



SLOW FOOD SONOMA COUNTY :: NORTH ::

December 2019 NEWSLETTER



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Holiday Food Traditions

For many of us, the holidays remind us of meals and other food treats that appeared every year, prepared by a parent or relative and evoking strong memories. Here are four favorite recipes from the past, donated by some of our chapter leaders. They all reported they enjoyed re-connecting with relatives when they searched for someone who still had the recipe. We hope you will enjoy them too. Happy holidays!

SWEDISH MEATBALLS

I grew up in a family of Swedish heritage and have fond memories of making and eating Swedish Meatballs every Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Everyone in our family would help in the preparation of the meal while we listened to Christmas carols.

Ingredients

1 lb ground beef
1/2 lb ground pork
1/2 cup minced onion
3/4 cup fine breadcrumbs/panko
1 Tbsp parsley
1-1/2 Tbsp salt
Pepper
1 tsp Worcestershire
1 egg
1/2 cup milk

Directions:

* Mix all ingredients. Shape into size of walnuts. Brown in 1/4 c. hot fat. Remove and make gravy.
* Gravy: Stir 1/4 c. flour, 1 t. paprika, salt and pepper into hot fat in skillet. Stir in 2 c. boiling water and 3/4 c. sour cream.
* Put meatballs back in gravy and cook 15-20 minutes.

MOM'S PENOCHÉ

One of my most cherished memories is making this candy with my mother for Christmas--we never had it any other time of the year. What I remember best was the beating part: Mom would put a towel on her lap to hold the hot pan, and then with a wooden spoon begin the beating. We took turns. It took some effort, but oh, was it delightful!

Ingredients

1 cup packed brown sugar
1 cup white sugar
3/4 cup evaporated canned milk
1 Tbsp butter
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup white Karo syrup
Dash of salt
1 cup nuts

Directions

Bring to a boil (slowly) all of the ingredients, except the nuts. Cook until mixture dropped into cold water forms a soft ball. Then beat until the gloss is gone. Add nuts as the candy loses its gloss. Pour into a buttered dish. Let cool and cut into squares.

POLISH KOLACZKI/HUNGARIAN KIFLI/NUT HORNS

Whenever we visited our Polish relatives in Pennsylvania, we got to eat traditional pierogi, cabbage soup, Kielbasa, and these wonderful dainty nut horns. Visiting the church midday, we could find the ladies in the church kitchen laboring with love to create these morsels. Powdered sugar everywhere! The only other opportunity to find them was at a Polish wedding or Polish picnic. You can imagine my surprise when the man I married--who

was Hungarian--claimed the recipe for Kifli to be the real deal: they are identical to the Polish version!

Ingredients

Dough

8 oz cream cheese at room temp
1 stick unsalted butter at room temp
2 cups flour
2 Tbsps Brown Sugar
¼ tsp salt
2 egg yolks, mixed
1 tsp vanilla

Filling

½ lb ground walnuts
2 egg whites
½ cup sugar

Directions

- * Blend butter and cream cheese in a food processor. Add egg yolks and vanilla. Blend well. Add to the dry ingredients in a bowl, blending until dough coheres like pie crust. Divide into 3 patties. Cover each tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate over night.
- * Beat egg whites into soft mounds. Add sugar. Mix. Add ground walnuts (don't grind too fine; texture is good).
- * Roll out the chilled dough thin using a floured board and rolling pin. Cut into 2-inch squares. Fill each with a teaspoon of nut filling (or apricot preserves). Roll and shape like a mini cigar.
- * Bake on trays without oil or parchment, 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Let cool, then dust with powdered sugar.

SWEDISH CARDAMOM ROLLS

My parents grew up in Northern Wisconsin, home to large dairy farms and abundant quantities of milk and butter. My grandfather worked in a milk-canning plant, and workers were given all the dented cans. My grandmother was Swedish and used the cans of milk to bake bread, rolls, and breakfast sweets for the large family. This recipe can be made sweet or savory by adjusting how much sugar you put in the filling. The use of milk and butter gives it a soft, nearly brioche character. Cardamom is a warming spice that will perfume your home during the holidays.

Ingredients

Dough

1 cup + 1 Tbsp milk, warmed
1 envelope dry active yeast
1/3 cup light brown sugar
3-1/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more to flour surfaces
1 tsp. whole cardamom seeds
1/4 tsp. salt
5.53 Tbsp butter (at room temperature)
Oil/cooking spray (to grease bowl)

Filling

4-1/2 Tbsp butter (at room temperature)

1/3 cup dark brown sugar
1-1/2 tsp whole cardamom seeds

Directions

Cardamom Dough

- * In a bowl, add yeast to the lukewarm milk with 1 tsp light brown sugar and stir until yeast has dissolved. Let activate for 10 minutes.
- * Meanwhile, grind/crush cardamom seeds with spice grinder or mortar and pestle. In the bowl of your stand mixer, mix together flour, light brown sugar (less 1 tsp), cardamom, and salt. Add the yeast/milk mixture to the flour mixture and mix on low until dough begins to come together.
- * Increase speed to medium-low and add cubed butter in handfuls. Once all the butter has been added, increase speed to medium/medium-high and knead for about 5 minutes. You want this to be a fairly loose dough, so whatever you do, don't over knead.
- * Scrape dough out onto a lightly floured surface and shape it into a bun, tucking the edges toward the center. Place in your greased bowl, seam side down, and cover with a clean kitchen towel. Place bowl in a warm place and let it rise for at least 40 minutes.

