

Join 'TASTE' For Food Ideas, Friendship

LOU ANN GOOD
Food And Family
Features Editor

LANDISVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Food and friendship appeal to people of all ages. The combination forms the basis for T.A.S.T.E., which stands for Taste and See — Thoughtful Expressions.

The newly-formed group, which meets the first Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. in Karen Mellinger's home, Landisville, invites new participants. No membership fee or minimum attendance are required.

T.A.S.T.E. is an opportunity to find new recipes, sample favorites, and take home the surplus to share with families and friends.

"I've always participated in cookie exchanges and thought that the common bond that forms in these exchanges would be nice to continue all year," Karen said.

Karen remembers the days her parents operated an upscale restaurant in Chicago. Her father was a chef who enjoyed trying a wide variety of ethnic foods. Her mother was in charge of planning seven-course meals.

Karen has recollections of helping prepare stuffed mushrooms and other appetizers.

Seven years ago, Karen married Dick Mellinger, a Lancaster countian, and moved into the area, where she discovered that Pennsylvania Dutch cooking is less seasoned than most ethnic cuisine.

Karen waitressed for a wide variety of restaurants. But she prefers experimenting with baked goods and appetizers.

A subscriber to several food magazines, Karen found herself collecting more and more recipes. She thought a T.A.S.T.E. would give her the opportunity to put some of those recipes to use.

"Periodically, I'd like to have a new recipe night — where everyone brings something they've never made before."

May 3 will be the second meeting for T.A.S.T.E. "We're only in our formative stage. I'd like to get feedback from other participants to see what they'd interested in having the group grow into," Karen said.

Participants should bring something baked for exchange such as cookies, muffins, bars, breads, candies or appetizers.

"The first several meetings are sort of trial and error. Participants should probably bring about a three dozen minimum of cookies or candy, and increase in a dozen increments if desired," Karen said.

If surplus is left over, Karen said the group would "bless others" by giving the baked goods to public service agencies such as the police department, fire department, library, post office, and community projects.

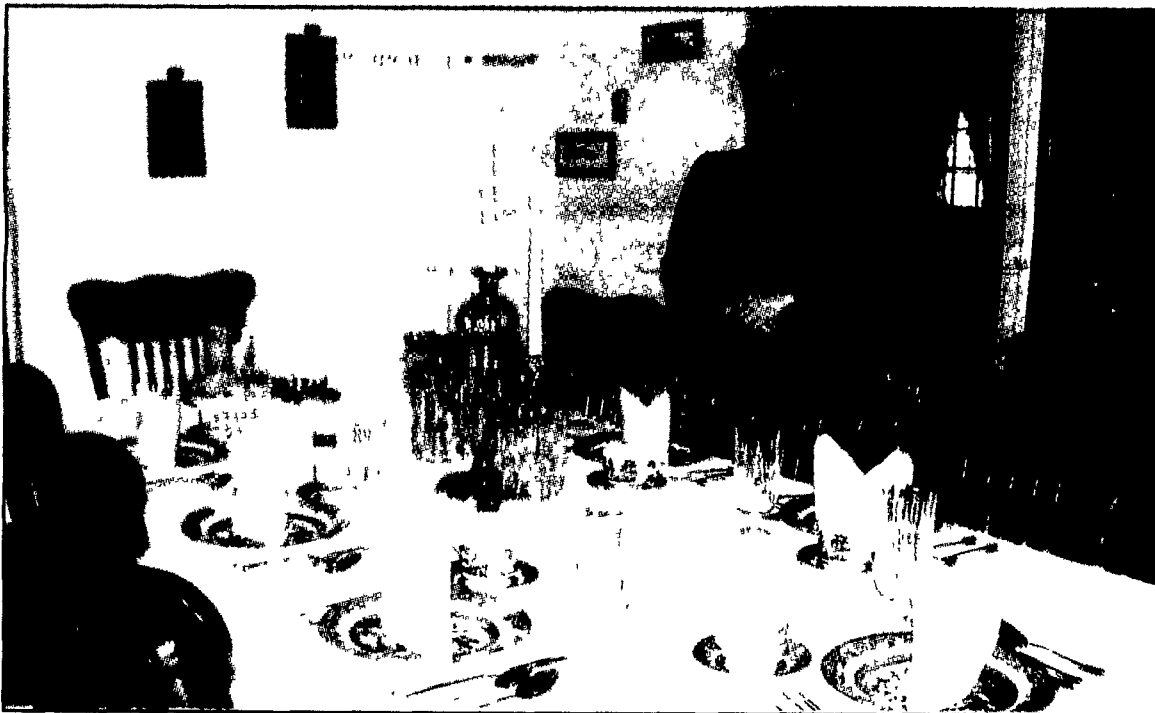
"At this point, we won't do whole cakes or iced cookies, because they don't pack well," Karen said.

