

National 4-H Contestant Learns Food Skills At Early Age

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
BERLIN (Somerset Co.)—Michele Countryman says, "When I was little, I liked to put seeds in the ground and come back a couple of weeks later and they would be growing. I loved it."

Her involvement with foods began when she was six years old.

Recently returned from the National 4-H Congress in Chicago, Michele, 16, was the Pennsylvania State winner in food conservation, preservation and safety program.

Because she has developed a strong fondness for homegrown vegetables, the Berlin-Brothers Valley High School junior confesses while grinning shyly, "Lots of times I don't eat the vegetables served at school," adding that they lack the good flavor she is used to having in her vegetables.

Michele says, and her mother, Linda Countryman, agrees, that when Linda gets called out to the barn during the middle of some cooking project they've got going, Michele takes over and finishes the job alone. The women grow, can and freeze their own vegetables. They also put up lots of fruit during the season.

Linda says she knew nothing about canning until her marriage to David Countryman, following which his mother taught her all about it. When Linda looks at her daughter's accomplishments at such a young age, one can see pride beaming from the mother's face.

During her 4-H years with the Milksquirts, Michele has completed 12 food projects from canning hundreds of quarts of food for her family, to mall promotions, donating her baked goods to agriculture, civic events, walk-a-thons, and fairs. She has taught classes on breads. Her pupils distributed the fresh loaves to area elderly persons. During the last year Michele has won numerous "firsts" and "seconds" in various baking competitions.

Michele is exchanging recipes with the 4-H Minnesota exchange guest from last summer and has a favorite recipe she likes to make for her family. Find it at the end of the story.

Getting her driver's license last September was a plus for the family. No longer a chauffeur for Michele, Linda says I can just say "Goodbye" when she (Michele) has to go some place.

Michele is very active in the Dairy Bowl, Farm City Week, Junior Holstein Association, Students Against Driving Drunk, local and county 4-H council, Ski Club, Forensics and Youth Traffic Safety Council. Oh, yes, she likes to go hunting and has bagged both a buck and a doe deer.

Following her own attendance at Vacation Bible School, she became an assistant during the sessions. "I like working with little kids," she says. She reported that one time she took a live lamb to show the children. "I was scared. I thought he'd take off running through the church."

"I would like to stay with the 4-H program and combine it with agriculture," says Michele, when discussing her future with the hope of attending Penn State University from which her bother, Michael, recently graduated.

She also has one sister, Mindi,



Michele might be young, but that doesn't keep her from being an expert at canning food.

who is in the fourth grade.

When preparing for competition at the state level, Michele says she was initially overwhelmed by the information requested on the white form with regard to the history of her 4-H projects. She says it was much more detailed than she expected. But she had kept good records, and, by taking it step by step, she managed to complete it on time.

Michele was one of 43 4-H'ers in the state to attend the 4-H Congress. They were selected from 117,000 state members.

Here is one of Michele's favorite recipes:

SPECIAL K BARS


Bring to a light boil: 1 cup white sugar, 1/2 cup light Karo syrup, 1/2 cup dark Karo syrup.

Add: 1 cup creamy/crunchy peanut butter, stir until melted.

Add: 4-5 cups Special K cereal and stir until coated.

Press into 9x13-inch cake pan (well-greased).

melt over a double-boiler: 1 cup each of chocolate chips and butterscotch chips. When set, use mixture to frost the candy.



Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser

Time to send Christmas greetings. As I go over my mailing list and delete the names of those who have passed on I am glad that it is only a few. To mail 100 cards, I must spend almost as much for postage as for the cards.

When you find a letter with a 1-2- or 3-cent stamp you know that you've found an old one. My mother-in-law received many post cards and she kept them. Now when I look through the book that I've put them in, I see that most Christmas cards from 1905 to 1910 had one cent stamps. And, they mostly pictured angels and holly on the front.

It appears that communication was mainly carried on by mail. The messages on the front and on the back often say, "I'll meet you at the trolley Friday night" or "Come for Sunday dinner." Now-

adays we do write letters but more often we pick up the telephone to deliver a message.

Keeping records of address changes of far-flung relatives and friends is a job. And, then there is the decisions to be made about sending to those who never return a card. One must take into consideration their age and health as they probably would like to receive a card and a note. Writing notes in the cards is what really takes time. This year I should send ours early so as to give people our new address.

It is not only time to send cards but also time to hunt the Christmas decorations. It will be a challenge to decorate our new home. But since we've invited all our relatives again this season, I think that I'd better get started.

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