

Doughs, Muffins & Breads

- Cream Cheese Pastry Dough
- Easy Yeast Dough
- Bran Muffins
- Banana Bread
- Pumpkin Bread
- Apple Bread

Cookies

- Chocolate Leaf Cookies
- Toll House Cookies
- Mandel Bread
- Rolled Pastries – Pogachel Dough
- Pogachel Dough
- Sugar Cookies
- Cream Cheese Cookies
- Oatmeal Cookies 1
- Oatmeal Cookies 2
- Macaroons
- Spritz Pressing Cookies

Cakes, Icings & Fillings

- Red Devil's Food Cake
- Sour Cream Coffee Cake
- Yellow Cake
- Sour Cream Chocolate Cake
- White Cake
- Fluffy Boiled Icing
- Chocolate Peppermint Patty Cake
- Fresh Coconut Cake
- Apple Cake Torte
- Ice Cream Roll Cake
- Dark Chocolate Icing
- Custard Filling
- Chocolate Icing
- Hershey's Icing for Angel Food Cake
- Seven Minute Frosting
- Whipped Cream Icing
- Vanilla Glaze
- Boiled Chocolate Icing or Filling
- Lemon Filling 1
- Lemon Filling 2
- Coconut Icing
-

Pies, Pastries & Miscellaneous Desserts

- Coffee Chiffon Pie
- Apple Pie
- Apple Crisp
- Coconut Cream Pie
- Pumpkin Pie
- Cream Puffs
- Apple Chocolate Torte
- Cheesecake
- Raspberry Sauce
- Rice Pudding

One thing that was very popular in the 40s and 50s but which seems to have fallen out of favor today is social clubs. They were loosely knit groups of people who used their club as a vehicle for socializing, and some members even vacationed together. While some of these so called clubs were actual places, like a real building for religious or ethnic groups to get together, other clubs were considerably less formal and did not have actual clubhouses. Such was the case with card clubs which consisted of a limited number of people who played cards regularly, every week of the year, and at a different member's home whenever they met.

My parents belonged to a club that was comprised of about five or six couples who met every Saturday night. They'd all go out to dinner first and then back to the home of one of the couples for coffee, dessert and, of course, cards. The men played gin and the women bridge. But it didn't end there. Cards was very much the TV of the 1940's and early '50s. On Monday evening my Mother played bridge and with a totally different group of women than she played with on Saturday nights. And not to be outdone, my Dad also played gin on Monday night with the same guys from Saturday night.

But we're not done yet. On Sunday morning, the same group of men got together to play some more gin (like two out of three days wasn't enough!). As you might expect, not many of the wives (like none!) were all that receptive to having a gin game in their home at 9:00 on Sunday morning. But not to be deterred, the men found a solution. "Hack" Ginsburg, one of the club members, operated a wholesale candy business on the so called "wholesale" block in downtown Wilkes-Barre. It was really more like a small warehouse because you couldn't just walk in off the street and buy a Milky Way. Everything was sold by the case, and only to recognized retailers. From this meager looking facility flowed most of the gum and candy sold in the county, a fact that impressed me beyond description until I was a grown adult. Hack had the world's best business. What could be better than being lord over all of the candy in the city! It was like owning the Fort Knox of candy!

The building itself was two stories and constructed of wood and brick probably sometime back in the late 1800s or early 1900s. It had heavily worn and splintered dark wood floors, and if you looked above to the ceiling you saw more wood which was the underside of the second floor. There was very little that you could call furniture, and every corner seemed to be taken up with brown, corrugated cardboard cases filled with every imaginable kind of your favorite (and not so favorite) brands of gum and candy. Each case was a rough cube probably on the order of two and a half to three feet in all three dimensions, and they were typically stacked three or even four high. It was a bit like what you'd expect Willy Wonka's distribution department to look like...cartons of candy as far as the eye could see, and then some! Lighting was a bit sparse and was provided by few scattered pendent lights suspended from the ceiling, much like a light over a pool table. And while this certainly does not describe an ideal card playing environment, for inventive men who wanted to play cards on a Sunday morning, there was no obstacle they could not overcome with a bit of imagination and ingenuity. Several of the large cartons were simply moved (actually slid) into place to serve as tables and seating. One seat may have been a case of marshmallow and chocolate Mallow Cups while the next seat over was a case of Mars Bars and the table a case of Topps baseball cards. And speaking of Topps baseball cards, that brings to mind a story involving those same baseball cards which took place at Hack Ginsburg's store during one of those Sunday morning get-togethers. But more about that a bit later after we run through some more recipes.

DOUGHS, MUFFINS & BREADS

Cream Cheese Pastry Dough (Freda Popky)

There were all sorts of recipes for cream cheese cookies that my Mother made, and I'm a big fan of every last one of them.

½ lb. butter
2 cups flour
8 oz. cream cheese

Mix three ingredients together and refrigerate overnight. Next day you have 2 options. (1) Roll out, cut with cookie cutter, sprinkle with cinnamon and bake at 350 degrees for about 12 minutes or until slightly brown at edges. (2) Roll out into a large sheet and cover with raspberry jam and crushed walnuts. Roll the dough and filling into a log and cut into cookies about 1 to 1 ½ inches long. Bake at 350 degrees for about 12 minutes or until slightly brown at edges. (That's what the recipe said, but I know it doesn't sound right!)

Easy Yeast Dough (Ruthie Dickstein... not to be confused with "Ruth" Dickstein. Ruthie was Ruth's step daughter in law and was married to Harry Dickstein's son, Herb.)

½ lb. sweet butter
¾ cup milk (or part sour cream)
3 tbs. sugar
1 small square Fleischman's yeast (dissolved in 1 tbs. tepid water)
3 scant cups sifted flour
3 egg yolks

Combine and heat butter, milk and sugar in a sauce pan, then allow to cool. Combine all remaining ingredients in a bowl and mix with hands. Knead until dough does not stick to hands. Refrigerate over night. Next day, remove from refrigerator and allow to warm to room temperature (about 30 minutes). Beat three egg whites with ¾ cups of sugar, pinch of salt and then add 1 tsp. of vanilla.

Banana Bread

½ cup butter (or margarine)
1 cup sugar
1 cup mashed banana
1 tsp. lemon juice
2 cups flour (sifted)
3 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
1 cup nuts (chopped)

Cream butter with sugar. Blend in mashed banana and lemon juice. Mix quickly with remaining ingredients, and add nuts last. Transfer to loaf pan and bake for about 50 minutes at 375 degrees.

Bran Muffins - 10 to 12 muffins (*Hilda Blume*)

One good way to remain a *regular* guy!

