



Mam's Cooking

A collection of recipes, cooking instructions, and stories that “Mam” Smith wanted to pass on to her beloved grand-daughters and great-grandchildren.



The Purpose Of This Book

“Mam” was my mother, Dollie Edith Nofsker. She did the cooking around the Smith house for fifty-some years ~ from the time she married my father, Bernard Robert Smith, until she was about eighty years old. That period included cooking weekday suppers for a working husband and kids home from school along with weekend meals for the family and some friends and in-laws from time to time. It also included nearly one hundred and fifty “special” meals on the holidays of Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter. That gave her an awful lot of experience in cooking. And then, when the time came that she had too much arthritis pain in her legs, causing it too painful for her to stand at the stove and sink in order to make meals, she passed some of that experience / knowledge on to me. I had never had any type of cooking lessons at school, and my experience while at college was to make things as quickly and simply as possible ~ which tended to result in meals that did not taste like anything that came from her hands. So I was honored to have her explain to me how to make certain dishes, and I wanted to pass some of those recipes on to my nieces and their children. If you want to experience how food tasted in the Smith house for so many years, follow the recipes as they are written. The recipes are probably slightly different than how you have been used to making them ~ calling for dill rather than sweet pickles, for instance ~ so try to follow them exactly they are written if you want to truly experience what Mam’s cooking was like.

Now this isn’t intended to be a standard cook book. I included only recipes for food items that were indicative of Mam’s cooking. That is why I start out with fried potatoes. Mam loved them and had them often. I also included her recipe for balogna sandwich spread because I have never found any that tastes like it.

I’ve also included a few of the stories Mam would tell about when she was young ~ which she usually told during a meal.



About Mam

“Mam” was Dollie Edith Nofsker who, on 18 June 1944, married Bernard Robert Smith. Dollie was born on 14 March 1924, a daughter of Henry Martin Cleveland Nofsker and Bertha Mae Shoop/Earnest. She was born in the log house that her grandfather, John Wilks Nofsker, built at Smith Corner. The name “Mam” was a nickname that her granddaughter, Kim gave her when she was young and everyone got in the habit of calling her that.

On Monday, 14 March 2011, Mam celebrated her eighty-seventh birthday. By that time she was pretty much “house-bound” because of the arthritis in her knees. Her left leg hurt her tremendously, and because of it she didn’t get out of bed on some days. She didn’t feel like a big meal for her birthday supper, so I didn’t argue with her decision to eat her Special-K cereal. I wanted it to feel more like a birthday, so I got her a white cake with whipped icing ~ her favorite type of cake. Her granddaughter Amanda and her husband, Erik, and their four year old son, Trevor, came over and celebrated with her. Trevor’s hug and kiss made her day.

On Thursday following her birthday, Mam started having difficulty breathing. As I found out later, she was probably experiencing a heart attack, but since she had a history of asthma, she and I both thought that if she used her albuterol inhaler, she’d get better. The difficulty breathing continued into Saturday morning, and I called 911 to take her to the hospital. Before the ambulance arrived at her house, she calmly passed into a non-responsive state. Her death came around 10:30am on the 19th. Her aches and pains were finally gone.



How To Fry Potatoes

Mam's secret to frying potatoes, and having them be firm, but tender, was not to mess with them so much.

Peel a number of potatoes and then cut them into thin slices – about 1/8 inch thick. Five or six large potatoes will make a nice amount. Place the slices into a pan. After you have all the potatoes cut into slices, fill the pan with water and swish them around in order to wash any dirt and excess starch off of them. Drain all of the water off.

Get a large frying pan – an iron skillet makes the best fried potatoes – and add some cooking oil. (Years ago, I would have used lard, or Crisco 'shortening', but in more recent years I have used Canola Oil.) Add enough to make a layer between 1/8 and 1/4 thick. Turn the burner on, not too high at first, and let the pan warm up.

Place the potato slices into the pan or skillet. Sprinkle about a half to a full level teaspoon of salt over the potato slices. Then sprinkle about a quarter to half a teaspoon of black pepper ovetop. Using a spatula, stir the potato slices in order to thoroughly mix the salt and pepper over them all. But do it a little slowly. Don't jab the spatula into the potatoes and slap them down. You don't want them to be mashed; you just want to sort of 'fold' them over a couple of times until they are all mixed together.

As the potato slices start to heat up, make sure the burner is set to about halfway between "simmer/low" and "high". Then place a lid over the pan or skillet. Now here's the important part ~ let them go! You can check on them

every once in a while, but don't stir them more than a couple times while they are frying. And when you do stir them, remember to "fold" them rather than "flip" them. The more you mix them up by stirring and tossing and flipping, the more they will break up into little pieces or get mashed.

At medium heat, the potato slices will take about fifteen to twenty minutes to fry. They will become light brown in color and slightly firm, but easily cut with your spatula.



Making Brown Gravy

"Brown gravy" is basically fried flour. It tastes great by itself, or with meat and potatoes. It was something that Mam enjoyed making for Carol.

To make brown gravy, get a large frying pan or skillet and place it on the stove's large burner. Start by placing about three tablespoons of lard, or Crisco shortening, into the pan, and turning the burner to between "medium" and "high". As the lard melts, spread it around evenly in the pan.

Get a cup of flour, and sprinkle some into the melted lard. While adding the flour, use a spatula or spoon to stir the mixture of melted lard and flour. Keep adding a little bit of flour until the melted lard is all gathered up by the flour, and the mixture gets thicker. Keep stirring the mixture until it gets sort of dry looking, and then continue until it gets as brown as you want it. It will get darker as it burns, and the taste will get better the more 'burnt' it gets.

Add about a cup of water, more or less depending on how thick or thin the gravy gets, and keep stirring it. At this time you should also sprinkle a teaspoon of salt over the contents of the pan. The brown gravy is ready when the water gets mixed thoroughly with the lard and flour.

