

MEMORIES FROM THE HEART

By Betty Schaefer McCormick

Every now and then I get really hungry for some of my parents homemade cottage cheese. It was the best. I remember the big white dish pan sitting on our cob burning kitchen cook stove with a white dish towel over it to keep out insects and germs. The milk from our own cows was in that pan and the curds were forming and we as a family were waiting for the first dish. Dad or Mom, when she could still walk and get around on her wheel chair, would look in every now and then and see how the curds were forming. When the curds were formed and they thought it was ready the whey would be squeezed out and the cheese was ready. What a treat. There is no cottage cheese as good as what my parents made. Jim, my husband, says his Mom's was the best and I am sure in his household it was the best. Either way, homemade cottage cheese is the best. This past week Jim and I visited the National Cheese Judging Contest held here in Green Bay. There were 1,360 cheeses to be judged. It was an awesome sight. We meet and visited with two of the judges from South Dakota State University. After three days of judging, the overall top champion was crowned. The cheese maker was from Antigo, WI. You could just see the pride on his face. We talked to him afterwards and he had been working on just the right recipe for such an award winning cheese for quite some time. It made me think of Mom or Dad when they had just the right recipe for their homemade goodies.

Also Mom's homemade bread was something to be reckoned with. She would get up early and get her bread mixed and rising. In later years when her Arthritis was very severe, she would knead the dough for exercising her hands. Sometimes, she would fry some rounds of dough in hot fat, which is what was used then, not oil like today, and when the dough was done frying, sugar was sifted over it, or a person could pour syrup over it. That was such a treat. As I am typing this, I can smell the aroma from the kitchen.

Dad also was a very good maker of Head Cheese. Now I know some of you, readers, would never consider eating that. Dad used only the best cuts of the leftover meat from the bones when he was done butchering. The meats and spices were mixed and put in cheese cloth and when it was done processing; Dad would cut the wonderful tasting meat for our sandwiches. I have never tasted Head Cheese as good as my Dad's.

My Mother's doughnuts were the best, just the right amount of spice and cooked in hot lard to perfection, as well as her sugar cookies, just the right amount of ingredients to make the sugars the best ever tasted. Our neighbor, Mary Kennedy, also made a wonderful sugar cookie. Esther Denekamp made wonderful doughnuts. Her daughter, Darlene, and I would come home from school and smell them as we entered the front yard. What a treat after a day of school.

Mom and Dad would can hundreds of jars of fruits and vegetables for our family. They were wonderful providers. They were always willing to share the food with the less fortunate. I can remember Dad telling me to go to the cellar and get some canned jars of food for a family less fortunate.

After butchering, the tallow was used to make homemade laundry soap. The best kind of soap to keep your whites –white. I can find good homemade soap when I visit one of the Amish shops. When they hang out their clothes, they are white. I enjoy driving by their farms and seeing the clothes blowing, their beautiful gardens and the children playing old fashioned games.

This time of year I have been thinking of the garden planning my parents would be doing. I have started with some of our plans. We just can't plant in our garden plot because all the deer and wild life enjoy our garden tremendously. We now make deck gardens, using big pails from our

local deli and bakery. The deer have gotten way too healthy compliments of the McCormick's gardens.

I know all of you have your favorites that your Mom's and Dad's have made. Relish those memories. Those goodies were all made from the heart and not heated up in a Microwave. They were made with much love, kneading, standing over hot stoves and no air conditioning, and served to their loved ones with pride. How fortunate we are to have such wonderful memories.

We as a community need to work hard at getting all of the things done that need doing before the celebration. Are you able to be involved and help in any way? Are you willing to do your share?