

# Christmas

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## Walnut Torte

12 eggs, separated  
 1 cup sugar  
 6 tablespoons flour  
 ½ pound walnuts, ground fine  
 Beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored. Add sugar gradually. Add the walnuts and flour and mix thoroughly. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Bake in three well-buttered 8-inch layer cake pans for 30 to 35 minutes in 350 degree oven.

### Filling:

½ pound walnuts, ground fine  
 1 cup powdered sugar  
 ½ cup sweet cream  
 Mix well and spread between layers of cake.

**Frosting:** Make your favorite recipe for white butter cream icing and frost top and sides of torte.

## Holiday Vines With Preserved Decorations

Sandra Stief, master gardener, demonstrated making trees from wild vines. She used an upside-down tomato cage covered with wire fencing to form a tree shape.

Choose only live pliable vines no larger than ¼ -inch in diameter for the tree. Do not shorten the length of the vine, but cut off any side shoots. Save the thinner side shoots and vines for the top. Start wrapping the vines at the bottom of the fenced cage by securing the end inside one of the 1-inch fence openings. Wrap the vine tightly around the cage, being sure to avoid gaps between wraps. Secure

end of vine inside 1-inch fence opening. Continue to wrap vines around cage, working to the top.

To finish off the top of the tree, insert four two-foot arches of vines across the top of the cage. Then finish by wrapping the vines around the arches.

Check the tree for gaps and fill in with extra vines. Decorate with some of the following: ribbons, cinnamon sticks, dried fruit, rose hips, miniature lights, and Christmas ornaments.

### Drying Fruits For Decoration

"Drying times are affected by the size of the load, thickness of the sliced produce, humidity, temperature of your home, altitude, the moisture content of the food itself, and how many trays are in use. Times may vary greatly from one area of the country to another, or even from day to day," Stief said.

Spread fruits in single layer. Usual drying temperature is 135 degrees.

**Apples:** pare, core, and cut into ¼ -inch rings, and dip in pretreatment of sodium bisulfate or a combination of ascorbic and citric acids to prevent discoloration. A dip into pineapple or lemon juice will often be all that is needed for satisfactory results. Dryness test-finished when pliable. Time 4-15 hours.

**Oranges:** Do not peel. Cut ⅜ -inch circles. Navel oranges work best. Dry 5-15 hours.

## Pantry Gifts

For the person who enjoys cooking, Debbie Weaver and Debbie Hartman, both master gardeners, share recipes and hints for preparing gourmet gifts and ideas for packaging the gifts. Here are some ideas:

### Cranberry Mustard

¾ cup brown sugar  
 ½ cup Dijon mustard  
 ¼ cup fresh or frozen cranberries, finely chopped  
 ¼ cup molasses

Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pack into hot sterilized jars. Wipe jars clean, adjust two-piece caps, and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes. Makes about 1½ cups. Can be used as a glaze for chicken, turkey, ham, or a sandwich spread.

### Pecan Praline Syrup

2 cups dark corn syrup  
 ½ cup dark brown sugar  
 ½ cup water  
 1¼ cups pecan halves  
 ½ teaspoon vanilla

Combine syrup, sugar, and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil; boil one minute. Reduce heat; stir in pecans and vanilla; simmer 6 minutes. Ladle hot syrup into hot jars, leaving ¼ -inch headspace. Wipe jar mouths clean, and adjust two-piece caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yield: 3 half pints.

Good served on ice cream, pound cake, bread pudding, etc.



Fay Strickler, extension home economist, shows how to fold napkins in a turkey form for the Thanksgiving table.



Sandra Stief shows how to make a tree from wild vines.



Ideas for table settings for Thanksgiving and for Christmas were on display during the 'Create Holiday Traditions' offered at the Berks County Extension on Nov. 4-5.

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