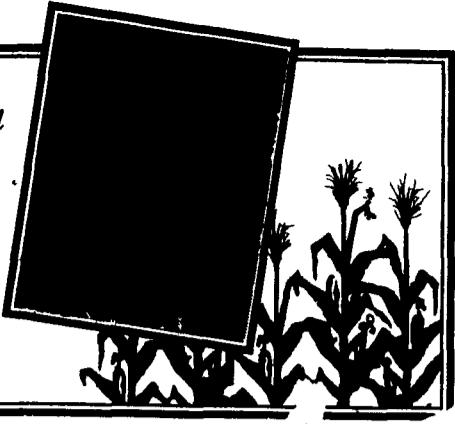


**On Being a Farm Wife**  
(and other hazards)  
**Joyce Bupp**



Scared. Shivering. Gasping for breath. Probably hurting a little.

This newborn heifer (female) calf was not in the best shape.

Mama stood mere feet away. Also hurting. Confused. Anxiously concerned over her baby.

She was in the process of "cleaning," following calving, passing from her body the placenta and remaining tissues which had nurtured this now cold and damp new life in a far corner of the pasture.

Darkness was at hand this late May evening, a brisk breeze chasing off the heat and humidity of the brilliant day. My lightweight T-shirt and shorts, while appropriate earlier, would have been more comfortable with an added sweatshirt-layer.

Laying aside a chunk of fresh, soft grass for the first-time mother, I kept one eye on the calf and the other on the nervous mother. The hay was both to help fill the cow's "interior" as well as offer a distraction while this intensive-care-candidate calf got its vital first meal of warm colostrum milk.

Delivery of a calf creates a void inside the cow, formerly

filled by an 80-100 lb. infant. Until the cow's interior can shrink back down to normal size, the abomasum, one of her four stomachs, may slide out of place and block her digestive system. Veterinary term is a "displaced abomasum," often shortened to "D.A." or in more layman language, "twisted stomach."

"We have a twist," is not a favorite phrase on a dairy farm. While a simple twisted stomach is remedied with fairly routine surgery, there is added vet and antibiotic costs, possible long-term complications to the cow, and the occasional, but inevitable, lost animal.

A "twist" was not my main concern initially with this newly-fresh young cow, but keeping her beautiful little baby alive was. The calving had been a difficult one and the calf had apparently swallowed a lot of fluids. Its face and throat seemed to be swelled. Her nose was cold, she was shivering, and the breeze was picking up in speed and cooling down in temperature by the minute.

She needed the bottle I had in hand of warm colostrum, extra rich stuff saved and frozen from

the calving a few weeks before of a veteran of the milking string. Older cows generally produce more disease-resistant antibodies in their post-calving milk than do younger, new mothers. We keep some frozen at all times for such occasions.

But the swelling was such that the calf's mouth had to be pried open to insert the nipple of the bottle. She was still to weak to suckle. And her struggling against the effort to help was further alarming the new mother, growing more nervous by the second, making little mooing sounds of concern, and still pushing to complete the after-birth delivery. No one was around; the men were all back in the field, working late in the haylage harvest. Was this a safe place to be?

This one would have to be left to Bigger Hands. I trudged back into the office in the semi-darkness, hit the patch of oil slick that (we later discovered) came from an untightened filter on the milking system vacuum pump, slid across the concrete floor and crashed into the wall.

It was time to call it quits.

Exiting the barn, I stumbled into The Farmer. The field crew was also calling it quits, after more than a week of extra-long hours of planting corn and chopping several hundred tons of silage toward refilling our bare-cupboard feed supplies. Just the night before, The Farmer had round baled until midnight, then lamented the next day that he had missed a field in the dark.

Sometimes, you just have to call it quits. To temporarily walk away. To go get some rest. It was time.

Next morning, the baby was alive and hungry, though she still had some difficulty swallowing. Mama Cow was fully rested and full of spunk. Haylage harvest resumed. The

Farmer departed to round bale the field missed at midnight.

And I thanked the Bigger Hands for keeping an eye on it all.

## Featured Recipe

The month of May has been designated "Older Americans Month." But don't waste your time looking on front porches for white-haired folks in rocking chairs to honor. Today's "older Americans" will more likely be found rediscovering all the activities they enjoyed before they filled their nest. Few "older Americans" who are taking advantage of early retirement options are acting tired. Most are busy volunteering, starting new careers, or taking up new hobbies. However, not many "older Americans" are choosing to spend new-found extra time in the kitchen.

