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CELEBRATING WITH FAMILY FAVORITE RECIPES

I am extremely excited that the holiday season has arrived. Finally a bit of familiarity and time for reflection and celebration, even if it is just the two of us in our little home in the woods. The decorations are up, the cards have been mailed and the smell of evergreen lingers in the air. In the background Nat King Cole is singing nostalgic carols. There won't be the typical festivities with family and friends, but I will be participating in the 25 Days of Frederick challenge.

The 25 Days of Frederick challenge is a partnership between the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, Visit Frederick, Frederick County Office of Economic Development and City of Frederick Department of Economic Development. There are 25 challenges and adventures to bring the community together this holiday season. Learn more at <https://www.visitfrederick.org/25-days-of-frederick/>

Food is a big part of holiday celebrations and we all have favorites we equate with celebrating the season. Grandma's famous stuffing, your sister's homemade rolls, and Uncle Jack's spiced eggnog. Each family and culture has their own special traditions passed down through generations. With the extra time you have sheltering in place, I encourage you to contact loved ones and record those favorite recipes before it's too late.

If you are feeling really ambitious, then create a Family Favorite Recipe Cookbook. Each member can contribute two of their yummiest recipes written in long hand. The little ones can draw pictures for divider pages. Add some live photos of everyone making a mess in the kitchen. The cookbook will become a family treasure for present and future generations.

Enjoy these favorite recipes from our family.

AUNT LOUISE'S STRAWBERRY CAKE

This was my very favorite dessert at Georgia family reunions

- 1 small package strawberry jello
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 1 cake mix (yellow, white, or strawberry flavored)
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup canola oil
- 4 eggs
- 3/4 cup thawed frozen strawberries

AUNT LOUISE'S STRAWBERRY CAKE (continued)

Dissolve jello in cold water. In separate bowl add cake mix, flour, jello dissolved in water, and canola oil. Beat for 2 minutes on medium speed. Add eggs. Beat for 1 minute. Add thawed strawberries. Beat for 1 more minute.

Cooking instructions based on type of pan used:

- Rectangular pan - Bake for 1 hour at 300°F
- Bundt pan - Bake 50 to 60 minutes at 325°F
- Two cake pans - Bake 30 to 35 minutes at 350°

Let cake stand for 10 minutes. Place on serving plate and ice once cake has thoroughly cooled.

Strawberry Icing

1/2 cup frozen sliced strawberries
4 tablespoons butter
3/4 pound powdered sugar

Beat with mixer strawberries, butter and powdered sugar. Spread on cake and refrigerate until ready to serve.

CHRISTMAS SPINACH & PINE NUTS SALAD

My mother-in-law Eleanor was an avid gardener in sunny California where my husband grew up. A meal was not complete without a fresh green salad. This was a Christmas dinner favorite!

3/4 cup toasted pine nuts, coarsely chopped
1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup olive oil
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 quarts of torn fresh greens – all spinach OR half spinach plus half butter lettuce

Toast pine nuts and coarsely chop. Clean greens and give time to dry. Mix together spices, olive oil, vinegar and salt. Fresh lemon juice can be substituted for vinegar. Place greens on salad plate, sprinkle with nutmeg and pour on dressing. Allow 2 tablespoons of dressing for each cup of salad.

PINEAPPLE CASSEROLE

This is a must have item on the table during holidays, especially good with spiral sliced ham.

2 (20 ounce) cans of pineapple chunks
2 cups of grated sharp cheddar cheese
6 tablespoons white flour
6 tablespoons sugar
1 full sleeve of Ritz crackers
1 stick of butter (optional)

Mix together flour and sugar and set aside. Drain pineapple. Place pineapple in mixing bowl. Add grated cheese and sugar and flour mixture and stir well. Pour into casserole dish and sprinkle crushed Ritz crackers on top. Melt butter and pour on top of casserole. If you omit the butter then spray the top of casserole with cooking spray for browning. Cook for 30 minutes in 350°F oven. Serve warm.

I encourage you to take on the challenge and become a part of the #25DaysOfFrederick! Also you can join in some of the virtual house tours, virtual tree lighting ceremonies and virtual tours to celebrate the holidays. Stay safe and Happy Holidays!

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