

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Wolf

Extension Home Economist



In Search Of A Homemade Holiday

Have you caught yourself saying, "Oh, if only the holidays could be as peaceful and uncommercialized as they used to be...?" In these last few days before Christmas, too many of us are completely frazzled trying to create a picture-perfect celebration complete with all the expensive trimmings while still fulfilling our normal responsibilities to family, farm, and employer.

STOP.

At this point, the thing you need to concentrate on is spending time with your family. Gather your family for a "pow-wow". Talk about the things that are not yet done. What plans can be given up this year? What plans can be modified? What plans can wait until January (or at least until December 26 or 27)? What plans can be completed together?

You may have to give up the idea of constructing that Williamsburg door decoration. You had intended to give each of your children a personalized gift, but you only have two completed. Give those this year, complete the others for next winter. Could you go to see Aunt Millie the first week in January? For older people, the let down after the holidays may be severe. House guests are

coming for dessert, but the tree is not decorated. Could you, as a part of the evening's festivities, invite each person to place three or four ornaments on the tree upon arrival?

Almost every year my family hosts an open house for friends and neighbors. Because Mom has fewer hands to help with the preparations, she has had to simplify the menu from year to year. The central event still occurs, but the non-essentials change according to the available resources.

What simplifications can you make? Surprisingly, you may find yourself slaving over something, in the name of tradition, that means little to others. Wouldn't it be better to rest or redirect your energy to a more valued effort?

A way to combine family times with holiday tasks is to create a homemade holiday. With a "homemade holiday", decorations, meals, gifts, and entertainment are created by the members of your family and your house guests. This allows a personalized touch. They will usually be less expensive, too. Families should strive for these reduced expenses because strained finances add tensions and disappointments to the holidays. We tend to expect costly items to bring extraordinary satisfaction. They frequently fail to

meet such high expectations.

Do you still have names to cross of your gift list? Consider putting together a coupon book for services or outings — an afternoon at the park together, a movie, a theater ticket, a sporting event, one closet clean-up, car washes, dog scrubbings. These act as IOU's.

Assess your resources. Do you have reusable containers, old calendars? How can you and the others in your family turn these into gifts for relatives? Fill tins, tubs, or tiny glass jars with homemade goodies that your family makes together? Transform the calendars into handmade notecards. Add stamps and envelopes from a print shop for a college student's stationery set.

Last week I was talking with a high school student who had little money. She was experiencing the uncomfortable pressure of trying to find inexpensive items for many friends. One suggestion a person like she could consider in future years is to pick names within a group of friends. This reduces the financial strain on everyone involved. You may also want to combine resources for a present instead of each person buying an individual gift.

But think. Think carefully. Who



'Vealy' Profitable Recipe Contest

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — A statewide veal recipe contest is part of an extensive veal food-service promotion funded through the \$1 per head beef checkoff program.

The program, "Veal. The Pro-

might enjoy an unusual/non-traditional gift — one that employs your creative thoughts? Do you play a musical instrument? You could select and perform pieces for others as a gift? Offer them a short note explaining why the particular pieces were selected for each of them.

Could you compile a "Memory Book" with quotes from children, old photos, newspaper clippings, recipe cards, and notes? Who would enjoy one of these?

Giving gifts like memory books, or informal concerts, or even working together to decorate a home draw a family together. They are built-in times for conversation. In a rushed world, times for talking and times for simply "being" together may be the most cherished gift one can present to another.

fitable Choice" is designed to increase veal sales at restaurant and foodservice establishments throughout Pennsylvania and upstate New York.

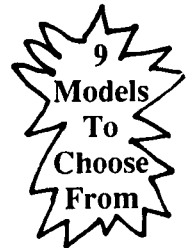
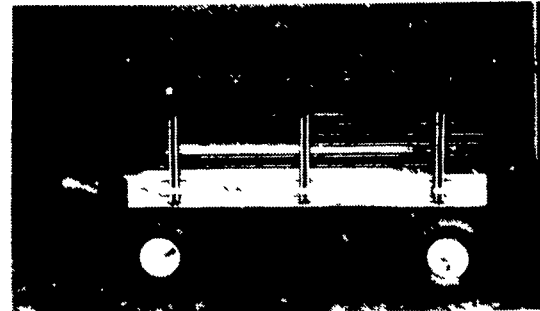
"The Veally Profitable Recipe Contest" is open to foodservice professionals, and includes cash prizes totalling more than \$4,000 in each state. The contest, which runs through February, is detailed in the restaurant kit.

"This promotion is designed to get both the individual restaurants and their supplier and distributor excited about including veal in their operations," said David Ivan, executive director of the Pennsylvania Beef Council. "At the same time, the recipe contest allows the industry to solicit creative and exciting recipes from the top chefs throughout the state."

The kit also includes menu ideas, nutritional and sales information, and point-of-sale materials assembled in an attractive folder that showcases veal.

The project was launched simultaneously by the Pennsylvania and New York state beef councils.

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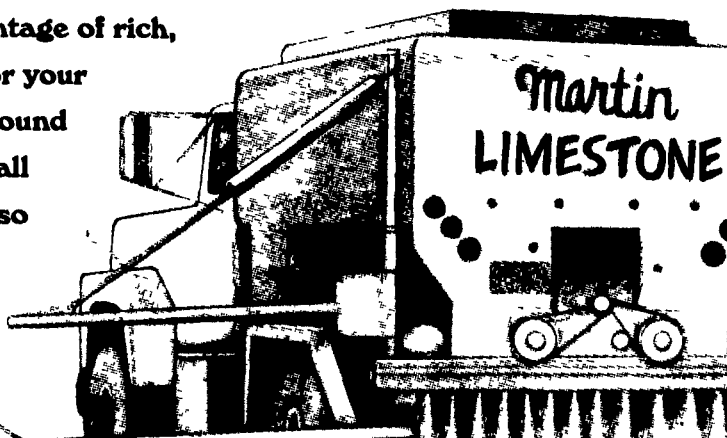
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