Mam said that you can use any grease that is left in a skillet after something, such as ham or bacon, has been fried.

Note: Directions for making gravy for fried chicken and making gravy for a turkey dinner are noted later.



Mam's Brother, Charles, Kept Groundhogs As Pets

It was Groundhog Day (February 2), and we were talking about groundhogs, and Mam told me this story.

Mam told me about how her brother, Charles (she always pronounced it as: Charl) liked groundhogs. He raised two of them from babies, and treated them as pets just like someone else would a dog, cat or rabbit.

She told me about the time they were going north, and they saw a groundhog out in an open field. They stopped the car and Charles went racing after the groundhog until he caught it. He put it under the seat to bring home, and Mam said she was scared that the creature would bite her on the legs.

She couldn't remember how Charles housed the groundhogs and kept them from getting away.



Spring Tonic

Mam loved to make what she called “Spring Tonic”, which was watercress with a hot dressing.

In a large bowl, mix together about two tablespoons of flour with about two tablespoons of sugar. Then break one egg and mix that in. Then add one can of evaporated milk. To this mixture you add a little bit of vinegar. The ‘little bit’ is about a tablespoon, but you have to taste it to see if it is sour enough, but not too sour.

Thaw out some bacon, and chop about four strips into small pieces, about ½” wide. Place the bacon in a skillet and heat it until it is browned. When the bacon is done frying, pour the ‘sauce’ mixture into the skillet, and slowly stir it all together.

Chop a pan’s worth of watercress into small bits, and then place into the large bowl. Pour the bacon and sauce mixture over the watercress and mix it all together.



How to Make Pie Crust From ‘Scratch’

Mam’s pie crusts were never thick and hard, nor were they fall-apart flaky. They were solid and slightly moist. In later years, she started to use the box mixes for her pie

crusts, but here is the simple recipe she used to make them from scratch.

In a medium size bowl, mix together two level cups of flour, one teaspoon of salt, 3/4 cup Crisco shortening and about five tablespoons warm water. It is best mixed with a fork.

If the mixture is too dry and will not form a ball, add a water a tablespoonful at a time.

If the mixture is too wet and a ball is sticky, add a little more flour.



How To Cook Chicken

Chicken is not one of those foods that are difficult to make, but just takes time.

You start by making sure that the chicken is thoroughly cleaned. Buying half a dozen chicken legs at the grocery store, taking them home, tearing the plastic shrink-wrap off and plopping them into a pan is not the way to clean chicken. You need to wash the pieces off thoroughly and closely inspect each piece for little hairs that the butcher might have missed. Also, any excessive amounts of fat should be cut off. And any bits of bloody residue should also be cut off and disposed of.

Place the cleaned pieces of chicken into a pot that will be large enough to hold all the pieces without being tightly jammed in.

Add enough water to cover all the pieces and a bit of salt. For six legs, add about half a teaspoon of salt.

Turn the heat up to high and bring the water to a boil. Then, after it starts to boil, turn the heat down a bit, to maybe medium high.

Get a lid for the pot. One that has a steam release top is the best to use. Otherwise, you will need to position a plain lid so that the steam can escape slightly. Now place the lid over the pot and let it cook. It should take about an hour.

After about an hour, take a fork and ‘test it’ to see if the meat is soft and tender. In order to do this, you don’t want to start stabbing at the meat, tearing it all up in the process. Instead, simply push the fork against the meat to see if you can gently move the fork into the meat, and then move it around just a bit to see if the meat separates easily. If it is still a little bit tough and doesn’t separate easily, put the lid back on and let it cook a little longer.

When the chicken is tender and the meat just about reaches that stage where it might fall off the bone, it is done.

Now, if you want to eat ‘cooked’ chicken, it’s ready. But if you want ‘fried’ chicken, you need to do a couple more things to it. Get a skillet and place it on a stove burner. Set the heating level to about medium. Then add a bit (about half a stick or four tablespoons) of butter (not lard or oil) and allow it to melt.

While the butter is melting, get a dish and put some flour in it. Take a piece of chicken and roll it in the flour so that it is completely covered. [Some people insist on dipping the chicken piece in egg before the flour so that more flour will stick to it. Mam said she did that years ago, but found it really wasn’t that much better.] Place each flour covered

piece of chicken onto the skillet, and let it fry for a minute or two. Don't mess with it. If the meat was about ready to fall off the bone, and you start messing with it in the skillet, it is bound to fall off. Using a pair of tongs, or something similar pick each piece up and turn them over so that the other side will fry. If you use a fork to pick the piece up out of the skillet, it might fall apart. So if you do use a fork, you might use a spatula with the fork.

Fry the chicken on one side for a minute or two, and turn the pieces over onto their other sides. Fry them on the other side for a minute or two, and then remove them from the skillet. The skins will harden up as they begin to dry in the air.

You can then make gravy to go with the chicken by using the water in which the chicken was cooked – now called the broth.

First, take a spoon and fish out any little pieces of chicken that might be in the broth. They'll just make the gravy lumpy.

Get a small dish and put in about a cup of flour. Run warm water from the sink and, using a tablespoon, add a couple spoonfulls of warm water to the flour. Mix it until it forms a paste. It should be a little on the wet side.

Turn the heat down to 'simmer' under the pot with the chicken broth. Add the flour paste slowly, as you stir the broth. Stir it until it starts to thicken, and add more flour paste as necessary to get it thicker. Don't bring it to a boil; just keep it on simmer.



How To Make A Creamy Sauce For Vegetables

This recipe actually came from Pap, my father ~ Bernard. When Mam started to have too much pain in her legs to stand and do the cooking, Pap took over. He was a great cook and was adventurous in his cooking. He got interested in making stir fry vegetables at one time, and bought a wok for that purpose. In the course of doing stir fry dishes, he found this recipe for a great, creamy sauce. It's kind of like an alfredo sauce, but it does not include eggs.

