

Now Have Your Decorations and Eat Them too...

By Maxine Buren
Statesman Woman's Editor

It seems to us that half the pleasure of Christmas day is anticipation, and when there are many preparations for the big day, there is just that much more enjoyment. Making decorations and then eating them is fun, especially when there are children to assist in preparations.

Prettiest of all the decorations at the Salem Garden club's recent Christmas greens show, to our way of thinking, was the beautiful tree decorated in strings of bright red cranberries, fluffy popcorn and cellophane-wrapped popcorn balls. It took plenty of time to string the berries and corn, and to fasten hundreds of kernels of the corn onto limbs with pins, but it was very effective and so pretty. Old fashioned too, and we are convinced some of the old ideas were wonderful.

An old German custom for Christmas morning decorations in

some families uses small oranges. Cut the peel and strip it back like a flower. Then carefully divide up the segments and loosen them slightly. In the center place a candle held by a quill prepared like this: With a razor blade shred the quill back about an inch, pulling the tiny strips down fountain-fashion. Place a tiny candle in the center. Lighted and placed at each setting at breakfast, the decoration is bright and gay.

Pictured on this page is another form of edible decoration. The miniature trees can center your Christmas day dinner table. For the Cone Christmas Trees, cook $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ pound marshmallows (about $2\frac{1}{2}$ dozen) over hot water until syrupy, stirring frequently. Put five cups popped rice breakfast cereal into a large greased bowl and pour in the marshmallow mixture, stirring briskly. Pack lightly into nine small paper cone drinking cups which have been greased. Insert a wooden skewer into each, for tree trunk. Allow to cool. Gently remove paper

cups, roll in confetti candy or colored sugar such as are used for cake decorations. Push the end of the skewer into red apples for standard. This makes nine trees.

Good old popcorn balls are versatile too. Make them big and round and wrap them in clear, red and green cellophane for Christmas tree ornaments. Form several into the shape of small, medium or large sized snowmen and use to center the dining table or as decoration for the mantel.

Della Robia and walnut wreaths are becoming more popular each year. The Della Robia wreaths use small fruits and nuts amid greens. A decoration the children would love to make.

Nuts lend themselves to wreaths too. Bananas, apples and other fruits can be wrapped in cellophane and tied to the trees to add a festive look, and of course there are always cookies to tie on the tree. One tiny dining table tree we saw recently was ornamented with candy kisses, tied with red and green ribbons. The tree was stripped at the end of the meal.



Miniature trees made from marshmallows, butter, popped breakfast cereal and apples, and rolled in tiny candies make edible Christmas decorations for the table. Home-made ornaments of other kinds are fun to make too, and make good eating.

Fruity Team in Gay Winter Salad

Sweet yellow canned peaches and tart red cranberries make a good team in salad. Mold them in strawberry-flavored gelatin with crisp apple for a bright and gay winter treat.

FAVORITE WINTER SALAD

1 cup canned peach slices
1 package strawberry-flavored gelatin
2 cups liquid (canned cling peach syrup plus water)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar
2 cups raw cranberries
1 cup diced unpeeled red apple
Lettuce for garnish
Mayonnaise

Drain and dice peaches. Dissolve gelatin in 1 cup hot liquid; add remaining 1 cup liquid. Stir in salt and sugar. Chill. Grind cranberries and mix lightly with peaches and apple. When gelatin begins to thicken, blend in fruit. Pour into an oiled 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -quart mold and chill until firm. Unmold onto garnished serving plate and serve with mayonnaise. Serves 6 to 8.

Nuts Make Handy Evening Snack

A good confection for special meals, or just for an evening's snack begins with nuts and in this area it may be fiberts from your own back yard.

SPICED FILBERTS

2 cups toasted filberts
1 cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
1 tablespoon cinnamon
Few grains salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine sugar, water, cinnamon and salt. Bring to a boil. Boil for two minutes. Remove from heat, add filberts and vanilla. Stir until syrupy, looks cloudy. Place on waxed paper or buttered platter and break apart.

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JACK'S CHRISTMAS PLUM HAD NOTHING ON MODERN PRUNE

The plum that little Jack Horner pulled out of his Christmas pie would today be called a prune—the type of plum which is firm and sweet enough to dry whole. Dried prunes have been favorites for holiday or other winter cooking from way back when this nursery rhyme was written. But modern Jack Horners have better prunes—more plump and tender which mostly sell packaged so are cleaner and more convenient. They no longer need long soaking plus long stewing. Some are specially treated with moist heat so are extra tender and take less time to cook, or are soft enough to eat "as is" like a confection.

This winter prunes are plentiful and good buys and you can cook them to any special form for your special use—rich and chewy, soft and juicy, or very soft for sieving.

