

HOMESTEAD NOTES

(Continued from Page 43)

homestead are branches of greens, candles, angels, stars and gingerbread houses.

On Christmas Eve the entire family goes to church. After worship, later that night, the Christ Child brings gifts and decorates a tree which is not put up until Christmas Eve.

The final celebration of the German Christmas season is January 6 when the Three Wise Men go from door to door collecting money. This money is then distributed among the poor.

The Christmas tree, tradition explains, stems from Martin Luther's having brought a tree into his home one Christmas Eve to show his wife and children the beauty of the Christ Child's Birthday. Attempting to depict the natural beauty of the dark night, Luther used candles to represent the stars.

Candles are also put in the windows of the homes to guide the angels through the darkness to their homes where they may come in and eat. Food is left out on the tables for them. One particular treat set for the angels and family as well is the German Spritz.

German Spritz:

2 1/4 cups sifted flour
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
few grains of salt
1 cup butter
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 egg

Sift dry ingredients together and cut in butter with pastry blender. Break egg into measuring cup. If it does not measure 1/4 cup add water to make 1/4 cup. Add with first mixture and vanilla. Beat well. Fill cookie press half way. Using crown design, press onto chilled cookie sheet. Decorate with red or green candied cherries. Refill cookie press using star design and make more. Bake 400 degrees F. for 10 minutes. Remove from sheet at once and cool on wire rack. Makes five dozen.

"God Jul." Greetings from Sweden. Christmas lasts a month in Sweden beginning December 13 with the feast of St. Lucia and ending January 13. On St. Lucia Day, the eldest daughter, according to custom, wakes early and dresses in a white robe, wearing a crown of seven lighted candles surrounded by greenery. She serves the family coffee, saffron buns and Christmas cookies while they are still in bed.

She represents the queen of lights and portrays the coming of longer days of daylight to the northern country.

On Christmas Eve, at midnight, the Swedes have their midnight Smorgasbord, when a huge table of food is prepared. Fish, meatballs, breads, rice porridge, saffron buns, ginger cookies, almond cookies, jellies, ham, brown beans and relishes are included in the traditional meal. One almond is hidden in the rice porridge. Whoever finds it in his dish receives a Marzipan candy shaped in the form of a pig.

Gifts are distributed by Jultomten as he arrives riding his goat called Jullirock. The family sets food out for Jultomten and they tie bundles of grain on the trees for the birds so they will also have food.

Marzipan

1 can (8 ounce) almond paste
2 tablespoons beaten egg whites
1 cup sifted confectioner's sugar

In a medium-sized bowl, break up almond paste with a fork. Add egg white and work paste with a fork well. Knead in the sugar until the mixture is stiff enough to form into desired shapes. Marzipan may be used to stuff dried apricots, figs and dates or it may be rolled into candies.

"Meri Kurisumasu." Greetings from Japan. Since less than one per cent of the population of Japan is Christian, Christmas is not observed as extensively as in predominantly Christian nations. The secular aspects of Christmas are widely observed however because the people are fond of festive celebrations. Stores in cities especially proclaim the commercial aspects of secular traditions of Christmas.

The theme of peace on earth is also compatible to Buddhist and Shuntu teachings. Heterosho, an old

Japanese God, is interpreted as Santa Claus. He checks the behavior of the children without the aid of a helper since he is endowed with eyes in the back of his head as well as in front. He sees all!

A popular Japanese cookie is a sesame seed confection.

Sesame Seed Cookies

3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter
1 egg
1/2 cup sesame seeds
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
tasted sesame seeds

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in egg and add sesame seeds. Stir together flour, baking powder and 1/2 tsp. salt. Stir into creamed mixture. Shape into eight inch by two inch logs. Wrap dough in waxed paper and chill until firm, for at least two hours. Cut into 1/4 inch slices and bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 350 degrees F. for 12 to 15 minutes. If desired, press toasted seeds into top before baking. Makes 32 cookies.