In a saucepan melt two tablespoons of butter over medium heat.

Add two teaspoons of garlic powder and continue to heat until the melted butter starts to turn lightly brown.

Add 10 ounce of sour cream and stir into the butter and garlic mixture.

Add 1/2 teaspoon of salt and 1/8 teaspoon of pepper.

Stir the mixture until well blended and bring the sauce to the boiling point. Then turn the heat down to low and simmer for three minutes, stirring constantly.



How To Make Chicken Casserole

Chicken Casserole was one of Mam's 'signature' dishes. Everyone who ate it loved it.

You start out with about ten boneless chicken breasts. You clean them, and then arrange them side by side in a glass baking dish. An alternative method is to dice the chicken breasts up into small, bite-sized pieces.

Place a tab of butter, about a teaspoon full, on each chicken breast (or about ten teaspoon fulls scattered over the diced up chicken).

Open two cans of Cream of Mushroom soup. Spoon out the soup and place it evenly overtop the chicken breasts or pieces until the chicken is completely covered.

Lastly, spread french-fried onion rings evenly over the contents of the entire dish.

Cover the baking dish with a piece of aluminum foil, tucking the edges around the lip of the baking dish. Place the baking dish in an oven preheated to 350 degrees, and bake for about one and three-quarter to two hours. Check to make sure that the chicken is tender and comes loose easily. If it is not tender, bake for an additional half hour with the aluminum foil covering in place. Take the aluminum foil off of the baking dish, and continue to bake the chicken for an additional fifteen minutes.



Mam's Brother Arthur, Drunk And Unable To Get Into Bed

Mam had five brothers (Huston John, Charles Andrew, Herman Gilbert, Arthur Sylvester and Samuel Blair). She often told us the story of how two of them, Herman (pronounced *Har'-mon*) and Art would go out and get drunk and then try to sneak back into their home without their mother, Grammy, catching them. It should be noted that the old houses tended to have holes cut in the second-storey floor through which heat could rise. It was also the perfect window through which the younger children could spy on their older siblings whose rooms were below them. One time Herman and Art came back late in the night, and Art was very drunk. He tried to get into bed, but for him the room was spinning around. The bed was going around too fast for him to simply lie down. He made a couple attempts to get into bed, but failed each time. He finally just jumped for it, but missed and landed on the floor with a loud noise that woke up Grammy. Mam and her sisters watched their mother give their older brothers a good thrashing for being drunk.



Bologna Sandwich Spread

I have never seen this recipe in any cook book. Mam would make it to be used as a sandwich spread and/or as a dip with chips.

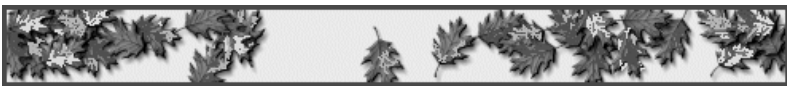
Boil eight to ten eggs for ten minutes. Peel the eggs and then set them aside.

Get a ring of balogna (not garlic, not old-fashioned). Pull the ‘skin’ wrapping off of the balogna. Then cut the ring of balogna into pieces of about four inches in length.

Get six to eight large kosher dill pickles. Cut them lengthwise.

On a blender, install the grinder attachment. Then grind up the pickles, catching the ground up pieces and juice in a small bowl. There will be a lot of juice created in the process. Pour the ground up pickles through a strainer to remove the juice, and then dump out the pulp into a larger bowl.

Using the blender, grind up the balogna and the eggs. Place all of the ground up pieces into the large bowl with the pickles. Add about four tablespoons of Miracle Whip salad dressing. Using a spatula, mix all of the ingredients until they are thoroughly blended together. Add more salad dressing as necessary to make sure that the mix is not too dry.



Mam’s “Sickness” Remedy

When I was little (having been born in 1954 that refers to the end of the 1950s through the 1960s), and got ‘sick’ usually it was a cold or sore throat or stomach ache. That was in the years before all of the miracle drugs that line the shelves of drugstores today. It might be noted that “pain

killer” drugs, such as acetaminophen and ibuprophen did not become non-prescription and popular until the 1970s and 1980s. So when I would “get sick” Mam didn’t have a bottle of pills to pull out of the medicine cabinet to give to me.

Mam’s remedy for just about anything ~ cold to stomach ache ~ was a dose of “liniment” and then a cup of tomato soup and a toasted cheese sandwich.

The liniment that was kept on hand at the Smith house was Porter’s Liniment. It had an alcohol content of 63% and it went straight to work when you took a dose. I have a bottle of it (although there is only a dark stain in the bottom of the bottle where the product used to be), and the ingredients were (in order of content): ether, ammonia, capsicum, camphor, oil of –jeput, cloves, myrhh, galangol and safrol.

This liniment was intended only for external use. But Mam would fill a water glass half full with warm water and then add a heaping teaspoon of sugar and about half a teaspoon of liniment. We weren’t allowed to sip at it. She would insist that we drink it down fast ~ and all of it at that.

Then she would make us the tomato soup and toasted cheese sandwich. I remember vividly how the tomato soup scratched and burnt going down if my “sickness” was a sore throat. But no matter what I had wrong with me, whether a stomach ache or cold, before I knew it, it was gone ~ not a week later ~ it was gone that same day.

When they couldn’t find the Porter’s Liniment any more in the stores, Mam and Pap started using Rawleigh’s Liniment. It had only 48% alcohol content, so it didn’t work as fast as the Porter’s, but it worked better than Tylenol and Motrin.