TIPS FOR STORAGE
Waxed paper and cellophane wrappings on bread and other bakery foods will keep them fresh longer and preserve the flavors if they are closed tightly after the amount needed is removed. Bread stored at the usual room temperatures will remain palatable for longer periods of time than if it is stored in the refrigerator. Bread kept frozen in a home freezer cabinet will remain fresh for as long as a year.

of plump prunes in thick, full-bodied juice is to put some in a fruit jar, cover with water, screw the top on, and hold in the refrigerator four to six days. No cooking required.

For a breakfast or dessert fruit, most people like softer prunes, prepared by cooking rather than soaking. Cook in water at a "slow boil" from 30 to 45 minutes to desired tenderness. Add water during cooking if necessary because the fruit takes up considerable moisture. Prunes have so much natural sweetness that they don't need added sugar, but if you like them sweeter, add sugar or honey during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Prunes are best if allowed to stand in cooking liquid several hours after they are tender.

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Two Flavors in This Fruit Pie

Once your pastry is made there's practically nothing to it to put this pretty and delicious pie together. Canned peaches and fresh cranberries need no special preparation. Cook the cranberries in thickened peach syrup a few minutes, combine with the peach slices and pour into a pastry-lined pan. Cover with a lattice topping and bake half an hour.

PEACH CRANBERRY PIE

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups canned peach slices
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup syrup from peaches
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups cranberries
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon grated orange rind
Pastry for single 9-inch crust and lattice top

Drain peaches. Heat syrup and cranberries to boiling. Stir in blended sugar, salt and cornstarch, and boil 2 minutes. Add peaches and rind, and pour into pastry-lined pie pan. Top with pastry strips arranged lattice fashion. Bake in hot oven (400 degrees) 30 to 40 minutes. Serves 6.

ADD OLIVES

The newest trick to give mince-meat pies a real meaty texture is to add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped ripe olives to the mince-meat for each pie.

Lucky You, Who Dine on Hopping John

A delicious and easy way to have a priority on the services of Dame Fortune and Lady Luck throughout the coming year is to eat Hopping John on New Year's Day, at least so say some old-time cooks.

How this good luck dish of rice and peas came by its name is a mystery, but one must not tempt fate or take a chance. Better eat Hopping John on the first day of the year. For that matter, the recipe we are giving you is good enough to become a regular on the menu throughout the year.

This Hopping John is made with black eyed peas and of course, rice. The bay leaf and the spray of celery leaves will add a flavor so delicious that those who eat it will wish to know what secret seasonings have been used.

HOPPING JOHN

1 cup black eyed peas
2 cups boiling water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound salt pork or fat bacon
1 large onion, sliced
1 spray of celery leaves
1 small bay leaf
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon black pepper
2 cups boiling water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup uncooked rice
2 tablespoons minced parsley

Place peas and boiling water in a saucepan. Cover and allow to stand 2 hours. Do not drain. Cut the salt pork or fat bacon in

squares and brown in a hot skillet. After the peas have soaked, add the pork or bacon, the onion, celery leaves, bay leaf, salt and pepper. Add the boiling water and simmer in a covered saucepan until the peas are nearly tender. Discard the bay leaf. Add the rice and simmer in the covered saucepan until the peas and rice are tender. Add water if the dish becomes too dry. More salt may be added if desired.

To serve, place the pieces of pork or bacon on top of the peas and rice and sprinkle with the parsley. This recipe makes six servings.

Pork, Cranberries Combine in Dish

Most folks like their pork chops the good old-fashioned way, but every now and then somebody comes up with a super recipe that makes pork chops a deluxe dish. Cranberry-Hawaiian Pork Chops not only taste good, but add a festive note to what might very well be an ordinary dish.

CRANBERRY-HAWAIIAN PORK CHOPS

(Makes about 4 servings)
4 loin pork chops
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon melted shortening
1 cup undrained pineapple tidbits
2 cups fresh cranberries
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Dredge chops in flour seasoned with salt. Brown in hot shortening in skillet. Combine remaining ingredients; pour over chops. Cover; simmer 25-30 minutes, or until chops are tender.

The Statesman's FOOD SECTION

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Pear Dessert Is Enhanced by Lemon

Here's another dessert that will put you among the unusually good cooks when you serve it. Pears are the main ingredient.

CANDIED PEAR DESSERT

6 cups uncooked pears cut in eighths
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ginger
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup molasses
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsifted flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine
Heat oven to 350°. Mix first

six ingredients; pour into a 2-quart casserole. Combine sugar and flour. Cut in butter or margarine until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over pears. Bake 50 minutes or until pears are tender and top is brown. Yield: 8 servings.

GOOD TASTE

lip-smacking spread for crackers is made by combining a can of tuna, flaked very fine, with 2 tablespoons mayonnaise, 2 tablespoons chili sauce, 1 tablespoon lemon juice and a generous dash of Tabasco and seasoning salt. Mix well. Heap in a bowl and surround with crisp crackers or squares of Melba toast.

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