

The Making Of A Cook Book

BY SALLY BAIR

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MOUNT JOY (Lancaster) —
"We think our mothers and aunts are some of the best cooks, and with our children old enough to cook, we thought a cookbook would be a remembrance for them," Ruth Conley says matter-of-factly as she explains why the families which make up the Old Order River Brethren congregation became interested in publishing a cookbook.

Publishing cookbooks has become a Lancaster County tradition among groups which wish to share their good recipes and also raise money. For those who worked on this cookbook, it became a labor of love as well as a good way to raise funds for their school, the Sonlight River Brethren School, founded just four years ago.

The school, which just graduated its first student, was organized "to provide solid, nurturing Christian education, suitable for children growing up in the modern day environment." It presently serves all the families of the River Brethren in Lancaster County and

is open to like-minded nonmembers.

Since many of the members are dairy farmers in Lancaster County, a wide variety of recipes featuring dairy recipes is included, and the cookbook arrived just in time for use during June Dairy Month.

Ruth said that collecting the recipes was challenging, because there were many cherished recipes which were not written down. She notes, "Some of the women had to make the recipes and measure as they worked so they could give exact ingredients. We tried to make sure the recipes were concise and complete."

Emma Sauder, another of the committee which worked diligently on the book, added, "We came across instructions like 'butter the size of eggs.'" Another direction which caught their attention was "to push it to the back of the stove and let set all day." This, of course, was in reference to having soup or stew simmer on the back of a wood stove.

One chapter of this cookbook which makes it unique and especially valuable to the River Bre-



From left, Harriet Scott, Ruth Conley and Emma Sauder look through recipes and reminisce about the work which went into producing the River Brethren Cookbook, a winter project for the women. The cookbook contains 650 recipes from family and friends.

thren is titled "Cooking for a Crowd." Because they usually have a fellowship meal together following their Sunday "meeting," the hosting family often has between 150-250 guests, and it is generally the host who supplies the meal. Occasionally meals will be

planned as a "carry-in," Ruth explains, but even that requires large quantities of food.

That chapter includes a Cheese Spread for Sandwiches which will serve 200 people, a recipe for shoo fly pies which makes a dozen, Bean Salad for 150 and many others.

There are, of course, several soup recipes, including one for Rice Soup, which is traditionally served for their "love feast." It is a picture of someone stirring rice soup at a love feast which adorns the front cover of the cookbook. The cover was created by member Stephen E. Scott, who worked from photographs to recreate the scene of the love feast. His wife Harriet was the third member of the trio which did the organizing and proofreading of the project.

In the Cooking for a Crowd section, it becomes quickly evident that one must have large containers available for the cooking. In addition to large roasters and canners, one recipe for bread requires the use of a "broom stick" for stirring the dough.

Ruth explained that the Cooking for a Crowd section is especially helpful to some of the younger sisters in the congregation who may not have their mothers close by to ask for help in preparing quantities. Emma says her children will be happy to have the recipes written down because, when they wanted to cook in large quantities they always had to multiply the measurements.

The ambitious women started collecting the recipes in December, and mailed the final copy to the Tennessee commercial printer in March. They chose the printer because Ruth had been involved in another cookbook which was done by them. Emma adds, "They gave us, 'helpful hints' and title pages already done."

Ruth adds, "They had a list of suggested categories." It was the committee's suggestion to add "cooking for a crowd," which the printer happily included.

The plea for recipes went out through a newsletter that is distributed to local families, a River Brethren community in Franklin County and one in Dallas County, Iowa. According to information in the cookbook, members number 326 among the five congregations.

As the recipes came in, the committee's work began in earnest. Ruth collected the recipes and looked for duplicates. This was not an easy task since some recipes were the same but had different names. "We had to go through and delete some to keep the number down to 650 recipes." In all, they received over 700 recipes, and Ruth points out, "We were very much pleased with the response. There are recipes from here to Iowa. The families really supported it. We really appreciate the amount of enthusiastic support we got. Some of the families collected their own recipes." Many people simply told them to use what they needed, or to tell them if they needed something in a specific category.

Emma explained that if two people gave the same recipe, both names were included in the cookbook. Each of the 47 students at the school was asked to submit his or her favorite recipe. The recipe could be one they enjoyed making or eating. The recipes provided by students in the school are starred in the cookbook. Because they wanted to include many traditional recipes, the women used recipes from deceased relatives, and noted the dates of their birth and death next to their names. The printers cooperated in printing comments which were added by those who submitted the recipes, including such things as when it was served or where the recipe originated.

For that reason some older members of the congregation reading the cookbook although they won't be doing a lot of cooking anymore. Ruth comments, "That's one reason we wanted to do the

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Children of Old Order River Brethren families gather around to taste test a batch of homemade ice cream on a hot June day. The ice cream recipe is one of 650 in the cookbook which family members published to raise funds for their school.



Elizabeth Sauder, Andrew Scott, Hannah Scott and Donald Sauder work at preparing homemade ice cream -- a perfect job for a hot summer day during June Dairy Month.

Homestead Notes