Pizza Casserole

A week or so before Leon passed away, Mam asked him what meal he would like for her to make for him. He was having difficulty eating certain things, and she wanted to make him something he could enjoy. His choice was Mam's pizza casserole.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cook one package of wide noodles for about six to seven minutes (until the noodles are soft and easily cut with a fork.)

In a skillet, brown one pound of hamburger, then drain any excess oil.

In a large bowl, mix together one 8-1/2 ounce can of tomato sauce, one 10-1/2 ounce can of pizza sauce, one 10-3/4 ounce can of cheddar cheese soup and a pinch of oregano.

Grease a casserole dish lightly.

In the bottom of the dish place half of the cooked noodles in an even layer. Over the noodles place the browned hamburger. Then overtop the hamburger add the remaining noodles. Then pour the soup and sauce mixture over the noodle/hamburger layers. Sprinkle additional oregano over the top.

Bake for about 30 minutes.



Baked Apples

Mam made apple dumplings from time to time, but we all loved her baked apples more.

Peel about ten or twelve apples. (We like McIntosh.) Cut them in two and remove the seeds and ends. Then place the apple halves into a glass baking dish, side by side, with the flat side aimed upwards.

Place a tab (about half a teaspoon) of butter on each apple half in the hole created by cutting out the seeds.

Put two cups of water into a small pan, and put it on to the stove to bring to a boil.

In a small bowl, mix together 1/2 cup tapioca, 1 cup sugar, 1 tablespoon of flour, a dash of salt and 1/2 teaspoon of ground cinnamon (if desired).

Pour the boiling water into the bowl containing the dry ingredients. Stir everything until the sugar, flour and tapioca are completely dissolved.

Pour the tapioca liquid over the apples in the glass baking dish. Make sure that some of the mixture rests in each of the apple pieces.

Place the dish into an oven preheated to 350 degrees. Bake for about an hour and a half.



How To Make Christmas Dinner With Ham & Green Bean Casserole

Purchase a 16 lb semi-boneless ham.

Remove any wrapper and place the ham in a large roasting pan. Add water to the pan to bring it 3/4 full. Cover.

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees, and when it is ready, place the pan with the ham into it. A ham should be cooked fifteen minutes per every pound of weight. So a 16 lb ham should be cooked for between 3-3/4 and 4 hours. Halfway through the cooking process, remove the pan from the oven and turn the ham over. A little water may be added at this time.

When the time is up, remove the pan from the oven and place the ham on a cutting plate. Using a sharp butcher knife, cut slices out of the ham.

The 'water' can be used for making potpie or noodles if desired.

To prepare the green bean casserole, obtain two cans of cut green beans, two cans of cream of mushroom soup, 3/4 cup of milk, a dash of pepper, and french fried onion rings.

In a baking dish place the two cans of green beans, drained of their water. Spread them evenly on the bottom of the dish.

In a medium-size bowl, mix the two cans of cream of mushroom soup, a dash of pepper and the 3/4 cup of milk. Using a wire whisk, mix the ingredients thoroughly.

Pour the mushroom/milk mixture evenly over the green beans.

Crush up some french fried onion rings and spread a layer of them evenly over the top.

Place the baking dish into the oven, preheated to 350 degrees. Cook the casserole for twenty minutes.



Mam's Fruit Salad

Mam made a particular type of fruit salad for most of the holidays. It had to be made only with exactly what this recipe calls for ~ there could be no deviations ~ with the one exception that sliced bananas would be permitted. (But since the bananas tended to turn blackish in a day or two, she did not usually want them added.)

The day before the fruit salad is to be made, prepare two flavors of jello: orange and strawberry. Use small boxes of the jello mix. Place in shallow 9" x 9" pans.

Peel two oranges and dice them into small pieces. Or substitute one can of mandarin orange segments. Drain the liquid, and discard.

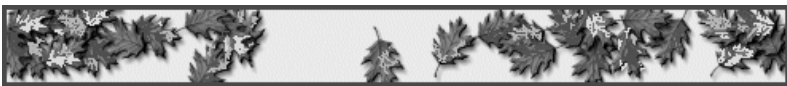
Drain the liquid of two cans of sliced peaches and dice them into small pieces. Set the liquid aside for use.

Drain the liquid of one can of crushed pineapple. Discard the liquid.

In a large lidded container, mix together the oranges, pineapple, and peaches. Then add two cups of sugar. Mix thoroughly. Add some of the peach juice that was set aside if the mixture is not fluid enough.

Cut the jello, which will have set up by this time into a layer about 1/2 inch thick, into 1/2 inch square blocks. To maintain the solidity of the jello, fold it into the fruit mixture while avoiding stirring it.

Refrigerate the mixture.

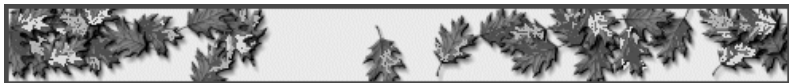


Mam And Her Sisters

Mam was closest in age to her sisters, (Margaret) Ann and Elsie, and she often talked about the three of them doing things together.

She enjoyed telling me about how the three of them had gone to a local fair, and some boys there offered them beer to drink. She laughed about how Herman drove them home in his truck, with the three of them sitting on the dropped-down tailgate, their legs dangling over the tailgate, and each one throwing up at some point in the ride home.

During the last six months of her life, as her mind was being taken over by Alzheimers, she “saw” and “talked” to Ann and Sis. She missed them so much.



How To Make Thanksgiving Dinner With Turkey & All The Trimmings

Purchase a 12 lb turkey. If frozen, place it in a pan in the sink and add cold to slightly warm water and soak it overnight in order to thaw it properly.

When the turkey is thoroughly thawed out, check it over for any remaining feathers. Remove the bag containing the neck, heart, liver and gizzard. Using a sharp butcher knife, cut away any excess fatty deposits.