"Life is too short to spend more time in the kitchen than you really want to," says registered dietitian Brenda Ponichtera, author of "Quick & Healthy Recipes and Ideas" and "Quick & Healthy Volume II" (ScaleDown Publishing, Inc., 1519 Hermits Way, The Dalles, Oregon 97058, \$16.95 each, comb-bound.) "This is a time in life to be spontaneous and unscheduled but also a time when a healthy diet is extremely important." Whether you have special dietary considerations (reducing salt content, trimming fat grams, watching diabetic exchanges, etc.) or just want to eat better so you can stay active, Ponichtera's cookbooks offer hundreds of terrific quick and healthy meal ideas.

Here is a recipe from the cookbook.

### Mandarin Yogurt Delight

The orange color makes this an attractive dessert. Serve in sherbet dishes with a dollop of light whipped topping. This also works well as a fruit salad.

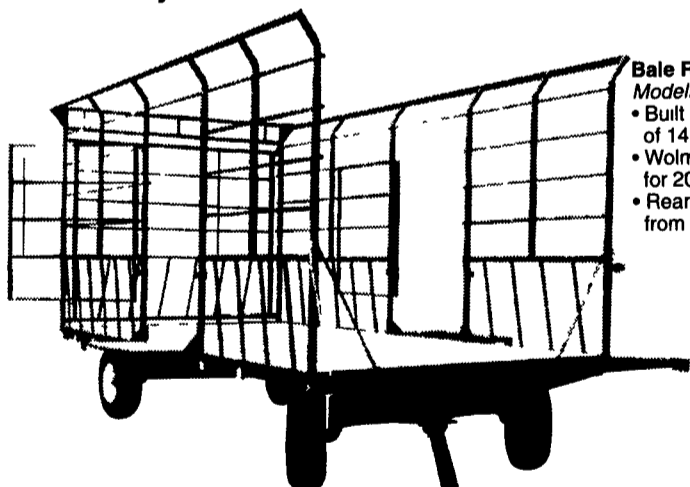
- 1 package (0.3 ox.) sugar-free orange-flavored gelatin
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- 8 ounces nonfat vanilla yogurt (sweetened with artificial sweetener)

1 can (11 oz.) mandarin oranges, drained  
Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Add yogurt and stir until smooth. Chill until the consistency of egg whites, about 20 minutes. Add drained fruit. Spoon into sherbet dishes and refrigerate until set.

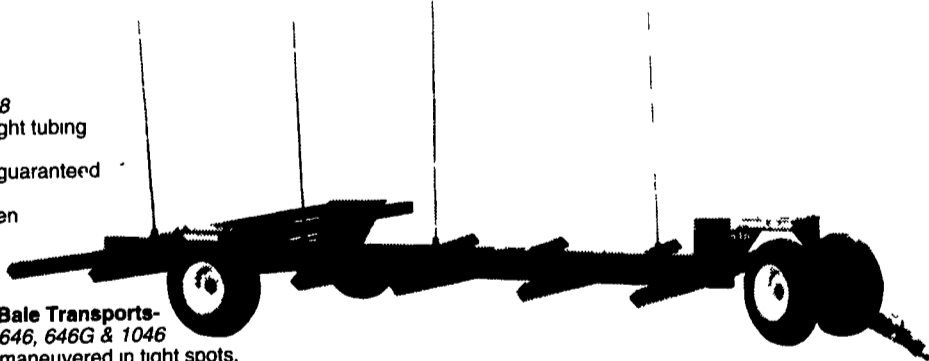
- Yield: 2 1/2 cups (5 servings)
- One serving: 1/2 cup
- Per serving: 40 calories, 7 grams carbohydrate, 3 grams protein, 0 grams fat
- Exchanges: 1/2 fruit

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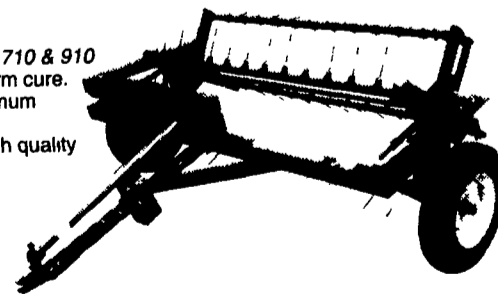


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