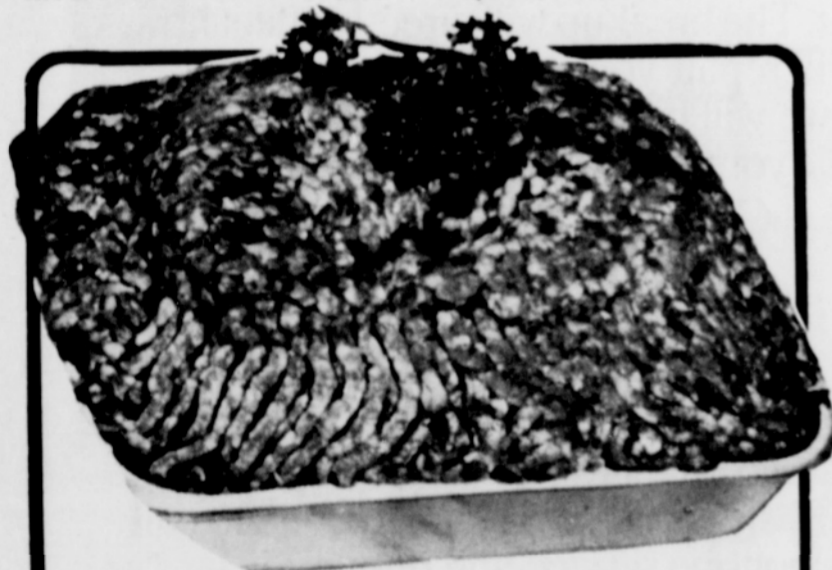
And that should make you feel very warm indeed.



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