Place the turkey in a large roasting pan. Add water to the pan to bring it 3/4 full. Add about a teaspoon of salt to the water. Add whichever of the ‘extra’ pieces (liver, heart, gizzard) you want to the pan. Cover.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and when it is ready, place the roasting pan in it. Cook the turkey for about four hours or until the meat begins to fall away from the bone.

Occasionally uncover the pan. Baste the turkey by dipping a ladle into the water and pouring it over the turkey’s body. Also add water as necessary to keep the level at about 3/4 full.

When the time is up, remove the pan from the oven and place the turkey on a cutting plate. Using a sharp butcher knife, cut slices and/or pieces out of the turkey.

Pour the ‘water’ into two large pans. One will be used for making noodles. The other will be used for making gravy.

During the evening prior to the dinner, prepare the filling (*variously*, stuffing) in a large mixing bowl.

If using purchased filling bread, obtain two or three bags of mixed (white and whole grain) bread cubes (we like Pepperidge Farm). Place the two to three bags of bread cubes into the bowl. Finely dice three celery sticks and place into the bowl. Melt one stick of margarine or butter, and pour it over the bread cubes. Also pour one cup of hot water over the bread cubes. Add about one teaspoon of salt and then mix everything thoroughly. Place a lid over the bowl and sit aside overnight.

While the turkey is being cooked, place the bowl of filling on the top surface of the stove, preferably near the oven’s exhaust hole so that it receives some indirect heat.

At about ten minutes before the meal is to be served, prepare the noodles. Bring the one large pan of turkey ‘water’ to a boil and then add the dried noodles. Let the liquid with noodles again come to a boil, and then reduce the heat to medium-high. Cook the noodles for at least seven minutes or until they are soft enough to cut with a fork.

After preparing the noodles, prepare the gravy. Place the second large pan of turkey ‘water’ on the stove. Turn the heat to the lowest setting (or ‘simmer’). You do not want it to come to a boil, but it should be heated slightly.

In a small bowl place a cup of flour. To the flour add a little bit of warm water, and with a fork or spoon, stir the mixture. Add water a little bit at a time and keep stirring the mixture until it becomes thick but fluid.

Pour the flour liquid into the pan of turkey 'water', stirring it all the while. Increase the heat to about medium. If the gravy being formed is not thick enough, remix some flour and water, and add it to the gravy.

Mashed potatoes and/or sweet potatoes was the last thing that Mam would prepare. In her later years, she used "instant" / imitation mashed potatoes. If you are making imitation potatoes, the recipe should be followed as noted on the box.

If you are making sweet potatoes, they should be diced and then placed in a baking dish. A couple tabs of butter is placed on the potatoes slices and then brown sugar sprinkled over all. The baking dish is then placed in the microwave and cooked on high for about three or four minutes. If cooked in the oven, they should be done in about 30 minutes at 350 degrees.



Mam Really Did Walk A Couple Miles To School

She used to tell us stories of walking to school with her sister Ann and some other neighbor kids – Stiffles and others that lived in Smith Corner. The Nofskers lived about five miles from their school at Claysburg. Mam said that they sometimes rode horses to school (led by an older

brother). And when automobiles became accessible, they would be given rides. Although we would joke about it, the fact of the matter was that they did actually have to walk to school a couple miles – it just wasn't uphill both ways.



Making Zucchini Bread

Mam enjoyed making zucchini bread especially so she could give the small loaves as gifts at Christmas.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a medium size bowl, add three eggs, two cups sugar, one cup grated zucchini, three teaspoons vanilla and one cup oil (Mam would use canola oil). Mix the ingredient well.

In large bowl, mix together three cups flour, one teaspoon baking soda, three teaspoons cinnamon, one teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon baking powder.

Stir the zucchini mixture into the flour mixture, and blend them thoroughly. Then add one cup diced walnuts and mix them through the zucchini / flour mixture.

Grease and flour two bread pans.

Divide the mixture into the two bread pans, and bake for about one hour. Test doneness by sticking a wooden toothpick into one of the loaves. If it comes out without sticking, the baking is completed.



How To Make Sauerkraut For New Years Eve

In a large roasting pan empty the contents of a large can of sauerkraut and spread it out evenly.

Next, place a large boneless Pork Loin, Center Cut on top of the sauerkraut already in the roasting pan. (The piece of meat - Pork Loin, Center Cut, should have a bit of fat on it to add more flavor.)

Sprinkle over the meat approximately one teaspoon of salt.

Empty the contents of five additional large cans of sauerkraut overtop and around the meat.

Add water to a level just above the sauerkraut, then place the lid on the roasting pan, and place it into the oven preheated to 350 degrees.

Cook the sauerkraut for five or six hours, occasionally checking to make sure the water is not cooking away. Add water as necessary to maintain the level.

After five or six hours, use a fork to test the meat to see how tender it has become. If it breaks apart easily, it is cooked sufficiently.

If hot dogs and/or kielbassa are desired, add them to the sauerkraut only a couple minutes before you are ready to eat. If cooked too long, they will split apart.



Mam Had Always Been Very Afraid Of Snakes

Mam was born and raised in a log house that was built in the late 1800s. She told me that more than one time, when they would be sweeping the upper floor and attic, where their bedrooms were situated, they would poke their brooms into a corner and disturb a snake that might have crawled in through a hole in the chinking between the logs. With log houses, there was no way to ensure that it would be completely tight. Mice might crawl in through a hole, and then a snake would crawl in to get the mice. It is little wonder that she would have been deathly afraid of snakes all her life. She couldn't even look at pictures of them in magazines. When we would bring a magazine into the house, we would go through it first and tear out any pictures of snakes that might be in it.



How To Make Pickled Eggs At Easter Time

Boil six dozen eggs for about ten minutes so that they are sufficiently hard boiled.