1 cup all purpose flour (sifted)
3 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking soda
2 ¼ tbs. sugar
1 ¾ cups bran
1 egg
4 tbs. melted shortening (or butter)
1 cup sour milk (or buttermilk)
2 tbs. molasses
½ cup seeded and floured raisins

Beat egg then add shortening and milk. Add dry ingredients then add molasses. Stir in raisins. Bake in greased muffin tins for 15 to 20 minutes at 400 degrees.

Pumpkin Bread (*Hilda Blume*)

3 ½ cups regular flour
2 ¼ cups sugar
2 very scant tsp. baking soda
1 ½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup Mazola oil
2/3 cup water
4 eggs
1 can pumpkin pie mix (Lucky Leaf...if it's still made!)
¼ tsp. vanilla
1 cup chopped nuts
½ cup raisins

Sift and then measure flour. Sift again. Put everything except dry ingredients into a mixing bowl and beat well until light. Mix on low speed and add dry ingredients. Fold in nuts and raisins last. Bake in loaf pan at 350 degrees until done. (Small loaf pan about 45 minutes and large loaf pan about 60 minutes.)

Apple Bread

Bread

¾ cup shortening
1 ½ cups sugar
3 eggs
3 cups flour (sifted)
1 tsp. salt
1 ½ tsp. baking soda
3 tbs. milk
1 tsp. vinegar
2 ½ tsp. vanilla
2 ¾ cups sliced apples

Cream together shortening and sugar then add 3 beaten eggs. Mix together flour, salt and baking soda. Make sour milk by adding vinegar to the milk. Add sour milk and remaining dry ingredients alternately to shortening mix. Add vanilla, fold in apples and pour into greased loaf pan. Cover with wax paper and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Topping

4 tbs. melted butter (or margarine)
4 tbs. brown sugar
1 ½ tsp cinnamon

Add sugar and cinnamon to melted margarine and pour topping over baked bread.

Our first TV was a Philco console, black and white of course. By *console* I mean it was a big bulky thing in a wood cabinet with a big piece of glass (the screen) that designers tried to disguise as a beautiful piece of furniture. (Editor's Note: Not!) It was ugly and heavy, very heavy, and moving it was a great way to get a hernia! When we got that set in 1951, there were two modes of broadcasting TV channels; UHF (Ultra High Frequency) and VHF (Very High Frequency). The difference really isn't important, but what was important was that either way you only got about three channels. We were set up to receive UHF, but it wasn't quite that simple. Most people with UHF had a mast antennae on their roof with three separate bow ties each of which was aimed in the direction of one of the three channels. If we had a bad wind storm and the antennae moved as much as one zillionth of a degree the picture deteriorated or was lost altogether. And that meant someone had to go up on the roof to make the readjustment. That in turn meant that another person had to be available to watch the TV and keep yelling to the person on the roof who was adjusting the bow ties to keep adjusting until a clear picture appeared on the TV. The same procedure had to be repeated for each of the three stations. As you can imagine, hanging around on the roof in the middle of the winter was not a particularly popular activity, and so when an alternative was presented all UHF users jumped at it.

Some genius got the bright idea to use only one bow tie mounted on a mast that would rotate in increments of about a quarter of a degree and that could be operated remotely, like from a box on top of the TV. When the wind knocked the bow tie out of alignment all you had to do was turn the dial on the box a few clicks and listen as it clicked off each notch of rotation. Brilliant! Right? Well, not exactly. Great idea, bad execution. Where things sort of fell down was that a full 360 degree rotation literally took

a minute or more, and even if you were in the other end of the house you could hear it slowly clicking for each and every quarter of a degree turn it made. So every time you changed channels you might as well go in for a nap while you waited for the antennae to rotate into place. It was so slow that people would plan their evening's viewing around which channel had the greatest number of programs they wanted to watch, because there was no way they wanted to take the time to change the channel and, of course the antenna to move with it. You could miss half the show while you waited! By the way, and for you much younger folks, remotes didn't come standard on TVs until probably sometime in the mid to late 1980s. Yes, that's right, every time we wanted to change the channel we had to tell our kids get up off our asses and change the channel for us!

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Chocolate Leaf Cookies (Hilda Blume)

Throughout the annals of history you will find objects which have become sacred icons, bigger than life symbols for religions since the beginning of time. For example, there is the Shroud of Turin, the Ark of the Covenant, The Cup of Christ and, of course, Hilda Blume's Leaf Cookies. By the way, this list is not in order of importance because if it was, there is no way the cookies would have been last! Probably more than anything else, these cookies symbolized Hilda's legendary prowess as a baker extraordinaire. The cookies were shaped like a leaf and about the same size. Not an oak or maple leaf with their many sharp points and angles, but more like an elm or birch leaf with a curved, teardrop bottom curving up gracefully to a pointed top. The dough was relatively thin, and after baking it took on a slightly dark, toasted color. Part of the magic in the cookie was the dough itself; its crispness, texture and distinctive taste. It was then covered with a thin layer of dark chocolate, and before the chocolate could cool a fork tine was used to engrave it with very thin veins which served to further enhance the leaf look. This must have been very time consuming, but Hilda felt it was necessary to help elevate the leaf cookie above all others. The final step was to very carefully sprinkle some crushed nuts around the cookie edges, a task requiring infinite patience that was one of Hilda's trademarks. The slight green hue of the nuts was a pleasant visual contrast to the dark brown color of the chocolate. Of the three main cookie components, the cookie, the dark chocolate and the crushed nuts, no one of them was a star unto itself, but putting the three of them together in a cookie was a pure stroke of genius. These cookies were so sought after by our family and Hilda's friends that they could easily have been used as currency! I am not aware of anyone who has made these cookies since Hilda's death, but I hope someone will be inspired to try it so that we can see if they can indeed be replicated. I suspect that the main reason no one has tried is largely because of the intimidation factor. Who among us can really expect to bake as well as Hilda Blume!

- ½ lb. butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- Dark chocolate
- Walnuts (finely chopped)

Cream first three ingredients well. Add well beaten eggs to cream until smooth. Sift baking powder and flour and add to cream mixture. Add vanilla while beating slowly. Refrigerate overnight. The next day, roll out cookie dough into a relatively thin layer (less than 1/8 inch) and use cookie cutter to cut out cookies. Place cookies on a cookie sheet and refrigerate 30 minutes before baking. Bake at 375 degrees until slightly brown.

Once cookies are thoroughly cooled, melt dark chocolate and apply a thin coating to each cookie. Before chocolate hardens use a fork to engrave leaf veins. After the cookies are covered and engraved, roll the edges of each cookie in the chopped walnuts. The finished product should have a very thin line of chopped walnuts along the perimeter of the chocolate coating.