Cardamom Filling

In the bowl of your stand mixer, fitted with paddle attachment, combine butter, dark brown sugar, and freshly ground/crushed cardamom seeds and mix together on medium-low until creamy and smooth.

Forming Rolls

- * Line baking sheets with parchment or Silpat mats and set aside.
- * Roll out dough into a 13" x 21" rectangle on a lightly floured surface. Spread filling onto the rolled-out dough rectangle so that it covers the entire area from edge to edge.
- * Mark the rectangle into three equal sections. Fold left side to the middle, then fold the right side over the left side. Turn the dough so that the openings are on the left and right sides and roll out the dough slightly. Using a sharp knife or pastry wheel, cut into strands. You should have 15-20 strands.
- * Starting from the end, wrap one strand around the tips of your thumb and four fingers (three if you have big hands) twice, twisting slightly as you wrap, then slip your thumb out of the roll, loop the strand around one last time then tuck the end and your thumb loop into the bottom.
- * Place buns on your lined baking sheets (giving enough room for dough to rise and spread during proofing and baking), cover with a kitchen towel and let rise for about 30 minutes.
- * Bake proofed rolls for 7-8 minutes or until tops are golden brown.

Slow Food Events

COMING EVENTS

Don't miss these coming events! Detailed invitations will be emailed approximately 4 weeks before each event.

December

7 Snail Trail at Estero Cafe, anytime 7:30am to 3pm, 14450 Highway 1, Valley Ford
10 Terra Madre Day Dinner, 5:30 pm, Healdsburg. **We have a few tickets left! [Click here to purchase.](#)**

January

13 **Slow Books**, *From Scratch* by Tembi Locke, 5:30 pm, Windsor

25 **Around the Slow Table**, dinner with dishes from Ruth Reichl's *My Kitchen Year*

February

Snail of Approval Annual Awards, date tbd

Spotlight on Sonoma County North Member/Producer: Earlybirds Place



Earl and Myrna Fincher represent old-fashioned values and grit. They married 63 years ago and built a vibrant life together on Chalk Hill Road in Healdsburg. They proudly boast three daughters, eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and a thriving farm with chickens, a plethora of vegetables and gourds of every shape and size.

It had to be serendipity for Earl Fincher. As a little boy, Earl found birds fascinating. He watched them for hours and wanted to learn about the different species and characteristics. Decades later on the farm he and his wife Myrna worked diligently to create, he wanted to construct bird boxes to attract his feathered friends. In a flash of inspiration, Earl purchased a package of hard-shell gourd seeds thinking they would make perfect bird feeders: sturdy, versatile and most importantly, affordable.

Now 15 years later, thanks to Earl and Myrna's ingenuity, that handful of seeds has morphed into dozens of gourd varieties grown on Earlybirds Place. Their gourds are used for bird feeders, instruments, jewelry, and so much more -- only limited by one's imagination. Myrna teaches gourd craft classes, the farm sells gourds to many artisans, and every June they hold a gourd festival to celebrate the versatility of these amazing plants. Cousin to the soft-shell squash, the hard-shell gourd is cultivated around the world, and its utility is almost as old as human history.

Earl and Myrna have a long history in Healdsburg, where they met and married. In 1971 they took out a \$7000 loan on a 3 ½ acre parcel. After paying off the loan, they had the equity to build a home. In what would be a long list of blessings, they found a second ancient well on the land, which provided plenty of water even during the drought years. As a result, they began planting even before the house was done. Through much trial and error, they created a vibrant garden with enough to feed their growing family. Soon there was too much for the family to eat, so they began selling at the local farmer's market and supplying produce for eight local restaurants. After 26 years at the market, Myrna and Earl have scaled down to two restaurants and still produce a wide variety of organic vegetables.

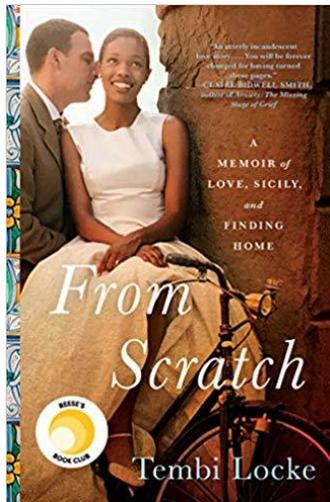
I spent a crisp and chilly November morning on the farm with this special couple. We sat in the warm living room and chatted while watching the parade of birds feasting at Earl's collection of bird feeders. Earl's favorite chair is situated right next to the large picture window where he finds peace and tranquility. It has been a rough year for the Finchers. They evacuated their beloved property during the Kincadee fire. Their land was spared, but the heat and smoke destroyed many of their crops. Several of their neighbors were not as fortunate. They feel so blessed and grateful for the support of the community.