Peel the eggs and place them in a large glass jar. They can fill the jar, but they should not be stuffed in so tight that they are distorted out of shape. If they are packed in too tight, they might not get coated completely with the pickling.

Into a large pan, pour the juice from eight jars of pickled beets. Do not use “Harvard Beets”. The drained beets can be set aside to be eaten separately.

To the pan add one cup of white vinegar, one tablespoon of sugar, about one teaspoon of black pepper and one quarter teaspoon of salt. Note: white vinegar is used because the yellow, cider vinegar will add its own flavor to the mix. For these pickled eggs, you want the beets to make the primary flavor, so using white vinegar will allow the “pickling” process to take place while leaving the flavor to come from the beets.

Bring the beet juice and vinegar liquid to a boil. As soon as it begins to boil, remove it from the stove and pour it into the large glass jar containing the eggs. Place the lid for the jar just over the mouth, but do not screw tightly.

Let the eggs cool to room temperature and then screw the lid on tightly. Shake the jar a bit to loosen the eggs. Then refrigerate. Once a day the jar should be shaken or the eggs stirred with a large spoon to keep everything mixed well.

The eggs should be pickled and ready to eat in a day or two. They will last for nearly a month if kept refrigerated.



Mam’s Favorite Dessert

Mam’s favorite dessert ~ and most of the rest of ours too ~ was Watergate Salad. It wasn’t necessarily a recipe unique to Mam, but because she loved it so much, I decided to include it here.

You mix together one 9 ounce container of cool whip, one medium size can of crushed pineapple (juice and all), one package of pistachio instant pudding mix, one cup of miniature marshmallows and one cup of diced walnuts.

After it is thoroughly mixed together, you pour the mixture into a bowl and place it in the refrigerator to chill and thicken.



How To Make Fudge

I'd love to be able to include Mam's recipe for making homemade chocolate fudge ~ if only she would have shared it with me.

Mam used to make delicious chocolate fudge using Hershey's cocoa. She would only make it in the winter, because after mixing the ingredients, and pouring it into the special platter (that was used only for fudge) it would be set on the porch railing to cool. On a winter day the fudge might be cool in less than a half hour sitting on the porch railing. (We never put it in the refrigerator to cool.)

Leon and I both remembered the fudge. Pap did too, but he didn't know the recipe. It was 'dark' chocolate and hard. It wasn't like some people make nowadays, which is soft and melts in your mouth (and all over your fingers as you hold it). The kind Mam made was dry and solid ~ almost as hard as, but not as hard as peanut brittle. It was almost like eating a candy bar of chocolate.

Leon and I tried to coax Mam into making that fudge from around the time that dad died, but she refused. She insisted that she had never ever made that kind of fudge. In fact she insisted that she had never ever made any kind of fudge. She insisted that we were thinking about the fudge that dad would make. He made the chocolate, peanut butter and oatmeal fudge that people called “haystacks”. But we remembered her chocolate fudge. Why she blocked it out of her mind, I’ll never know.



Pap’s Peanut Butter & Oatmeal “Haystacks”

As noted in the item just before this, to fill the void left by Mam refusing to make us plain chocolate fudge, Pap found this recipe for a type of fudge brownie.

In a large saucepan, add and mix together 1/2 stick of margarine (Pap insisted that it had to be Fleischmann’s), two cups sugar, 1/2 cup milk, three tablespoons of Hershey’s cocoa and a pinch of salt.

Turn the heat up on the stove and bring the mixture to a boil. Boil for only one or two minutes, then remove from the heat.

Add 1/2 cup of peanut butter, one teaspoon of vanilla, and three cups of uncooked “Mothers” oats. Mix thoroughly and then place spoonfuls onto a layer of wax paper to cool. The spoonfuls need not be neat because part of the appeal of this ‘fudge’ is its rough appearance.



How To Make Gruel ~ Broccoli Casserole

Mam made the most delicious broccoli casserole, but because of the texture of it, Leon and I started to call it gruel. Mam was not offended, realizing that we were simply joking when we called it that. [Note: The word “gruel” actually refers to food such as oatmeal.]

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a large saucepan, melt one stick of butter, and then add a medium size onion, chopped. Saute the onion in the butter until it is pretty soft.

To the sauted onion, add one cup “instant” rice (such as Uncle Ben’s) and one cup water. Add one 8 ounce jar of cheese product, such as Velveeta or Cheeze-Whiz, and one can of mushroom soup. (You can substitute celery soup if you do not like mushrooms.) Stir the mixture and heat until the cheese is thoroughly melted and smooth.

To the mixture, add four to six cups of chopped fresh broccoli (or two small packages of frozen broccoli, thawed). Mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture into a large casserole dish.

Melt half a stick of butter and mix into a cup of bread crumbs. Then spread the the bread crumbs over the top of the mixture in the casserole dish.

Place the casserole dish in the oven and bake for 45 minutes.



How To Make Meatloaf

Mam used to make meatloaf using torn apart bits of bread as filler, but in the last years of her life, Stove-Top Stuffing was substituted for the bread. The preparation was simpler and the flavor was better.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a large mixing bowl add one pound of hamburger, a package of Stove-Top Stuffing, 1/2 cup of ketchup, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, two eggs and one cup of milk.

Mix everything together (by hand) adding more ketchup and/or milk as necessary to keep it moist enough to form into a 'ball'.

Form the mixture into the shape of a 'loaf' and place in a metal cooking pot. Add enough water into the pot to bring it to a level about three-quarters of the height of the loaf.

Bake for approximately two hours (or until the internal temperature reaches 145 degrees F). Halfway through the baking, add more water if necessary, and lift the loaf in order to allow the water to get underneath it.

You can use the water that is left over in the cook pot to make gravy.

