



Betty Groff

## “I Cook Because I Love People”

Mrs. Abram Groff, Mount Joy RD1, whose chief hobby is cooking, says “I cook because I love people.” This is the title of the first chapter of her book “Good Earth & Country Cooking” which was co-authored by Jose Wilson, a free lance writer who lives in New York City and Rockport, Mass. She has written four interior decorating books and was food and feature editor for House & Garden magazine fifteen years. She is now business manager for James Beard’s Cooking Class in New York City. He is the best known chef in the United States. He demonstrates french cookery and has put out twelve books. Jose is also a contributing editor now for House & Garden magazine.

To quote this farmer’s wife, “One thing just naturally seems to lead to another”, as she tells how she turned a hobby into a full-time business not only for herself but now involves the whole family and employes several others.

Yes, right now promoting her 250 page cookbook is almost receiving priority over her restaurant and family. 30,000 copies of this book came off the press mid April of this year. It has been a very successful book, sales of which are surpassing most books that are coming out. It made the best seller list in York County last week. It can be obtained at book stores everywhere from the publisher Stackpole Books, Cameron and Kelker Streets, Harrisburg, Pa. 17105 or, if you are fortunate enough to eat at the Groff’s Farm Restaurant, Mrs. Groff will autograph a copy for you.

In the way of promotion the first thing Groffs did was to contact 7500 parties of legible reservations made at their restaurant in the past year and a half. One out of seven ordered books. They went to eight foreign countries and to every state in the U.S.A. They put coupons in Pfaltzgraff pottery of York, since they use their china and all Pfaltzgraff’s national advertising uses her recipes.

Mrs. Groff has had many speaking engagements before large groups, including the New Jersey State Grange convention and particularly at various women’s club meeting where she spoke on the ways and whereof of Pa. Dutch food and about her cookbook. Fran McCabe, Marketing Coordinator for Pfaltzgraff Company, makes arrangements for Betty to put on food demonstrations at large store. At present she has engagements for one at Wanamakers in Philadelphia for September, one for Macy’s in New City City and one for Kauffman’s in Pittsburgh for October.

This book, which took two years to write reads like a novel as Mrs. Groff gives facts and fallacies about the Mennonites and the Pa. Dutch people, some of her husband’s and her family’s background both of which are tenth generation natives of Lancaster County, Pa. and descendants of Hans Herr, she tells about their own family, their farm, how she started in the restaurant business, some notable experiences and some humorous things that happened. She gives famous Groff’s Farm Restaurant menus, holiday, seasonal luncheon, dinner and wedding menus. The book is interspersed with colorful photos of the Groff family, employes and scenes about the home as well as culinary sketches.

The greater part of the book is devoted to the recipes for Mrs. Groff’s old-fashioned and family recipes which have made their restaurant world famous. It isn’t strange then that Jose Wilson, who grew up in the same kind of country background, in the Cumberland area, where the food was



by  
Mrs.  
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simple and satisfying should team up with in writing this book and should say “Our kind of food is the kind I’m eternally hungry for.” Included also are the recipes to freeze and can vegetables and fruits as well as recipes for preserves, apple butter, pickles and relishes. It even tells how to make wines that are used for mincemeat and other special recipes.

Groff’s 96 acre farm is located on Pinkerton Road, about one and a half miles south of Mount Joy, in East Donegal Township. Groffs bought this farm in 1955. Considerable work needed to be done on the 200 year old stone house so it was not until 1956 that they could move into the house.

Mrs. Groff assisted her husband with their 12 acres of tobacco and worked with the hay. They took Bob Rote to raise when he was 15 years old and he became a lot of help on the farm. When he left home about six years ago they quit raising tobacco. Bob is married, lives near Rheems and is in business with Earl Lokey. They have milk trucks. Bob and his wife have two daughters, Sherry and Susan, whom the Groffs call grandchildren. Groffs had a dairy of 34 Holstein cows and shipped to Inter-State Milk Producers until one year ago. Abe now farms 16 acres of wheat, 26 alfalfa, 41 of corn and 1 of sweet corn which they use in their restaurant. He planted 72 grape vine stalks two years ago which are producing.

Groffs have two sons. Charlie will be 17 next month and Johnny is 13. They both help with the barn chores and Charlie works in the fields. Charlie helps carpenter, cooks and is a waiter in the restaurant. He is taking “food trades” at Mount Joy Vo-Tech School. He is also interested in motors and autos. Johnny runs the dishwasher in the restaurant and serves as a waiter in the dining room. He is active in all kinds of sports. He did play drums.

