



Getting Ready for Christmas - *then and now*

MAXINE HEBERT

After taking off a few months for a little repair to my heart, and to do some canning with all my tomatoes, I am back. I read in a magazine that if you put a Tums tablet in with each tomato plant that it is good for the plant. Well, I put two Tums in each hole as I planted them, and you should have seen what happened. My daughter, Michele, will remind you all about this in the spring in the gardening column. I ended up with over 40 quarts of salsa, 10 quarts of tomato onion relish, 7 quarts of tomato sauce, 12 small jars of pizza sauce, and 15 quarts of plain canned tomatoes. Plus, I gave away bushels and bushels. It sure works.

I don't know about you, but I am starting to get ready for Christmas. At least in this day and age we are lucky enough to have freezers to keep things in so we can start early and just pop it all into the freezer. My Mom didn't have such a luxury, so she had to do most of the baking just the last few days before Christmas, and what a flurry that caused in our kitchen. Of course her Christmas cakes were made in early October, wrapped in cheesecloth and moistened regularly with brandy, sherry, or rum. Then she had to do the mince tarts, butter tarts, gingerbread, and shortbread just before Christmas. Our old coal and wood stove was just puffing away.

We would be busy making our cranberry and popcorn tree garlands then too because we didn't want the cranberries to dry up

too soon. They were always put out for the birds to gorge on after New Years. We also had the business of getting the tree and putting that up – a real tree, not an imitation one – and it sure did smell good. As soon as my dad would bring the tree in the house, you knew Christmas was coming.

Now we can all start our baking early and have it ready, and just go down to the basement to get the imitation tree and the decorations from the years before. Kind of takes all the fun out of it, I think.

I do a lot of baking before Christmas because I make cookie and treat boxes for friends and family, and I am sure they all appreciate getting their box of goodies. I have one neighbour (not mentioning names) who even tells me what to put in it. My granddaughter, Mimi, is coming over to help me soon with some of the cookies. I think that she thinks I am getting too old to be trusted with making all the cookies. That's OK because we have a good time. This year we are going to make chocolate Santa Claus and Christmas tree suckers to put in the boxes, too.

I am going to give you a recipe for the most delicious savoury cheese cookies to be served with a glass of wine, or even coffee. These are really good and I hope you enjoy them. They are a good snack to put out when friends come over, rather than chips or salty snacks.

The second recipe is a favourite of everyone in our family. It is quite

simple to make, but can be messy.

I hope you all try these recipes, and enjoy them as much as our family does.

Before I leave, I want to thank the wonderful lady named Sue who brought our little dog, Oliver, back home when he got out of the yard a couple of weeks ago. (Someone left the gate open – not me.) Oliver has an ID tag on his harness with our phone and address, and while we were out looking for him after leaving the house quickly and leaving the doors

unlocked, she put him in our kitchen. He was found over a mile away on Ravine Drive, that little stinker, which means he had to have crossed Stony Plain Road. These are the kind of people we have living in this area, and thank heavens for that. So, thank you very much, Sue, and my husband thanks you also because now he out of the doghouse.

MERRY CHRISTMAS everyone, from the Heberts.

Cheese Netties

- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese (I use old)
- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 1/8 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 3/4 cup flour
- 2 cups Rice Krispies

Mix the cheese, butter, Worcestershire sauce well. Stir in the flour and cereal. Mix well. Roll dough into logs 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Wrap in wax paper and chill in fridge for 30 minutes. Cut into 1/2 inch slices and place on lightly oiled baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F until lightly browned. I would suggest doubling this recipe.

Toffee Crunch Grahams

- 12 whole graham crackers, about 5 x 2 1/2 inches
- 1 1/2 cups butter (no substitutes)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups sliced almonds

Line a 15 x 10 x 1 inch baking pain with foil. Place graham crackers in pan. In a saucepan, combine butter and brown sugar. Bring to a boil stirring constantly. Carefully pour over the graham crackers. Sprinkle with almonds. Bake at 400 F for 6-8 minutes. Let sit for a minute or so, then place on racks. Let cool completely.