

Grandma's jam cake: Try it. You will like it!

By J B Leftwich

'Tis Thanksgiving, almost, and time to think about good eating, both anticipated and in the past. And time to think about good cooks who authored good meals in years gone by and good cooks who continue the tradition.

My mother was a great cook and a daughter of a great cook.

The vast stretch of their cooking was before electricity came to our valley. They cooked on wood-burning stoves, a welcome source of heat during winter months but the bane of their comfort in summertime.

My mother-in-law was a great cook. I overate good food and gained too much weight during the early years of my marriage when I ate, more often than not, at her table. She was cooking on an electric range then, but she was frying and baking long before the TVA arrived.

My wife is a good cook and peer of the above-mentioned. She never saw a recipe she didn't like and, in due course, improve. We said in our family that she "gussied up" recipes. Our grandchildren would fight over her biscuits

They, the cooks mentioned above, never had their pictures made in their pretty dresses for food pages in newspapers or magazines but had only warm feelings for others who did. They never had the state of the art kitchens they merited. They just cooked great food.

My daughters and daughters-in-law are good cooks in modern kitchens. Even my sons and sons-in-law are good cooks. They, the males, have their specialties which, I think, don't include cornbread or biscuits. Now, another generation of good cooks has established itself.

I am not a cook. Never had to cook. Always had good food, even at Cumberland University and at Castle Heights. Two of my favorite food specialists were Mrs. Wallace Foreman and Mrs. Ed Loyd, dietitians at Castle Heights. They were wonderful with food. I loved them and they sorta pampered me. I cheated. They saved extra servings of banana pudding for me. To heck with the inequity. Any cadet would have done the same. Some probably did.

But the current generations of my family always had electricity or gas. Their ovens reached a constant temperature and remained there. They never stoked the fire. Needless to say, they would have and could have coped with more primitive cooking ranges. They, as did their mothers, excelled with the appliances at hand.

My question now, too late to ask, is how did Mama and Granny and MaMa regulate

temperature and maintain constant heat while stoking the fire boxes of their stoves? Now, when it is too late for me to ask earlier family cooks, the question persists.

During holiday seasons, Thanksgiving and more especially Christmas, my mother and grandmother launched a marathon of cooking. One emphasis was cake-baking, an exercise my brothers and I relished because we loved scraping the pans.

At Castle Heights, the Thanksgiving dinner, served in mid-afternoon, was the greatest meal of the year. Vacation was only one day, and many cadets remained on campus. Classes resumed on Friday. Saturday morning school met as usual. But on that one day we ate a meal unimaginable in flavor and savored by faculty families who were guests of the academy. My children's Thanksgiving memories still focus on Castle Heights. My wife, freed from long hours in the kitchen, loved it.

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Here is the reason I wrote this column: I want to share one of Mama's recipe which my children named **Grandma's Jam Cake**.

**3 1/2 cups flower ... 6 whole eggs ... 1 1/2 c. buttermilk ... 2 c. sugar ... 1 c. butter ... 2 c. seedless blackberry jam ... 2 c. walnuts.
1 c. candied orange peel ... 1 box raisins ... 2 tsp soda ... 2 tsp cloves ... 2 tsp cinnamon 2 tsp allspice.**

Cream butter and sugar together. Add and mix thoroughly all ingredients. Cook in large stem pan greased and sprinkled with flour. Cook at 250 to 300 degrees (I don't know how Mama managed that) for about 3 hours. Before baking, put pan of water on oven shelf under cake in oven.

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