

On Being a Farm Wife
(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Your grandma — or maybe great grandma — probably wore one a lot.

With it she gathered eggs, carried a few potatoes or turnips, wiped a sticky face or a perspiring forehead, dabbed up minor spills and kept her few everyday dresses clean for use several days in a row.

But how many people don aprons today? I mean besides those nifty barbecue ones for the guys who like to do the outdoor grilling bit. How many of us who daily poke around the kitchen tie

ing coverings before we get started measuring and mixing?

Not me. Not usually, anyway. Still, there I was, tying on an apron a few days ago over my jeans and turtleneck. Because I was baking a pie. And — at least for me — pie baking is messy; I end up dusted with flour from head to toe.

Or did. Before I started taking the shortcut.

having donned the apron, from habit, I poured my homemade pumpkin pie filling into a frozen pie shell and popped it in the oven. And did it with the

same absolute lack of "guilt trip" I find in whipping up instant potato flakes with milk and butter to hold gravy.

Fact is, guys, as our lives get busier and busier, we're all looking for shortcuts to the traditional things. And, in reality, it's often more economical anymore to use prepared shortcuts, rather than starting from scratch, even before figuring in one's time.

And never do we need shortcuts more than during this busy holiday season, when we try to cram in all the extra special things of the season. Thus, you'll find more and more of us printing out holiday list mailing labels on our computers, maybe even sending e-cards to our e-pals via e-mail. That's after we've finished e-retailing with an e-Santa at an e-mall.

It's become a breeze to bag the roll-out, cut-out, decorated cookies in favor of the slice-off kind with a seasonal motif pre-printed in the dough. Or dropping them via a bag mix to which we add milk and eggs. And, in a pinch, a gift doesn't have to be wrapped, it can be tucked into those wonderful decorative bags under a fluff of colorful tissue paper, and still look beautifully festive.

A local supermarket flyer came just days ago featuring a full-color, four-page insert crammed with photos of lovely, luscious pre-prepared holiday food trays: veggie, meats, cheeses, meats and cheeses mixed, shrimp, assorted breads, cookies. All lovingly appointed with decorative touches and pitch-out containers.

An hour or two after perusing that, I spotted containers of ready-to-stuff homemade stuffing in a meat retailer's deli-display. And then there are the pre-stuffed birds, pre-cooked whole hams, even order out a whole holiday dinner. Which, if you have to prepare for several days, serve and then clean it all up for the better part of the holiday, that option looks more inviting all the time.

Is my age showing here...or what?

But of all the shortcuts we might concoct — in reality or our dreams — my hands-down favorite this year is the instant, decorative, holiday gingerbread house. So easy, a 5-year-old can do it. Really.

I have seen and become a believer.

Actually, the festive gingerbread house came as a kit, complete with icing bag and appropriate candies to add all the colorful decorative touches. Our daughter found it at a mass marketer and snatched it up for use as a family project for the kids. It's sort of like those real houses that arrive in pieces on one big truck. Hammer together Part A to Part B, then attach to Part C. Only in the case of the gingerbread house kit, you glue — or goo those parts together with instant squeeze-and-stick frosting.

Plunk it next to a cherry red poinsettia and — viola! — picture-pretty seasonal display.

Having seen this, I've forgiven myself for never having done a gingerbread house from scratch for my kids. No one had devised instant ones in a kit two decades ago.

With all the wonderful cooking and entertaining shortcuts which keep rolling out of the food marketing business, we kitchen engineers may soon be able to relegate our aprons to the endangered-species list.

Something tells me I should feel more guilty about that than I do.

Experience Teaches City Slicker Truth About Farming

SUSAN SULLIVAN
Special To Lancaster Farming

I have always envied farmers. Growing up in a very urban area, about 20 miles west of New York City; my view of farmers was limited to television commercials and one or so "country drives." To me, a farmer was someone who drove a tractor; had trained cows that laid around in a field; had winters off; raised nondescript dogs that chased people and cars; and waved to everyone.

So after a really "fun" divorce, very close neighbors telling me what to do, and my children becoming street smart; I decided to move to the country and become a farmer. I bought a small farm, complete with house, barn, pond, and fields. I was on my way to the laid back life of farming, so I thought.

My experiences from that day on, have taught me, never to assume how easy someone's life appears. Now, my view of farmers

is that they aren't laid back, they are exhausted. Their cows aren't trained; they are just resting up for the next freedom run (through your body) to the neighbor's lawn and flower bed.

Usually, the neighbor lives far away so that it takes all day to get the cows home. I know now that electric fences are designed to jump start your entire body, after you have succeeded in getting the cows back. I've learned that two barn cats can make 50; that roaming chickens never lay eggs, they just relieve themselves on the front porch.

Hand-raised geese become disturbed pit bulls in feathers. Pigs are not for riding nor for sledding with (they hog the sled). Cute, little groundhogs are really nasty, destructive creatures with a thousand lives or a thousand relatives. And last but not least: I've learned that nondescript farm dogs are really socially mal-adjusted, egomaniacs that think

they rule the world.

But to be very honest, farming is not a way of life that you can give up or would want to after you have tasted it. Each day is a lesson, an adventure, and a memory. For me to reach my goal of being a farmer, I need to be first a vet, chemist, weather-forecaster, mechanic, and an economic wizard. I need to work long, long hours with very dangerous equipment and uncooperative co-workers (mainly cows).

So, I am just very proud to live among farmers; to know some as friends; and to have worked for some. I believe that my children and myself, have immensely benefited from knowing and living among, some very amazing people called farmers.



Tranquil moments on the farm are few for Susan Sullivan.

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