To celebrate the holiday season, the Conestoga United Methodist Church began work on this extensive project in September. The Church presented to the community the traditions of songs, costumes, foods and telling of customs of Christmas around the world. Whether stated "Feliz Navidad" or "Meri Kurisumasu" the message is the same — "Merry Christmas."

Toddler topics available

SCHUYLKILL HAVEN - An infant's first teachers are his parents. The early months and years are filled with new experiences. His school, in his crib, the floor or anywhere else that he spends most of his time. His instructional materials are familiar things like soap, toys, spoons, or cups. Time for learning is almost any time.

Sometimes parents wonder if their child is developing according to his age level. They compare him to an older brother or sister or the child next door. Of course, all children develop at a different rate, but there are a number of basic guidelines to help determine if one's child is within the expected range of development for his age.

One can find out more

about these guidelines and also gain some new ideas about raising his preschooler by subscribing to "Toddler Topics" being offered at no charge by the Schuylkill County Cooperative Extension Service of Penn State. These readable practical learning packets will be sent to the home at no charge by merely asking for "Toddler Topics," at the Extension Service—717-385-3431—or by writing to Mrs. Kathy J. Buggy, c/o "Toddler Topics," P.O. Box 250, Schuylkill Haven, Pa. 17972.

Persons who have been on the mailing list in past years will receive Toddler Topics automatically.

Interested individuals and groups are urged to take advantage of this free service.

Americans eating more chicken

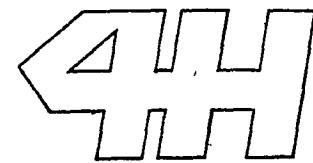
COLUMBIA, S.C. - It is estimated that the average American will consume about 45 pounds of broiler-fryer chicken this year. And, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Outlook '79" Conference held recently, that amount is likely to increase 8 to 10 per cent during the coming year.

One reason is, consumers are turning to chicken to help fight inflation in their food purchases. While beef and pork prices have gone up (this trend is predicted to continue in 1979), chicken has remained a thrifty buy and poultry experts at the conference forecast that broiler prices next year will

likely average near the 1978 level.

The National Broiler Council notes that chicken has a nutritional advantage over red meats, too. It is lower in fat content and cholesterol and has fewer calories per serving than either beef or pork.

Nutritionists are urging Americans to be more selective in the foods they eat. They note that a person's diet is important to all-round well-being.

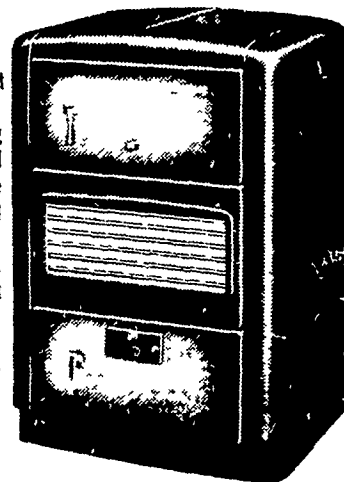


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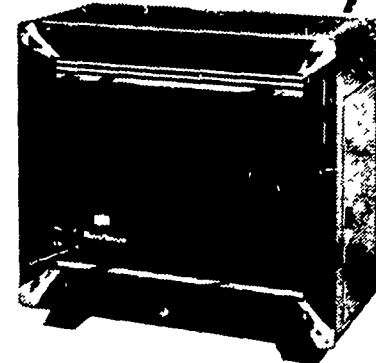
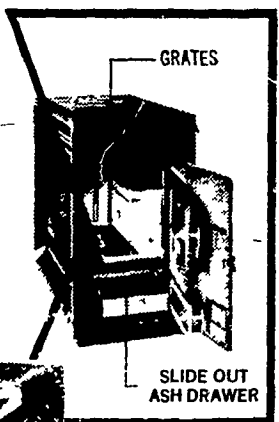
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