Toll House Cookies (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

1 cup shortening (softened)
¾ cup brown sugar
¾ cup granular sugar
2 eggs (beaten)
1 tsp. vanilla
2 ¼ cups sifted regular flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
1 pkg. Nestles chocolate chips
Finely chopped walnuts (optional)

Cream together shortening, brown sugar, granulated sugar, vanilla and beaten eggs. Gradually add dry ingredients and mix well. Use tsp. measuring spoon to drop cookies onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes.

Mandel Bread (*Mrs. Urban*)

Here's another one that you're probably not really sure about, but fortunately I'm here to explain it. Picture a tasty, moist, cookie size piece of very plain cake. Now, take that piece of cake like pastry and leave it on the counter for several days until it's as dry as hay and almost as hard as a brick. Now leave it out another day or two. That's Mandel bread! Or to look at it another way, Mandel bread is the Jewish version of biscotti, only dryer and harder!

¼ lb. margarine
¾ cup sugar
3 eggs
1 tsp. rum
½ tsp. almond flavor
1 tsp. anise
1 tsp. lemon juice
2 cups regular flour
1 tsp. baking powder

Cream well margarine and sugar. Oil jelly roll pan. Divide dough into three sections and form into three long rolls. Bake in oven for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove from oven, cut in 1 inch slices, turn slices on sides and return to oven for 5 minutes. (Should you turn it on the left side or right side? Hmmm...)

Rolled Pastries - Pogachel Dough 1

(Ruth Dickstein)

Somewhere else in this book I mentioned the need for Jews to use sour cream with everything, and in this recipe you'll see it even applies to cookies! While the term "Pogachel" is really used to define the dough, not the cookie, most of us think of this particular cookie when the term "Pogachel" is used. It's made with a thin dough shaped and cut like a very small slice of pizza which is covered with the jam, and nuts and then rolled up like a mini croissant. This is also the dough that's used to make rugelach, and when rugelach is made well it rivals (well, almost) Hilda Blume's leaf cookies for the gold medal. This is one of my all time favorite cookies. It can't be found in stores, so it's worth trying your hand at.

2 cups (scant) flour
½ cup sour cream
½ lb. soft unsalted butter
powdered sugar

Blend ingredients in a mixer and refrigerate. Next day cut dough into four equal pieces and roll out on a floured board. Sprinkle dough and board with powdered sugar. Fold and roll out again in a round shape about 1/8 or less inch thick, fill with raspberry jelly, chopped nuts and coconut (optional) and sprinkle with granulated sugar. (This is essentially how rugelach is made, and you can vary the filling ingredients to suite your personal tastes. Personally, one of my favorites is cinnamon and nuts but without the coconut.) Cut in to eight pieces (like a pizza). Roll each piece from the outside (wide) edge like you'd roll a croissant. Bake at 350 degrees until outside starts to brown. After cookies have cooled, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Pogachel Dough 2

(Ruth Dickstein)

There are almost as many pogachel dough recipes as there are tsimes recipes. This particular pogachel dough recipe came to me from my Sister, Sally, via her daughter, Liz Martin Landau. It had my Mother's name attached to it, so I would assume Sally got it from my Mother.

3 ½ cups flour
3 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
¾ cups sugar
½ lb shortening
¼ lb. butter
1 tsp. vanilla
3 eggs separated (reserve 1 white to coat tops before baking)
½ glass sour cream (probably 4 oz.)

Cream sugar and butter. Combine flour, baking powder, salt, Spry (shortening) and vanilla. Beat three eggs less 1 egg white. Beat together 2 eggs and sour cream and leave a little egg white to coat cookies before baking. Add a little milk if too thick. Add this mixture to the sugar and butter. Divide into three equal balls. From here finish like first pogachel dough recipe or simply roll out dough into 1/8 inch thick, cut with a cookie cutter and top with cinnamon before baking at 350 degrees. When edges begin browning cookies are done.

Sugar Cookies

½ lb. butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs well beaten
3 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. cream of tartar
1 tsp. vanilla
Cinnamon
Sugar

Combine butter and sugar and cream well. Add other ingredients and mix well. Make walnut size balls, roll in sugar and cinnamon and then flatten with bottom of glass. Use a fork to make small ridge like edges. Freeze for a few hours or overnight. (If a cookie pusher is used, do not freeze.) Bake for 10 minutes at 400 to 450 degrees.

The cookie recipe which follows had on it the name Emma Cantor. Emma was one of my Mother's friends, and she and her family were one of several Jewish families that had cottages at Harvey's Lake. There were probably seven families in all located within walking distance from one another and who spent a fair amount of time socializing as families. One other such couple was Nat and Mildred Popky. Nat was known to everyone as Sheeps, and I never (and I really mean *never!*) heard anyone call him anything other than Sheeps. He was an electrician by trade, and he and my Dad were very good friends. Sheeps was about six feet tall with very large hands the fingertips of which were covered with thick calluses.

Whenever we had an electrical problem at one of the stores, which was quite often, Dad would call Sheeps. It seemed as if the problem was almost always in the fuse box, and Sheeps had a rather unique way of locating the faulty fuse or circuit. On several occasions I was privileged to be present to witness him at work. He would remove a few fuses at a time, lick the tip of his index finger, and then proceed to insert that finger into each empty fuse receptacle (Yes, you read that correctly!) until he found the problem one. I can still see him sticking that finger in and then immediately recoiling from the shock. He'd smile at me and say, "I guess it's not that one!" and then repeat the same process over and over again until he had found what he was looking for.

He and my Father both had a highly developed sense of humor, and they would constantly pull pranks on one another. I saw Sheeps pull on my father one of the great all time pranks which is now very common.

We were standing in a fairly long line at a road side frozen custard stand awaiting our turn. Sheeps let some gas loose with its own distinctive and very loud sound track. Everyone within six miles either heard it or felt the concussion wave from it, and Sheeps immediately turned to Dad with a disgusted look on his face and said, "Jesus, Melvin," and then walked to the back of the line. I'll never forget it, and I still laugh when I think about it.

Cream Cheese Cookies (*Emma Cantor*)

½ lb. shortening (margarine or butter)
1 package cream cheese (3 oz., softened)
1 cup sugar
½ tsp. salt
1 egg yolk
2 ¾ cups sifted flour
1 tsp. vanilla

Combine shortening and cream cheese and beat well. Add sugar and beat until fluffy. Add egg yolk and salt and beat well. Add flour and vanilla and beat again. Roll and cut into cookies. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.