Mrs. Betty Groff, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Herr, Herr Road near Strasburg grew up on their farm where they kept a dairy and shipped milk to Supplee, raised beef cattle which Mr. Herr butchered in winter and grew melons in the summer. Part of their farm was especially suitable for growing melons and Clarence and his brother Emory developed a special Persian melon. They also grew cantaloupes, crenshaw melons and watermelons, a total of four acres. Clarence has retired but is still remembered for his melons, home-cured hams, dried beef and bologna. Four years ago his son Richard bought the farm. He has 45 Holsteins and continues to raise four acres of melons. This time of year people from all parts of Lancaster County beat a path there to get their melons.

Betty grew up in this atmosphere where many people came and went to buy meat and melons and there were usually about twelve people at the dining table. Food was plentiful and deliciously prepared and thus she developed a taste for good food and learned to prepare it. She also learned to love people and liked to meet them. She, like her mother, took a Home Ec course at West Lampeter High School. After graduation she became a secretary for New Holland Machine Company. As a girl she was in the 4-H sewing and cooking clubs a total of six years. At 13 years of age she entered her canned and baked goods at the West Lampeter Fair. Her lemon chiffon cake won in both the adult and school division.

Abe is a son of Mr. and Mrs. Wlas Groff, now retired from their chicken and dairy farm near New Danville. Elias Jr. farms that farm now and has chickens and steers.

When Abe and Betty were first married they lived at Betty’s home and Abe helped butcher. Through this experience he learned the cuts of meat and how to carve and prepare them. After four and one half years on their own farm Betty missed seeing people, and had a desire to get out among them. Hearing of a county restaurant which was looking for a Mennonite girl to take special bus loads of people for a meal she decided to try it since her rooms were large and she had entertained large family groups. Her first group in 1961 numbered 42 and she very ably fed them. More



Mrs. Groff is proud of the food turned out in her kitchen. Sharon Gross bakes the bread, Ron Lutz helps her bake the pies and Ron bakes the cakes.

bus loads came and these folks passed the word around and it wasn’t long until people came from far and near. Groffs have received much favorable publicity, not through their own volition but because of pleased guests, which has brought many satisfied new diners to their unusual farm restaurant.

Today, after fourteen years, Groffs have expanded and can handle 80 to 100 people at a time. They serve meals by reservation only. Dinners are served at 5 and at 7 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday. They have this same menu each evening except Wednesday when they serve a special menu. The vegetables and pies change with the season but this menu is basically the same as it was fourteen years ago: Cracker pudding, old-fashioned chocolate cake with caramel icing, fresh fruit cup or ham and bean soup, roast prime ribs of beef, baked country ham, chicken stoltzfus, mashed potatoes with browned butter, bread filling, happy beets, green beans in ham broth, pepper relish, chow chow, spiced cantaloupe, spiced watermelon rind, shoofly pie or blueberry crumb pie or cherry crumb pie, choice of ice cream, sherbets or chocolate sundaes.

Groffs will take luncheon reservations for groups of 8 or more people and serve some wedding receptions. They have been more or less pushed out of the farm house as a living area. One year ago Abe converted the tobacco house cellar into a family room and kitchen. He did a beautiful job making a rustic setting using old weatherboarding and wide boards from an old building and having a beautiful stone fireplace built in one end. On occasion they even use this lounge for entertaining guests.

Abe and Betty enjoy greeting the guests as they arrive, chat with them during the meal and send them off with music. Betty, having been a first chair cornetist in her high school band, loves to entertain with her horn. Abe sings and if there is a pianist among the guests they play the piano. Everyone has a happy time together.

When Betty first opened her house to serve meals she did all the work herself besides helping with tobacco and hay. She had one small son and was soon to have another. After five years she hired Erma Engle, a neighbor, to assist her. Abe carved the meats and still does. She now has two helpers from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. who work on the food. Erma Engle is responsible for the cooking. She cooks the vegetables and cooks and prepares the chicken. Mrs. Sharon Gross bakes the bread. She makes the pie crusts and Ron Lutz fills them. He also makes the filling and bakes the chocolate cakes, however, he will be going back to Penn State University this fall. Eight or ten local girls come in to serve the dinners. Betty says “I help as much as I can with vegetables and with freezing.” Abe does the bookkeeping and letter writing now. Anyone of the crew takes reservations. Calls come in anytime from 7:30 A.M. to 10 P.M. Many times they are compelled to say “Sorry, we’re filled up.”

Groff freeze their own corn. They bought over 800 dozen ears of corn to freeze, not including the 75 dozen a week they used for serving, last year. They put 800 quarts of corn in the freezer. So far this year they froze 5 bushels of green beans. They put 1000 pounds of blueberries in the freezer. They buy frozen vegetables all year to make chow chow. They make 70 to 100 quarts at a time. Mrs. Groff, unlike most housewives

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Betty Groff in front of her antique corner cupboard filled with Pfaltzgraff china holds her recently edited book “Good Earth & Country Cooking”.