Myrna took me on the grand tour of her property. First, we headed to the attached garage, which serves as storage to hundreds of gourds ready for pick up. An odd shaped wooden box sits in front. It is lovingly known as Earl's corn kernel peeler. He grows Japanese hullless popcorn, which, according to Earl, is superior to anything else. The kernels last for years, and you never get those annoying hulls caught in your gums. Earl plopped a popcorn cob in the machine and cranked the wheel, leaving an empty cob and a collection of kernels in the bottom.

We wandered around the 3½ acres of land with buildings scattered about each with a careful purpose. We ended the tour in the gourd greenhouse where Myrna spends many happy hours planting seeds, transplanting and nurturing her beloved gourds.

You can follow [Earlybirds Place](#) on Facebook. For more information about Earl and Myrna's gourds and craft classes, call 707-433-1826. Stay tuned for the summer 2020 gourd festival!

Slow Books: "From Scratch"



On Monday, January 13, Slow Books will discuss *From Scratch: A Memoir of Love, Sicily, and Finding Home* by Tembi Locke. We will meet at 5:30 pm at Violet Nelson's home in Windsor.

It was love at first sight when Tembi met professional chef, Saro, on a street in Florence. There was just one problem: Saro's traditional Sicilian family did not approve of him marrying a black American woman. However, the couple build a happy life in Los Angeles, with fulfilling careers, deep friendships and the love of their lives: a baby girl they adopt at birth. Eventually, they reconcile with Saro's family just as he faces a formidable cancer that will consume all their dreams.

"From Scratch" chronicles three summers Tembi spends in Sicily with her daughter, Zoela, as she begins to piece together a life without her husband in his tiny hometown hamlet of farmers. Where once Tembi was estranged from Saro's family and his origins, now she finds solace and nourishment—literally and spiritually—at her mother-in-law's table. In the Sicilian countryside, she discovers the healing gifts of simple fresh food, the embrace of a close knit community, and timeless traditions and wisdom that light a path forward.

In Sicily, it is said that every story begins with a marriage or a death—in Tembi Locke's case, it is both. Her story is about loss, but it's really about love found. Her story is about travel, but it's really about finding a home. It is about food, but it's really about chasing flavor as an act of remembrance. "From Scratch" is for anyone who has dared to reach for big love, fought for what mattered most, and needed a powerful reminder that life is...delicious. (Amazon)

Snail of Approval



Join us on the Snail Trail at Estero Cafe

In support of our local Snail of Approval restaurants, come follow the Snail Trail out to Valley Ford and enjoy a meal at Estero Cafe on Saturday, December 7th. Estero Cafe is one of our original (2017) Snails, and we want to celebrate and support them. Breakfast, brunch, lunch, whatever you want to call it, they have it, visit anytime from 7:30am to 3pm. Gather a group of your friends and head on down; six or more and you can make a reservation (707) 876-3333. Otherwise just pop on in. They are located in Valley Ford at 14450 Highway 1. It's a beautiful drive!

Support your local Snail of Approval restaurants and farms this winter

Many of our local restaurants, farms, and producers are having a rough time with the fire affecting Sonoma County and winter right around the corner. Take the time to support them and frequent their establishments.

When you visit our Snail restaurants, or see our farms at the Farmers Market, take a photo and add our hashtag [#snailofapprovalSC](#).

And when you're making your plans for eating out, don't forget to [browse the complete list of SoA's here!](#)

In Memory of Evelyn Cheatham



Evelyn Cheatham Scholarship

We will miss long-time Slow Food member Evelyn Cheatham, who died on October 31, 2019. Evelyn founded Worth Our Weight in 2006 to create a pathway to a career for young people who had aged out of foster care or had struggled with the effects of neglect, family chaos, homelessness, gang involvement and other challenges.

For more than a decade, Evelyn was the driving force behind the non-profit café and training program. A dedicated teacher who was often described as both mentor and mother, she immersed herself in the work until 2018 when the program disbanded. Several times she brought WOW interns to the international Slow Food Terra Madre in Italy.

With Evelyn's passing, a group of her close friends and supporters decided to start an ongoing scholarship fund for Sonoma County students to pursue culinary training.

Supporting this scholarship helps those with a dream of working in the culinary field reach those goals. As a woman, a chef, and a leader who touched so many, Evelyn's scholarship will continue the passionate work of her life. To contribute, go to [Evelyn Cheatham Culinary Scholarship](#).

Membership

Welcome New Members!

Cat Bellinger
Sue Davis
Katherine Latour
Hollis Lefkowitz
Jared Pickard
Ubaldo Solorio
Don Williams

[Join or renew your membership online](#) and list Sonoma County North-CA as your chapter. If you prefer to renew locally by check, please download our [membership form](#) and follow the instructions.



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