Oatmeal Cookies 1

¼ cup butter
1 ¼ cup sugar
6 tbs. molasses
2 beaten eggs
1 1/3 cup all purpose flour
2 cups quick cook oatmeal
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ cup chopped nuts
1 cup seedless raisins

Combine butter and sugar and cream well. Sift flour and add it along with baking soda, salt and cinnamon to creamed mixture. Stir in oatmeal, nuts and raisins. Drop by tablespoon onto a greased cookie sheet about two inches apart and cook 5 to 10 minutes at 370 to 400 degrees.

Oatmeal Cookies 2

(Hilda Blume)

1 cup shortening
1 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. salt
3 cups uncooked oatmeal
1 cup sugar
½ tsp. vanilla
1 ¼ cups flour
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ cup chopped nuts

Cream sugar and shortening. Add eggs and vanilla and beat. Sift dry ingredients and add everything to cream mixture except oatmeal and nuts. Then add oatmeal and nuts, beat, and drop with teaspoon on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes.

Macaroons

Personally, I don't see what the big deal is about macaroons. My Dad loved them and could finish off a box without any outside help, but to me they're just a pile of dry coconut with some other ingredients that don't seem to help the taste. You be the judge!

2 egg whites
¼ tsp. salt
¾ cup sugar
1 ⅓ cup coconut
½ tsp. vanilla

Beat whites stiff (not dry). Add salt, and then beat in sugar ¼ cup at a time sprinkling it over the egg whites and beating well before adding more sugar. Add vanilla and fold in coconut. Use a teaspoon to drop onto greased cookie sheet, and bake at 275 degrees for 20 – 30 minutes. When done, let stand for a few minutes before removing from sheet.

Spritz Pressing Cookies

1 cup unsalted butter
½ cup sugar
¼ tsp. salt
1 egg
1 tsp. vanilla
2 ½ cups sifted flour

In a large mixing bowl cream butter and sugar gradually adding the sugar. Beat until light. Add salt, vanilla and egg and beat while gradually adding flour. Dough should be firm, but neither

sticky nor stiff. Transfer to cookie press. Press dough onto greased baking sheet and sprinkle with decorating sugar. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees about 10 minutes until lightly brown on edges. Transfer from cookie sheet to wire cooling rack and allow to cool. Store in airtight containers.

To make a chocolate spritz cookie, add 3 oz. of melted and cooled semi-sweet chocolate to butter mixture and beat until blended. Increase flour to 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups.

* * *

CAKES

Cakes were much more popular in the 40s and 50s than they are today, which in itself is a bit strange because, if memory serves me correctly, there really weren't a whole lot of cake mixes until the early 1950s. If you were going to make a cake back then, it was a big deal because there weren't many short cuts. You had to start from scratch, and it was a long, arduous process which took a fair amount of time. It's not like you personally had to milk the cow or churn the butter, but those of us who don't bake have no real appreciation of what "from scratch" actually means in baking circles. For you men out there, it's not all that different from cutting the grass yourself versus having a lawn service do it for you! But it obviously wasn't a big deterrent, because my Mother and millions like her took to their kitchens and made "from scratch" cakes on a very regular basis. The cakes were interesting and of a broad variety. There were layer cakes and sheet cakes, white cakes, yellow cakes, chocolate cakes and dark chocolate cakes, and an almost infinite number of icings to coat them with. Although there were some minor efforts expended toward decoration, the emphasis was definitely more on taste and texture.

When our children were young (in the one to ten year old range), my Mother and then Margie would make animal cakes for their birthdays. String licorice, jelly beans and all other sorts of candies were used to decorate everything from a rocking horse (everyone's favorite) to giraffes, lions and cartoon characters. Beyond the theme birthday cakes were some really serious cake delights, and while many of the original recipe cards do not credit a specific individual, I associate many of these cakes with my Mother, Aunt Edith and Hilda Blume who, for the most part, were the center of my "you bake it and I'll eat it" world. They were exceptional bakers who baked often, not just for birthdays and holidays, and probably because they did it so often, they had honed their skills through many years of practice and trial and error. Unfortunately, some of those recipes have not survived, but here are some of the ones that did.

Red Devil's Food Cake (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

¼ cup butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 ½ cup sifted flour
½ tsp. Baking powder
½ cup sour milk (or sour cream or butter milk)
2 squares bitter chocolate
1 tsp. baking soda.
1/2 cup boiling water
1 tsp. vanilla

Combine and cream the butter and sugar. Beat well the 2 egg yolks and reserve the whites. Add yolks to the butter and sugar and mix. Gradually add the sifted flour and ½ tsp. baking powder. Then add the sour milk (or alternate). Melt the squares of chocolate and fold in the egg whites. Add 1 tsp. baking soda to the chocolate mixture and a ½ cup boiling water. Let cool a bit, and then add the chocolate mixture to the other ingredients. Stir in 1 tsp. vanilla. Place in two 9 inch cake pans and bake at 350 – 375 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes.

Sour Cream Coffee Cake (*Hilda Blume*)

1 cup shortening
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
½ tsp. vanilla
¼ tsp. salt

Cream shortening, sugar and eggs slowly adding the sugar and then the eggs one at a time. Then alternately add a bit of sour cream and a bit of sifted flour. Add vanilla and salt. Pour into an angel food cake pan or loaf pan and bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes.

Yellow Cake (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

Cake:

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
3 cups cake flour (sift then measure)
3 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
4 eggs separated
1 cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
2 tbs. Hershey's chocolate syrup

Grease bottom of two round 8 inch cake pans or one 9" x 13 inch pan. Cream butter and sugar. Add yolks one at a time to creamed mixture and beat. Alternate adding the wet and dry ingredients and beat after each one. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into mixture. To 1/3 of the batter, add chocolate syrup. Bake for 40 – 45 minutes at 350 degrees.

Dark Chocolate Icing:

2 squares Bakers chocolate
¾ cup water (or coffee)
¾ cups sugar
1 heaping tbs. corn starch
¼ cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1 heaping tbs. butter

Combine chocolate, water and sugar in a sauce pan and bring to a boil. Add cornstarch to milk first, then add to mixture while boiling and stir constantly until thick. Remove from heat and add vanilla and butter. Spread on cake while warm, and when cool ridge with a fork.

