

Ida Risser

It seems that children make Christmas. They add excitement to the air, they encourage decorations and they want lots of cookies and other traditional foods. Without them the tree might not be decorated and the gifts bought and wrapped. Cindy likes to place the reindeer on the same spot on the same table as previous years and Santas must hang from the same doorway.

We expect all the children to be home except Nancy who will spend her Christmas skiing in Canada. She plans to fly home for Easter next year. She has traveled quite a lot on the West Coast this year and even spent a week in Mexico but through all her letters and phone calls tell us we are not forgotten.

There are so many things to do that take ones time. Little errands and big ones take us here and there over the county for ourselves and others. Even in the home, we often find it isn't the big jobs but the little ones and all the

interruptions that come along which cause us to say "Can it be lunchtime already?"

But if you have extra time, the school districts are willing to fill the void with recreation for adults and evening classes. I've just been reading some of the possibilities in our township—slimnastics, bridge, decoupage, knitting, oil painting, upholstery, fly tying, stocks and bonds, handwriting analysis and self defense.

So if you want to try something new in the new year, which will soon be here, look into the likelihood of a class meeting your interests at a nearby school.

Puritan Yule

Puritans and Calvinists refused to celebrate Christmas in 17th century England. Celebrations were banned and charged with being anti-religious sentiment. People payed penalties for missing work on Christmas day. Christmas did not become a legal holiday in New England until 1856.

Special Treat For Santa

This Christmas eve, when Santa Claus comes to visit, show him that your family really cares. Don't leave out dry old peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Or last week's left over chocolate chip cookies.

Instead, treat Saint Nick to a special treat--Cheddar cheese!

There are lots of ways Santa—and all your guests throughout the holiday season can enjoy Cheddar cheese. For an easy-to-prepare snack, try Cheddar slices with slices of tart apples or melon. Just as tasty are cheese balls rolled in chopped nuts. Or consider making bread sticks using Cheddar cheese.

If Santa's had a long night and needs a light breakfast, Cheddar cheese pinwheel rolls might be the perfect accompaniment to the meal.

Of course, such a world-renowned guest deserves the best Cheddar cheese there is. To assure Santa and all of his friends of a top-of-the-line product, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made quality grade standards available to the manufacturers of Cheddar cheese.

The USDA--AA and A grades—can be used only on cheese that has been inspected and graded by a government inspector. To qualify for inspection and grading, the cheese must be made in a plant which has met USDA standards for

cleanliness.

Grade AA Cheddar must have a consistently fine, highly pleasing Cheddar flavor (appropriate for its curing category), a smooth compact texture, uniform color, and attractive appearance. Grade A Cheddar is also good quality cheese—but not quite as high as Grade AA. The flavor is pleasing; however, there may be some variation in flavor and texture between packages.

Grading is voluntary, and users pay a fee for the service. Although in some sections of the country consumers may not be able to find Cheddar cheese with a grade indicated, this does not necessarily mean that the cheese was not USDA inspected or graded. Sometimes, manufacturers ask that their cheese be graded for sale to retailers, but choose not to advertise the fact that their product is graded.

Over the years, Santa has done quite a bit of traveling in southwest England, where Cheddar cheese got its start long ago. He knows what to watch for in Cheddar. And one thing he always checks is the cure—or aging time—of the cheese.

Cheddar cheese labeled "mild" is aged for about three months. "Sharp" Cheddar takes about a year to age, and "medium" somewhere in between.

Living the natural life at the North Pole with his elves and reindeers, Santa Clause appreciates the fact that Cheddar cheese—made from fresh milk—is a natural food.

Amish Dolls

We recently received a request from one of our readers for a pattern for Amish Dolls. She mentioned in her letter that one of the Farm Women Society's was making them last spring.

We have not been able to locate the group that was making the dolls and would appreciate hearing from any of our readers who either were involved in the making of the dolls or who knows where we could find some information on them. Address your replies to M.

Piper, Associate Editor, Lancaster Farming. We thank you for your help.

Farm Women Calendar

Saturday, December 21
Farm Women Society 28
banquet with husbands at
Historic Strasburg
beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 28
Farm Women Society 5
Christmas party at the
home of Emma Peifer at
1:30 p.m.

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Christmas Solstice
Northern European tribes used to celebrate their chief festival of the Yule around the time of the winter solstice. That's when the days began to lengthen and the "rebirth of the sun" was honored.

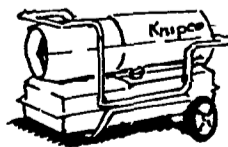
Christ's Mass
Christmas — the name — derives from the Old English "CHRISTES MAESSE," meaning Christ's Mass. Our present spelling most likely came into use around the 16th century.

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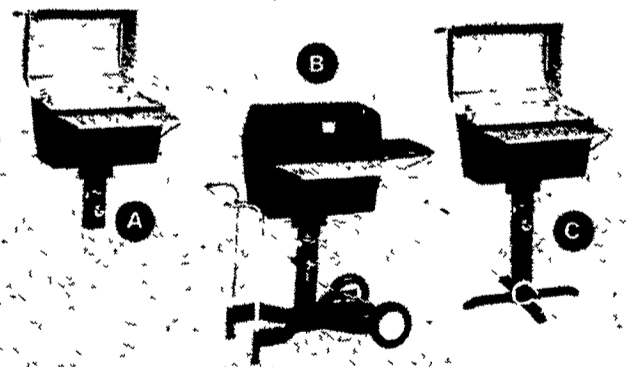
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