

# Prepare Last Minute Holiday Gifts At Home In Your Own Kitchen

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**YORK** — Less than a week left before Christmas, and you're not finished with your gift list yet? Take heart. If you're one of those people who likes to "mess around the kitchen," the creativity of Sheila Arnold may be just the inspiration you need.

Sheila is a freelance home economist. A graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, she has worked as an extension home economist in both Adams and York counties, and now teaches craft

and cooking classes.

While growing up in Mifflin County, Sheila participated in 4-H sewing project work. She decided long before time for college enrollment that home ec would be her major, and accepting the home economist position with the Adams County Extension Service in 1964 fulfilled a dream of many years.

"I decided extension was the best job anyone could ever have," she says of the diversity of the position, and of working with homemaker groups, 4-H'ers and community organization leaders.

In 1966, after her husband, Boyd, began teaching in York, she transferred to an opening on York's Extension staff.

By 1969, Boyd was well on his way to a doctorate degree and his present position with the York College staff, son Jeff had arrived, and the Arnold family was settled into their comfortable home in the Crestwood area of East York. Jeff, now 17 and a senior at Eastern High School, added to Sheila's life the dimensions of room mothering, PTA activities and hosting the same-age cluster of neighborhood youngsters. As most of that group turned age 8, Sheila introduced 4-H into the urban development area, taking on the role of leader for the Crestwood Kids 4-H club.

As that phase of her life also waned, Sheila was receiving an increasing number of calls to teach extension classes, especially in the area of cooking and breads.

"When I was up to teaching three microwave classes a week, I decided I was no longer what you would call 'unemployed,'" she grins.

A do-it-yourselfer and avid crafter, Sheila was often tapped to lead craft workshops at 4-H activities such as camp. Meanwhile, she was running her own candlemaking and candle party business in the 1970's, until demands of the business outgrew both her time and facilities.

Fabric crafts, primarily quilting, now claim much of her time. She currently teaches a beginner's quilting class, and attends a few local craft shows each year, marketing a variety of her original quilted creations.

Like others who taught and attended quilting classes, Sheila felt frustration in seeing numerous projects begun, but never having a chance to see the finished projects of students and quilting classmates. So, just over a year ago, Sheila and other local needlecrafters who share a passion for piecing colors into patterns founded the fast-growing York Quilters Guild.

Still, Sheila has never tired of what she jokingly refers to as "messing around the kitchen." And, during this holiday season, that equates to preparing unique time, with the special warmth of a handmade touch.

Knowing her creative abilities, the York Extension staff invited Sheila in 1985 to present a program on "Gifts From My Kitchen" at the annual homemaker's holiday meeting. Its success led to a similar spot on this year's Adams County holiday programs, and is available to other interested groups.

Since so many seasonal festive foods lean toward the sweet and heavy, Sheila's suggestions depart from the traditional cookies and candy.

"I would rather include some things other than the standard 'cooking' or food preparation," she adds.

Breads have long been a favorite, and a source of many of her class themes. The St. Lucia's Crown, a braided circle of sweet dough, resplendent with blazing

candles, is the traditional Christmas breakfast at the Arnold home.

In the original Swedish tradition of serving the St. Lucia's Crown, the eldest daughter of the family would rise before sunup to serve the bread to her family. This was in memory of St. Lucia, believed to have been seen in a 15th Century vision crossing the frozen lakes of Sweden's western provinces to help the poor. The crown of sweet

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One of Sheila's favorite gift bread presentations is to package the loaf in its own special waxed calico wrapper. She forms the wrapper from a piece of calico cut to the size needed to neatly cover a bread pan, dips the fabric into hot paraffin, and shapes it around the pan, leaving it to cool until set.

## Homestead Notes



A Christmas tradition at the home of Sheila Arnold features the serving of a St. Lucia's crown, a tasty Swedish bread fashioned into a braided circle.

## Holiday Gift Recipes

Inspired to make some last-minute gifts? The recipes below, compliments of Sheila Arnold, should help.

### ST. LUCIA CROWN

- 2 ¼-ounce packages active dry yeast
- ½ cup warm water (105 to 115°F.)
- 5 to 5½ cups unbleached bread flour
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup milk
- ½ cup sweet butter, softened
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon cardamom
- 1 cup raisins
- 2 tablespoons sweet butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Red candles, optional
- Bow and holly sprigs, optional

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. Add 3 cups of the flour, sugar, milk, softened butter, 2 eggs, salt, lemon peel, and cardamom. Beat at medium speed of electric mixer, scraping bowl often until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add raisins. Stir in enough additional flour to make dough easy to handle. Turn dough onto lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Place in greased bowl; turn greased side up. Cover; let rise in warm place until double in size, about 1½ hours. (Dough is ready if indentation remains when touched.)

Grease a large cookie sheet. Punch down dough. Divide dough into 3 equal parts. Roll each part into a 20-inch long rope. Braid ropes together. Place braid on cookie sheet, curving into a circle. Pinch ends together to seal. Brush top of braid with melted butter. Cover; let rise until double in size, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat together 1 egg and 1 tablespoon water. Brush over braid; sprinkle with 2 tablespoons sugar. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden brown. To serve traditionally, decorate with candles, bow and holly sprigs. Makes 1 round bread.

### DOGGIE BISCUITS

- 1½ cups unbleached flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- ½ cup rye flour
- 1 cup bulgur
- ½ cup cornmeal
- ¼ cup instant nonfat dry-milk powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 envelope active dry yeast
- 1½ cups chicken broth
- 1 egg, slightly beaten with 1 teaspoon milk

Turn oven to 300°F. Mix the first 8 ingredients with a wooden spoon in a large bowl. Heat chicken broth to lukewarm; add to flour mixture. Stir until dough forms. Roll out dough until it is ¼-inch thick. Using a large dog biscuit for model, cut out bone shapes from dough. Place on greased cookie sheets. Brush dough with egg glaze. Bake bones for 45 minutes. Turn oven off. Biscuits should remain in oven overnight to harden. Makes 50 3-by-1-inch bones.

### 'FOR THE BIRDS' SUET CAKE

- 1½ cups beef suet, ground
- 1 cup assorted grain foods — cornmeal, oatmeal, bread crumbs, cereal
- ½ cup bird seed
- 2 teaspoons coarse sand or parakeet grit
- ¼ cup peanut butter

Combine ingredients, adding more peanut butter if needed to hold mixture together. Shape into 1 large or 2 small balls. Serve in a net bag (like onions come in) or ½ grapefruit rind with strings to hang in tree.

### FINGER PAINT

- ½ cup cornstarch
- ¾ cup cold water
- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin
- ¼ cup cold water
- 2 cups hot water
- ½ cup mild soap flakes
- Food coloring

Combine cornstarch and ¾ cup cold water in saucepan; soak gelatin in ¼ cup cold water. Add hot water to starch mixture; bring to boil; boil until mixture becomes clear, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Blend in softened gelatin. Add soap flakes and stir until mixture thickens and soap flakes dissolve. Divide into containers and color as desired. Makes about 3 cups.