Sour Cream Chocolate Cake (Edith Leventhal)

3 squares of dark chocolate
½ cup water
2/3 cup butter
1 cup granulated sugar
2/3 cup brown sugar
3 eggs
2 tsp. vanilla
2 cups sifted flour
½ tsp. sifted flour (to coat pan)
1 ½ tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 cup sour cream

Combine the 2/3 cups of butter, 2/3 cups of brown sugar, and the cup of granulated sugar and cream well. Beat in each of the eggs one at a time. Add the sifted ingredients and 1 cup of sour cream. Bake in two 9 inch cake pans at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand for 10 minutes. Remove from pans and place on wire racks for further cooling. Ice with chocolate sour cream frosting.

No conversation about desserts in the Shapiro household would be complete without an explanation of my Mother's serving technique. Whether it was pie, cake or just about any other dessert you can think of, my Mother always had what you might call a heavy serving hand, and particularly when it came to dessert. It was very much like a challenge to her to see just how much she could get on your plate while subduing your objections.

Someone would say, "Just a very small piece, please. I'm really stuffed! If you don't give me a small piece I'll puke all over your carpet."

"Don't worry, it's *light*," was always her reply. I can see sponge cake being "light", but dark chocolate cake with dark chocolate icing, or rhubarb pie? And she would proceed to cut and serve the same very large, appetite gagging piece to everyone.

And after we all, including Mom, had completely and thoroughly stuffed our faces and our stomachs with everything edible in sight, she would invariably say, "The little I ate I enjoyed!" a saying that over time became her trademark.

White Cake (Coconut Icing)

Simple cakes like this are very hard to find today. Restaurants insist on complicating cakes by using five or six layers in a single cake, not to mention two or three fruits and a liberal sprinkling of nuts. The beauty in this cake is its simplicity which allows the main ingredients to come through loud and clear. Definitely one of my favorites as a kid, but it's been many years since anyone has made it.

1 cup sugar (sifted)

½ cup shortening (or ¼ cup butter and ¼ cup margarine)
2 large eggs (or 3 small) separated
2 ¼ cups sifted cake flour
2 ½ tsp. baking powder (3 for lighter cake)
pinch of salt
¾ cup of milk
1 tsp. almond extract (optional)

Cream sugar and shortening together. Add beaten yolks one at a time. Combine and mix flour, baking powder and salt. Combine and mix milk, vanilla and almond. Alternately add flour mixture and milk mixture to the sugar and shortening, and then fold in egg whites. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes, test for doneness, and return to oven if necessary.

Fluffy Boiled Icing (*Ruth Dickstein*)

1 1/3 cup sugar
½ cup water
1/3 tsp. cream of tartar
½ cup egg whites

Put sugar, water and cream of tartar in a sauce pan. Mix well and put on stove. Boil without stirring until mixture reaches 260 degrees. If cloudy day, boil until temperature reaches 270 degrees. (Honest! I didn't make that up. It's really in the recipe!) Beat egg whites and salt until stiff. Pour sugar mixture over whites slowly beating constantly. When it cools, you're ready to ice the cake. If you like, you can also sprinkle so shredded coconut on the top and sides.

When I think of cakes I also think of my Mother's Monday night bridge club where home made cake and coffee were a near certainty to be offered. They would serve a snack or appetizer type food which they could pick at as they played, and the cake usually came out about two thirds of the way through the evening for what you might call a seventh inning stretch. Besides my Mother, the group consisted of Hanna Kline, Doris Lidtz and Lee Goldberg. Mrs. Goldberg was famous for rewording old greeting cards and resending them. If it was your birthday, she might take a condolence card she had received when her mother died a few years earlier, cross out "sorry for your loss" and replace it with "sorry for your birthday!" It really was a funny gig that we all enjoyed. The women probably spent about as much time talking and catching up on the latest gossip and social news as they did playing cards. The men did sort of the same thing on Monday night, but they played gin, rather than bridge. There were about seven or eight men in the Monday night club, and they were not particularly concerned with food and even less concerned with the latest social news. Their mission was crystal clear. They were there to play cards!

I remember one time when I was probably ten or eleven years old, when the stars aligned perfectly creating a once in a lifetime situation which for a kid was akin to hitting the lottery for an adult. That year Halloween happened to fall on a Monday night. Now the significance of that may not be immediately evident to you, but it hit me like a two by four in the back of the head. I knew that if I played my cards right (no pun intended!), this would be nothing less than a financial bonanza. That Halloween night the

men were playing at our house, and the women's game was at the Kline's house, a mere three blocks away.

Shortly after dinner, Mom escorted me to trick or treat at a few homes in the neighborhood, and our last stop was at Kline's where the bridge game would start as soon as Mom could take me home and get back. They all smiled while I sang my song after which I was given some candy and coins. All very pleasant with smiles all around. We then went back to my house where the men's gin game was already in progress. Mom waited just a minute or two until I was safely in the door and Dad knew I was back, and then she left to go to go back to Kline's for her bridge game.

I hovered around the table for a while, still wearing my Halloween costume, but I got nothing, absolutely no reaction from the men. No one even looked up from their cards. I don't remember all the names, but there was my Dad, Alfie Nelson, Clem Karnovsky, Morrie Cantor, Abe Braveman, Mush Herman, Sid Goncher and, of course, Hack Ginsburg. So in desperation I finally offered, "Who wants to hear my song?" That got their attention, and right away they all got fidgety wondering how they could avoid the inevitable. After a brief uncomfortable moment, one of them said, "Nice costume, Louis. Here," and he held out a one dollar bill. The others quickly followed suite, and in a matter of seconds, and without having to sing a single note, I had taken in eight dollars. The men went back to playing gin, I was on my way to listen to the radio, and everyone involved, especially me, was happy. As you can see, Halloween with the men was a bit different than Halloween with the women.

Chocolate Peppermint Patty Cake (*Edith Leventhal*)

This was Aunt Edith's signature dessert which she served at many of her elegant dinner parties. It was a simple two layer, dark chocolate cake, but the thing that made it so distinctive, both in appearance and in taste, was the icing which was also two layers; one dark chocolate and the other light green peppermint. The peppermint icing was applied first, and over that the chocolate was poured so that in the finished product large areas of the light green peppermint could be seen through the chocolate layer of icing. The peppermint part had the same light green color and taste of mint ice cream. I should also add that this was long before any ice cream makers were offering mint chocolate chip, and that's pretty much what the completed cake tasted like.

Cake:

- ¼ cup Crisco
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 squares unsweetened chocolate
- 1 ½ cups flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1 cup sour milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Beat Crisco, sugar and egg yolks. Melt chocolate and add to mixture. Sift dry ingredients and add alternately with sour milk. Add vanilla and mix. Pour into 7 ½ inch square cake pan coated with Crisco. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes.