She'd love to find more recipes for casseroles that freeze well. "Perhaps we'll have a casserole exchange sometime. It's nice to have a casserole in the freezer to serve to unexpected company," Karen said.

"Something I would like to create in the future is a database of information on each participant. This database would reflect the interests of each person in the group. For instance, maybe several people would say they are interested in exchanging canned goods, looking for fondue recipes or vegetarian (Turn to Page B3)



Karen Mellinger displays some of the cookies that participants brought to exchange during the first meeting of T.A.S.T.E. The group offers opportunities to sample new recipes, share the surplus with family, friends, coworkers, and community, and form new friendships.



Denise Hess sets the table with blue willow china, stemware, and gold-colored napkins in preparation for a gourmet feast. Her husband Mike restored the antique brass candelabrum with polished prisms, which he found in Vermont. The Hesses will serve a gourmet feast to the highest bidder on the date of choice.

Gourmet Feast, Doll Bed Will Go To Highest Bidder

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MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — For those who can't cook, don't have time, or simply want to enjoy a leisurely five-course dinner without the time-consuming preparation, Denise Hess has the solution.

She will prepare and serve a gourmet feast in her home for eight guests of your choice.

This unique service will go to the highest bidder at Kraybill Mennonite School's 24th annual benefit auction, May 12.

Patrons at the school try to incorporate their talents into donating items for the benefit auction. For Denise, cooking and entertaining is her forte.

Her husband Mike, owner of the Furniture Doctor, excels in furniture making. Mike handcrafted a doll poster bed in the Chippendale style that will placed on silent auction to go to the highest bidder May 12 at 2 p.m.

Denise sewed a coverlet and bedding set for the bed that fits an 18-inch doll. In addition, Denise and a friend cut out 65 outfits to fit 18-inch dolls. Mothers of students at the school sewed the outfits. These will be priced and available to buy during the auction days, May 11-12.

Denise said that her love for cooking was inherited from her mother and grandmother — wonderful cooks. When Denise was in junior high school, she was responsible for preparing family suppers because her mother worked away from home.

"My brother gave me appreciation for foods from beyond Lancaster County," Denise said.

"He liked to cook unusual things and we'd eat it."

Today, Denise prefers preparing gourmet dishes, especially desserts. For the dinner that will be offered for bid, the menu includes the following:

- Asparagus Soup and Rolls*
- Mandarin Orange Salad*
- Leg of Lamb/Roast Beef*
- Buttered/Parslied Red Potatoes*
- Vegetable Medley (carrots, snowpeas, yellow squash)*
- Chocolate Espresso Fudge Cake*

"I'd love to be a pastry chef," Denise said. "I like to prepare desserts that require several days of preparation."

She gets plenty of practice by preparing desserts for friends and church fundraisers. In fact, for a church fundraiser, she offered a dessert of the month. The highest bidder gets a dessert each month on a date compatible with the recipient and Denise.

All this cooking requires lots of time and expense, but Denise said that she and her husband believe in the philosophy that a three-cord strand cannot easily be broken. The three-cord strand, she said, refers to school, church, and home.

The Hesses apply this belief to laying a firm foundation of training for children, Brad, 8, and Elizabeth, 5.

When the school, church, and home teaches the same (morals and beliefs), children are grounded and strongly influenced to follow their childhood teachings rather than compromise from peer and media influence, Denise said.

For that reason, the Hesses believe a sacrifice of their time, money, and talents is well worth it.



Five-year-old Elizabeth Hess steals a moment of play with this handcrafted doll bed that is available through a silent auction. Elizabeth's dad, Mike, made the four-poster bed to fit an 18-inch doll, and her mother, Denise, stitched the bedding set and coverlet. Seamstresses stitched more than 65 outfits to fit 18-inch dolls. These outfits and some other items will be priced for purchase rather than auctioned during the two-day benefit auction (May 11-12) at the Kraybill Mennonite School, 598 Kraybill Church Road, Mount Joy. For more information, call the school at (717) 653-5236 or visit its website at kraybillms.mennonite.net.