

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



If you're looking for a diet-busting event, go no farther than your nearest family reunion.

At least in this part of the country, with our Pennsylvania "Dutch" heritage and the food traditions in which that heritage is so rich, no gathering of family is complete without "fressing."

"Fressing" is one of those familiar words of my childhood. Another term for stuffing one's mouth with food. Eating.

Fressing—eating—is synonymous with the popular custom of family gatherings, usually at least once a year, to break bread, renew kinfolk ties, and figure out who the newest baby looks like. It may be accompanied by formal, or more likely informal, programs, photos to be shared, games for the kids. And food.

Always food.

Little kids usually like reunions because of the games. They flee the gathering as teenagers—who wants to associate with boring adults?—but may drift back when they marry and begin adding a next generation of leaf clusters to the family tree. Adults come for the fellowship. And the food.

Many families have certain staple foods of reunions.

In one of The Farmer's traditional family gatherings, homemade root beer, faithfully concocted by his grandmother, was mandatory. No reunion worth the name would ever have been considered without the traditional—always sweet, never "bitey"—10-gallon stoneware crock of the tasty brew. Another

family reunion features a local delicacy—homemade chicken corn soup.

Such family reunion staples are likely to be of regional or ethnic tradition. Take chicken corn soup to a south Texas family get-together and you would likely stamp yourself an outsider. One family dinner table we are occasionally blessed to be a part of faithfully serves up pierogies. Before marriage entwined our lives with these wonderful folks, I wouldn't have recognized a pierogie if it smacked me upside the head.

How many family reunion tables don't sport at least a couple of varieties of potato salad? And macaroni, either in salad form or fixed as our grandson's favorite "mac and cheese." Mom can be depended on for her delicious contribution of baked dried lima beans. And fortunate are the families in which there are folks who still bake pies—cherry, apple, fresh peach, and—yummy—maybe even coconut cream.

With family reunions heavily oriented toward summer and vacation time, enabling distant kinfolk to participate while vacationing, seasonal foods are also popular table fare. Like

cucumber slaw, just-picked, corn-on-the-cob or fresh watermelon and cantaloupes.

A plate of fresh melon slices is one of my favorite dishes to both contribute and to enjoy from the dessert tables as one of the fewer-calorie selections. It's also a favorite in part because the melons in the garden are usually ripe for late summer gatherings. Predictably, this year's jungle of melon vines in the garden has produced dozens of cantaloupes, watermelons, and honeydews. Still green. And which, like the aggravatingly-slow tomatoes, show no signs of being in a hurry to come to the dinner table.

So, with no homegrown mel-

ons to share, I recently pondered preparations for the latest family "fressing" session, finally throwing together on a busy afternoon a dessert contribution not requiring baking, refrigeration, or special handling. Zap two ingredients together in the microwave, melt into a gooey mess, dump in the dry stuff, stir around and spread in a pan and forget.

Rice Krispy treats. Totally uncreative, but the kids (young and old) seem to enjoy them.

And, in the hot, humid August weather, the only food safety issue they raise is how to discreetly lick the sticky stuff off your fingers.



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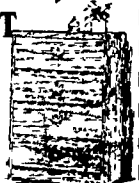
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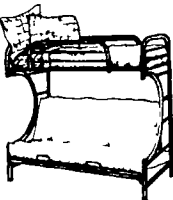
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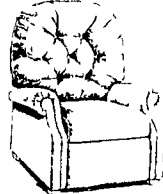
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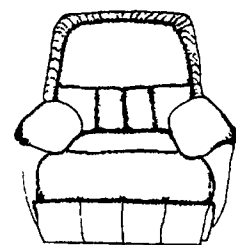
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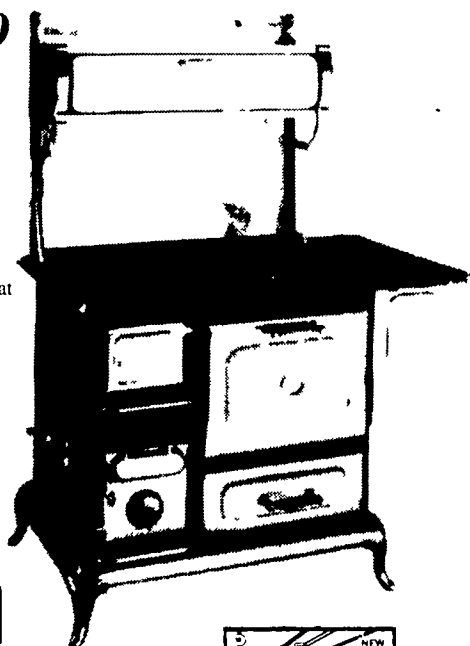
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