Icing:

1 ½ cups granulated sugar
2 unbeaten egg whites
1 tsp. Crisco (shortening)
1/3 cup water
½ tsp. peppermint flavoring (or ¼ cup crushed after dinner mints or patties)

Beat in a pot over boiling water and continue beating until icing is spreadable. Cut cake in half horizontally to create two layers. Ice, top, sides and between layers. Melt two squares of chocolate and blend with one tsp. Crisco. Pour over top and sides, but do not cover all of the mint icing.

Fresh Coconut Cake (*Ruth Dickstein & Edith Leventhal*)

This is what I used to call a “Lake Cake” because there was something very summery about it, and all of my memories of it are from Harvey’s Lake. Of my Mother’s cakes, it was my favorite, and she always made it for my birthday. After our last year at the Lake, I don’t remember her making it again for at least twenty years. And then, when my daughter Sally was about three years old, she resurrected it again in the form of a rocking horse. It then reappeared regularly for several years for Sally and Jodi’s birthdays in different forms, made either by Mom or Margie, and beautifully decorated with an assortment of candy to help define the theme of that year’s cake.

Cake:

1 cup shortening
2 cups sugar sifted
3 cups Swans Down cake flour (sifted before measuring)
3 tsp. Calumet baking powder
½ tsp. salt
4 eggs
1 cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
½ tsp. almond extract

Cream butter then gradually add sugar creaming until light and fluffy. Sift flour with baking powder and salt. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add flour mixture alternatively with milk and flavorings beating slowly after each addition until smooth. Pour batter into two 10 inch cake pans and bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Cool in pans for about 10 minutes and then turn on to racks for final cooling.

Icing:

3 egg whites
¼ cup water
Fresh coconut
½ (+) cup sugar
1 pinch cream of tartar
1 tsp. vanilla

Combine and boil water, sugar, and cream of tartar until syrup forms a string when tested with a fork. Add slowly to beaten egg whites until mixture stands in peaks. Add vanilla. Grate fresh coconut and sprinkle generously between layers and on top and sides of cake.

Apple Cake Torte (*Edith Leventhal*)

This tort isn't all that difficult to make, but it looks like it is. In fact it looks like it was made in a French bakery. It's also one of those rarities that tastes as good as it looks!.

¼ lb. butter
1 1/3 cup sugar
1 cup all purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla
2 apples
cinnamon

Cream butter and 1 cup sugar together. Add vanilla and mix. Spread batter in 9 inch spring form pan. Peel and core 2 to three tart apples and cut into thin slices. Arrange apples on batter. Mix 1/3 cup sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Before serving, sprinkle with cinnamon and glaze with raspberry, strawberry or currant jelly.

Ice Cream Cake Roll (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

This is another recipe that reminds me of the Lake, because Mom made it two or three times a summer when we lived there. You can enjoy it at any time of the year, but there's something about it that says summer and yells "summer holiday", like July 4th or Labor Day. This is an exceptionally good dessert that everyone enjoys because is there anyone who doesn't like chocolate cake and ice cream?

4 eggs separated
¾ cup sugar
6 tbs. cake flour sifted
6 tbs. cocoa sifted
1 tsp. baking powder 2 tbs. water
Vanilla ice cream
2 tbs. water

Sift cake flour, cocoa and baking powder together. Beat egg whites until stiff and add one half of the sugar. Set aside. Add water to yolks and beat until very light in color. Add remaining sugar and continue to beat until sugar is incorporated into the mix. Fold dry ingredients into yolk mixture then fold egg whites into the batter. Pour into a greased jelly roll pan and bake at 400 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Check cake after 10 minutes. When done, turn cake out onto a linen dish towel that has been sprinkled with granulated sugar. Roll up with towel (starting with short end) and refrigerate (with towel) for no less than one hour. Carefully unroll cake. Slice ice cream into sheets of about ½ inch thick and place on cake. Carefully re-roll cake, wrap with plastic wrap and place in freezer. For serving, simply slice like bread.

The cream cake recipe is so reminiscent of Harvey's Lake that it reminded me of one more lake story which involved Sheeps Popky who was already introduced in a previous story. His real name was Nate, but I never remember anyone calling him by that name. He was "Sheeps", even to his wife, yet I have no idea where the nickname came from.

To digress just for a moment, for a young kid in the 1940s, Harvey's Lake was a truly magical place. With a little imagination, which for a kid was always readily available, it was my own personal Disney World where another fun day was a mere night's sleep away. The neighborhood was a very closely knit community, and what helped to make it so was that most of the neighbors were all friends of long standing. There were Morrie and Emma Cantor and Mildred and Sheeps Popky just up the road a few houses, and in the other direction were Harry and Ceicile Baker and the Baltimores, and a short boat ride across the Lake were Marion and Jack Isaacs. We rented an apartment in a very large house that had been renovated into three separate apartments, and the other two family occupants were Abe and Sylvia Savitz, who owned the property, and Flora and Eddie Gale who rented the third apartment.

Now to the story. My Dad and Sheeps Popky both bought boats at almost the same time. They both bought the same Mercury "Super 10" outboard motor, which at the time was about as big as they got, but the boats they purchased, though similar, were somewhat different. The primary difference was that the Shapiro boat was a bit lighter than the Popky boat. The Pokpys had two children, Ann who was a year older than me, and Sammy who was about four years older than me. Everyone liked Sammy who seemed always to be happy as well as inquisitive. He had this innate curiosity to find out why and how things worked, and he eventually went on to college where he earned a degree in engineering.

Well, Sammy was somewhere between twelve and thirteen at the time, and one of the big curiosities Sammy focused on that summer was why our boat was a bit faster than theirs. Apparently the weight difference in the boats was, for whatever reason, not obvious to him, and that made him particularly vulnerable when my Dad explained to him that our boat was faster because of the "Gestoitner Valve" my Dad had purchased and had installed on our outboard motor.

Shortly thereafter Sammy turned thirteen and had his bar mitzvah. My Dad decided that what better gift could he give to the son of one of his closest friends than the one thing the son really wanted – a Gestoitner Valve! So my Dad spent a fair amount of time at a local hardware store carefully selecting all sort of nuts, bolts and other interesting pieces of small, miscellaneous hardware which were placed in a box along with an intricate set of typed assembly and installation instructions. The package was then beautifully gift wrapped and given by my Father to Sammy on the day of his bar mitzvah.