Get a small dish and put in about a cup of flour. Run warm water from the sink and, using a tablespoon, add a

couple spoonfulls of warm water to the flour. Mix it until it forms a paste. It should be a little on the wet side.

Turn the heat down to ‘simmer’ under the pot with the meatloaf water. Add the flour paste slowly, as you stir the broth. Stir it until it starts to thicken, and add more flour paste as necessary to get it thicker. Don’t bring it to a boil; just keep it on simmer.



Mam's Homemade IceCream

Our family made homemade icecream for many years and many generations. Mam and Pap talked about how his mother, Jennie, used to make homemade icecream by simply mixing the ingredients in a pan and sitting that pan in the snow, turning it back and forth to get it to freeze. This recipe is the one we used as long as I can remember. It is one that I have never seen anywhere else. And in today's environment of thinking that everything is going to make you sick, the use of uncooked eggs seems to be a very terrible idea. The fact of the matter is that ten or twenty years ago the eggs produced by most chickens in the United States were safe; you didn't need to fear contracting diseases. At that time, when you exposed raw eggs to freezing, you killed most of the bad things that might be in them. Nowadays, that may not be the case. There are those who claim that very fresh eggs will be less risky for harboring diseases, such as salmonella, and therefore there is not much harm in using them in making homemade icecream. The claim has also been made that the risk of contracting salmonella from eggs in homemade icecream is much less than in eating steak that

is rare or medium rare. So, when determining whether you wish to make homemade icecream using this recipe, you'll just have to decide if it is safe for yourself.

This recipe is for a six quart freezer.

In a large mixing bowl, add 1-1/2 cups sugar. To this add four large eggs. Beat the two ingredients together until they are thoroughly blended.

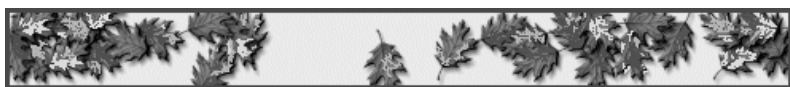
Add two teaspoons of vanilla and 1/4 teaspoon of salt to the mixture. Stir in.

Add one 14 ounce can of sweetened condensed milk and stir in.

Add one 12 ounce can of evaporated milk and stir in.

The mixture is poured into the can of the freezer. The dasher unit is placed into the can. And then whole milk is poured into the can so that it brings the level to just above the top vane of the dasher unit. The can's lid is put on, and the turning mechanism (whether hand or electric) is installed on the freezer.

Crushed ice, alternating with salt, is poured into the space between the can and the freezer and the turning is started. The ice cream will be frozen in about twenty minutes.



A Tribute To Mam

My mother, Dollie Edith (Nofsker) Smith, known to her family as *Mam*, died at 10:30 on the morning of 19

March 2011. The previous Monday (the 14th), she had celebrated her eighty-seventh birthday.

My mother was born into a poor family. She wasn't born in a mansion, but rather in a log house. But she never wanted to live poorly. And so she and dad worked hard to make their lives better than what they had been born into. They never forgot where they came from; they simply didn't believe that they had to stay there.

She took pride in keeping herself looking nice and her house clean and in shape. I remember her saying that even if you were poor and could afford nothing more than water, you could at least clean your clothes in that water. You might not be able to afford soap, but you could at least get the sweat and grime out. As the years passed and dad started to make good money working at the paper mill, he bought mother nice clothes. But despite the nice clothes, she never was ashamed of, nor forgot, her past.

When she could get around better, mother would get out and clean down the exterior walls of the house. She might do it two or three times a summer. And woe to my dad and us kids if the paint on the house started to peel a bit. One or two spots peeling meant that the entire exterior had to be painted. I sighed a sigh of relief when they finally got vinyl siding. But it still had to be washed down a couple times a summer.

Mom took pride in 'fixing up' the porch with her wicker furniture and flowers. One of Thelma's daughters told her mother that she could tell that it was finally summer when Dollie had her porch furniture and flowers out. Mom told me that she worried that after she passed on I might not take care of that wicker furniture. But you can be sure, I'll be sprinkling it off and letting it air dry before placing it on the porch again this year.

I was always proud to go places with my parents. They might have embarrassed me now and then by an action or a statement, but I'm sure they never intended to. I am proud to be able to say that even when I went through my 'hippie' stage, they respected my choices. I'm sure they didn't like them, but they respected them and allowed me to explore my interests.

I would bet that many children and their parents go through life as just parents and children. In my case, my parents were truly friends to me. When my dad was alive I could sit with him late into the night discussing things that we were both interested in, things like theology, science and history. We didn't get into arguments, even if we had opposing views. And after dad died, although mother and I wouldn't necessarily discuss the same subjects as dad and I would, we still had great conversations. And I'm really going to miss that. Mother often told me that her favorite pastime was simply sitting with dad and talking. I tried to take his place – as anyone driving up the road could see. We'd sit and talk about her childhood and I'd tell her about something that I was involved with at the time. I knew that she wasn't really interested in what I was talking about, but that didn't matter. We were keeping each other company.

I remember the time when Mam was upset that she didn't know how to pray. When dad was alive, they would pray together, with him doing the actual praying. Some time after he died, I could tell that Mam was upset about something. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that since dad always prayed for them together, she didn't know how to pray. I took the time to explain to her how I prayed, thanking God for the things He had done for me and the family, and asking Him to watch over us all. There were many times after that in which I would enter her house in the

evening, and hear her praying. It seemed to give her some consolation.

It makes me happy remembering that I could make my mother laugh as much as I did. Mom understood my sense of humor, and I would hear her telling others that things I said and did kept her feeling young.

Mother stopped visiting about three years ago. After my brother, Leon died, she just didn't feel like doing a lot of the things that we used to do.