I'm not sure how much time elapsed that year between the bar mitzvah and when the Popkys opened up their lake house for the summer and put their boat in the water, but one weekend afternoon Sheeps walked down to their boathouse for a swim, and although I wasn't there to see first hand what took place, I was there very shortly thereafter when Sheeps related the story to my Father. (Even if you're a little slow on the uptake, I would think by now you can see where this is going!) Sammy had decided to surprise his father and install the Gestoitner Valve on his own so that their boat would then be as fast as the Shapiros. When Sheeps arrived on the scene he found Sammy sitting in the boat house with parts of the Mercury outboard motor scattered around the dock and interspersed with the miscellaneous hardware pieces that comprised the so called Gestoitner Valve. After significant effort, Sheeps did finally get the motor put back together again and working, and it was something my Dad and Sheeps laughed about for many years to come.

Dark Chocolate Icing (*Ruth Dickstein*)

Particularly good with yellow cake.

2 squares Baker's chocolate
¾ cup water or coffee
¾ cups sugar
1 heaping tbs. corn starch
¼ cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1 heaping tbs. butter

Bring chocolate, water and sugar to a boil. Dilute corn starch in ¼ cup of milk and add to mixture stirring constantly until thick. Add vanilla and butter. Mix well and spread on cake while still warm. When cold, ridge with a fork.

Custard Filling (*Hilda Blume*)

½ cup sugar
1/3 cup flour
1 ½ cup milk
3 eggs
1 Tsp. vanilla
½ cup heavy cream

Combine sugar and flour into a double boiler. Slowly add 1 ½ cups of scaled milk while stirring constantly. Stir until thick, and then cook an additional 10 minutes without stirring. Beat well 3 egg yolks, and then add a little of the custard to the yolks while stirring. Then add that back into the custard mixture. Cook for about 2 minutes, and then remove from heat. Stir in 1 Tsp. vanilla, let cool, and then refrigerate. When cold, fold in ½ cup of whipped heavy cream.

Note: If used for pie filling, add ½ package of plain gelatin to sugar.

Chocolate Icing (Sadie Greenwald)

2 squares of chocolate
1 ½ cups sugar
7 tbs. milk
4 tbs. butter
1 tbs. corn syrup
¼ tbs. Salt

Mix and boil above ingredients about 3 minutes. Put in mixer and beat until thin enough to spread.

I've been looking for an appropriate place to insert this story, but I don't know that there is such a thing as "an appropriate place", so here it is anyway. The story I'm referring to is what you might subtitle, "A Brief (very brief) History of Shapiro Family Pests". Oops, did I say "pests" instead of "pets"? Must be a Freudian slip.

When the Shapiros lived on Academy Street in Wilkes-Barre, before I was born, the family pet was a Boston Bull Dog named "Jinx". Maybe it was spelled "Jinks", but does it really matter...he's dead!) I've heard several stories as to how Jinx met his demise, but the most told version relates to an encounter with a truck...a very large truck. It seems that Jinx came out on the short end of that one, and his departure was so traumatic for the family that he became the last "real" pet. I say "real" pet, because I don't view anything that has to be confined to a bowl a true pet.

Case in point. When I was about four years old my parents decided to get Sally and me some painted turtles. The term "painted" is not their real name like "box" turtle or "Galapagos" turtle, but because they were actually hand painted, as in paint with a brush. There were four such turtles, each of which were painted a distinctive color which made it easy to tell them apart. Sally and I would remove them from their smelly bowl and play with them on the floor. They eventually died, and they really were the last "family" pets.

Now we fast forward thirty some years to when Sally and Jodi were kids, and the pets they had were both numerous and varied. I may not get the order exactly right, but I believe we started with goldfish in a bowl, and we managed to kill at least one of them every week or so for quite some time. From plain old goldfish in a simple bowl we went to fantailed goldfish, a larger species which require an aquarium. They're also great jumpers, so the aquarium also needs a cover to guarantee their imprisonment. It was quite an operation including an aerator with a charcoal filter which also required daily maintenance.

One summer we went to Toronto for the weekend expecting that the fish would survive for our two day absence. When we returned, the house smelled pretty much the same as an outdoor fish market, but without the soft summer breeze to carry off the top few layers of the odor. Apparently, there had been a power interruption because of a thunder storm, and a breaker or some similar device in the filter shut it down but was not capable of restarting when the power came back on. Since we weren't home, we had shut off the air conditioning which further helped to enhance the rate of decay and further heighten the odor!

One final story within a story about the fish. After the untimely death of the fish during our trip to Toronto, they were replaced with four more fish in a matter of a few days. (That's how long it took to

clean the aquarium!) Where do you find four names for four goldfish? No problem...name them after the four grandparents. It seemed like a stroke of genius at the time. Well, maybe not. One Sunday morning a few weeks later Jodi burst into our bedroom obviously very agitated and with her eyes about to come out of her head. "Mommy, Daddy", Popop's dead!

Margie and I both sat up straight in bed. We had been abruptly awakened from a restful Sunday morning sleep, and we could not believe our ears. "What? What did you say?" I asked.

"Popop's dead, Popop's dead!"

I couldn't understand it. I know I had been sleeping, but wouldn't I have heard the phone which was right next to me on my night table? And besides, who would give that kind of information to a four year old kid and not ask to talk to her parents? What the hell was going on?"

"Who told you that, Jodi?" Margie inquired.

"Nobody", came the reply.

Then how do you know?"

"I saw him. He's on the floor of the family room."

Then it finally came into focus. Someone had not replaced the lid for the aquarium after feeding them last night, and one of them made the big leap to freedom, or at least what he thought was freedom.

Sally and Jodi asked if I would bury him in the woods next to our house. "Sure kids", was my sympathetic reply. "Sure." And that was the occasion for developing my burial rules for family pets, a set of rules which are both humanitarian and functional at the same time. The only dead pets that go in the ground are the ones too large to flush down the toilet without danger of clogging the pipes. The ones that need to go "into the ground" are placed there in a solemn and now well practiced ceremony I call an "aerial burial". This is how it works. The deceased pet is carefully positioned on the end of a shovel. A powerful circular, over the head, catapult like motion is then used to propel the pet high into the air and toward their final resting place in the woods. However, the crows in our area are both large and ravenous, and I suspect that a few of the little airborne corpses may have been intercepted in mid air and never even hit the ground. There were other pets such as a parakeet and gerbils (both of which, by the way, were thoroughly dirty and disgusting animals!), all of which were given aerial burials upon their demise. I guess that's nature's way; the circle of life and all that.

Hershey Icing for Angel Food Cake

½ pint whipped cream
2 plain Hershey bars

Melt Hershey bars and fold in whipped cream. Ice cake immediately and refrigerate a few hours. (I'm not keeping track, but this has to be the shortest recipe in the whole book!)