And then there were her health problems. She had about five major problems, each one of which would have driven someone else crazy.

Mam lost her hearing about eight years ago. I bought her a top-of-the-line set of hearing aids. She tried them, but did not like using them; and so the \$6,000 set of hearing aids sat on her dresser while I suffered through trying to speak to her. I think it was partly a habit, but to everything I said, she would ask "What?", and I would be forced to repeat it. But that was not the extent of it. She would try to get me to repeat the same thing up to four times. When I would get frustrated, I would ask her: "Now what do you think I said?", and she would respond with exactly what I had said. So I would get upset with what I perceived as simply a habit that she could break if she really wanted to. It became a thing that we argued about; and that I came to regret the most.

The worst thing for her was the arthritis pain she felt in her legs, especially her knees. The doctor would give her pain medicine, but most of what he prescribed had some form of narcotic in it, and so she would not take it because it made her drowsy all the time.

Then she had the bladder control problem which really worked on her nerves. We had to plan trips to

accommodate that problem, and eventually stopped going anywhere because of it. Her problem was that she would finish going to the bathroom, but feel like she might have to start again. As a result, Mam would sit on the commode for up to an hour at a time. As the problem progressed, we couldn't even go to restaurants because she would go in to the bathroom and I would have to just wait for her ~ awkwardly. And then there was the bedwetting problem that grew worse and worse during the last six or so months that she lived. I'm sure that the arthritis pain in her legs kept her from being able to get up easily to physically go to the bathroom to relieve herself. But then, at times, I thought that she probably just didn't get up from the bed when she first felt she needed to relieve herself. The trouble was that while I was at work, she would have to just lie there in the bed, wet or not. As soon as I would get home from work, I would help Mam up from the bed and assist her in walking to the bathroom. Then I would remove the wet sheets and blankets, and put them in the washer. I had a couple complete sets, so I could start making the bed right away ~ if the mattress was dry. But that was not always the case. Despite the fact that I had gotten waterproof fitted bedcovers for her, Mam might be lying close to the edge of the bed when it happened, and the wetness would soak down the unprotected edge of the mattress, soaking into it underneath the waterproof cover. I tried not to get upset about having to make the bed every night, but there were times that I said things I should not have. She would cry sometimes because she was causing me so much work.

Sometimes people would notice that she had bandaids on each of her fingers. That was because she had some sort of fungal problem that made her nails drop off.

And lastly, she had a water retention problem in her legs. They would swell up and then spots all over them would burst open to relieve the pressure. The spots that

opened would then burn and itch for her. I tried my best to help her overcome these various problems, such as keeping her legs clean so that she wouldn't get infections, and cleaning her bedclothes every evening when I came home from work, but complete relief was never found. For at least the last two years, she really wanted to die knowing that she would be going to Heaven and leaving her painful body behind.

Despite the aches and pains that she had through her ailments, Mam began to acquire additional aches and pains from falling. Mam started to fall during the last couple of months of her life. She slid off the bed a couple times, missed a chair as she was sitting down twice, and simply fell forward once. She would slide off the bed because she insisted on sitting on the edge of the bed for hours at a time, until her legs got too numb to hold her in place. I would try to lift her up, but then my sciatica would be irritated. The main problem with helping her get up was that her knees hurt her too much to be able to put weight on them in the process of getting up. So I had to basically pull or lift her straight up. A couple of times it took me two or three hours to get her up. The two instances in which she missed the chair took place in the kitchen. She thought she was sitting down, but in missing the chair, she went on down to the floor. The second time it happened, I came home, opened the kitchen door, and saw her lying there on the floor. As I got closer I could see that she had the dog's bed pillow under her head, and Nikki was lying right beside her. She told me that Nikki had pushed the bed pillow over to her after she was lying there a short while. The one time that Mam simply fell took place in the bedroom. She had gotten up, went to the bathroom, and when she came back she thought that she was actually getting into her bed. Instead, she was at the foot of the bed, and as she leaned forward to get into the bed, she missed it and went right down to the floor face first. The amazing

thing was that although she got black and blue marks and sore spots, she never broke any bones in any of her falls.

I was selfish in doing it, but every time I prayed I would ask God: “Please let Mam live a little while longer, I don’t want her to die, but please take the aches and pains away.” I wanted her to be here for me as long as possible. But I think she was just tired of living, and really wanted to die ~ especially since so many of her relatives and friends were already dead. We didn’t get the newspaper, but I would photocopy obituaries from the paper at work, and take them home for Mam. Carol would also email to me obituaries of people she thought that Mam would have known. But toward the end, I stopped taking them to her because I could see how it upset her to see that everyone she knew was dying. It seemed like I was slapping her in the face with the fact that she might be next every time I showed her another obituary.

And then, during this last year she started to fade into Alzheimers. Doctor Maniglia told me that I would know that she was getting that ailment when she would forget who I was. Off and on over the past four or five months, mother would start to tell me what “Larry” had done that day. I would ask her if she knew who I was, and she would think about it, and finally say: “Oh, you’re Larry”. But in the last two weeks that she lived it was harder for her to recognize me. She would say: “You’re not Larry; the other boy is Larry.” We even argued at least one time about who I was. She only accepted that it was me when I got out a picture and showed her that it really was me. I would find myself thinking at work of ways that I could help her to remember me. She didn’t want to go to a ‘home’, but I feared that it would be inevitable if she got to the point that she did not recognize me at all.

Mother died peacefully, and for that I thank the Lord. She no longer has the aches and pains. And she did not have

to die in an “old folks home” that she dreaded. And my fears that she would die painfully while I was away at work were calmed by the Lord choosing to take her when I was there with her. I almost forgot that she told me one evening about three weeks ago, that she dreamt that Jesus came to her and took her by the hand and showed her the land on the other side of the river. I think she was at peace when the time finally came.