Seven Minute Frosting

3 egg whites
2 ¼ cups sugar
1/8 tsp. salt
½ cup water
1 tbs. light corn syrup
1 ½ tsp. vanilla

Place all ingredients except vanilla in a double boiler (don't put over boiling water). Beat for ½ minute at a low speed with a portable mixer. Place over boiling water but not touching boiling water. Cook while beating constantly until frosting forms stiff peaks (about 7 minutes). Remove from boiling water. Add vanilla and beat until icing reaches a consistency appropriate for spreading, about 2 minutes. It should cover top and sides of two 8 inch or 9 inch layers.

Whipped Cream Icing

½ cup shortening
3 tbs. butter
1 cup powdered sugar
1 tbs. cake flour
3 tbs. heavy cream
2 eggs (whites only)
1 tsp. vanilla

Cream together shortening and butter, then gradually add powdered sugar, flour and cream. Beat egg whites until stiff then add them along with the vanilla and beat to consistency of whipped cream.

Vanilla Glaze

1 cup confectioner's sugar
1 tbs. butter or margarine (softened)
1 to 2 tbs. hot water
½ tsp. vanilla extract

In small bowl, blend all ingredients with a spoon until smooth. Drizzle over cooled cake.

Boiled Chocolate Icing or Filling

(Hilda Blume)

¾ cup sugar
¾ cup water (or coffee)
2 squares bitter chocolate
¼ cup water to dissolve
1 heaping tsp. corn starch
1 heaping tbs. butter
1 tsp. vanilla
Lemon rind

Melt together sugar, ¾ cups water and chocolate squares. Dissolve corn starch in ¼ cup of water and add mixture to first mixture stirring over heat until thick and shiny. Add butter and stir until dissolved. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Add vanilla and mix.

Lemon Filling 1

1 ¼ cups sugar
2 heaping tbs. corn starch
1 ½ cups boiling water
3 eggs
1 ¼ cups fresh lemon juice
1 lump of butter

Beat egg yolks well. Stir in sugar, juices and lemon rind. Dissolve corn starch in a bit of cold water and add to egg mixture. While mixing, gradually add hot water. On low heat, add lump of butter and stir until fully dissolved and mixed in.

Lemon Filling 2

¾ cup sugar
1 egg
juice from 1 lemon (strained)
1 tbs. cold water

Beat egg and add sugar. Mix in strained lemon juice and 1 tbs. cold water. Cook over low heat stirring constantly until thickened. Allow to cool a bit before applying to roll or cake.

Coconut Icing

3 heaping tbs. butter
5 heaping tbs. brown sugar
2 tbs. cream
1 heaping cup shredded coconut

Mix all ingredients together well. Spread on hot cake and allow to cool until icing bubbles.

And now, back to Hack Ginsburg's candy warehouse and the story about Topps baseball cards. It was a typical Sunday morning, and I was somewhere around ten years old. Back in those days there really wasn't a whole lot to do for a kid my age during the winter months, so I managed to talk my Father into letting me accompany him to the weekly Sunday Morning card came at Hack's. I can't really say what I was thinking when I asked if I could go with him, and it's an even greater mystery what Dad was thinking when he said yes. But what ensued is indelibly impressed upon my memory and will surely survive even the ravages of dementia if and when it comes.

Upon arrival at the store, the big question seemed to strike both my Father and me at almost the identical moment. What can a ten or eleven year old boy do in a small warehouse for two or three hours? It was a question that neither of us had an answer to, but half an hour later when everyone present had been pushed to the limit by my constant whining of, "Dad, when are we going home?" and, "Dad, I'm bored", Hack himself came up with the solution.

"Kid, what's your favorite candy?" he asked.

"Oh, I really like Three Musketeers," I said. And then I hastily added, "Mallow Cups are great too!"

Hack looked at me for a brief moment and then said, "Okay, kid. You got 'em," and with that he walked briskly down one of the aisles, stopped to scan a few cartons, and then ripped open the corner of one of them removing two or three Mallow Cups. He then moved to another nearby carton and did the same thing, this time coming up with a few Three Musketeers bars.

"Here you go kid. Enjoy yourself."

"What's in that box?" I ventured, pointing to a nearby carton and knowing full well what its contents were.

"What?" he said, I guess not believing how far I was pushing the envelope. And then he looked over at the box I had pointed to, and he immediately realized why I was so interested in that particular carton. He gave a low snorting kind of a laugh, and then ripped open that carton as he had done with the others. From it he pulled two (not just one, but two!) boxes of Topps baseball cards each of which contained twenty individually wrapped packages, each with five cards and one piece of bubble gum. You do the math. That's a total of forty pieces of bubble gum but, even more importantly, two hundred baseball cards which, for a kid my age in those days, was like currency. I had hit the mother load!! With what was in my hands at that moment, I could rule "kid" world while also staying occupied and content, not just for a few hours, but for days. It's difficult to adequately explain the popularity of collecting and trading Topps baseball cards back in those days, but the activity carried with it an almost religious air.

My friends and I would squeeze our meager allowances to produce another nickel to buy just one more pack of Topps baseball cards, and here I was with forty unopened packs. It couldn't possibly get any better than that! Thanks, Hack!

A postscript of sorts would probably be in order here. Every year after Margie and I were married Mom would make a push to get the rest of my junk (as she called it) out of the house, a request I essentially ignored but to which I paid sufficient lip service to keep her from taking any unilateral action. One day sometime in the late 1970s, I heard that Topps baseball cards had become quite valuable, and Yankee cards from the 1950s and 60s were of particular value to collectors. Well, I knew my boat had just docked because, thanks to Hack Ginsburg and some good card trading, I had all of the cards that were in demand. When I went to Mom's house to retrieve my "lottery", I was informed that she had chucked them about two years ago since I hadn't responded to her previous requests to remove them. And by the way, my baseball cards were accompanied to the garbage dump by my Lionel train set that may have been worth more than the baseball cards!

* * *

PIES, PASTRIES & MISCELLANEOUS DESSERTS

Coffee Chiffon Pie (Hilda Blume)

1 envelope of gelatin
¼ cup sherry wine
4 eggs (separated)
¾ cups sugar
pinch of salt
1 heaping tbs. instant coffee

Soften gelatin in the sherry. Dissolve coffee in 1 cup boiling water in upper half of double boiler. Beat yolks slightly, stir in sugar and salt and boil until thickened. Remove yolk mixture from heat and add to gelatin mixture. Stir until very smooth, and then strain and let cool. When cool, fold in beaten egg whites and whipped cream on top. Decorate with shaved chocolate.

Apple Pie (Ruth Dickstein)

Filling:

¾ cups sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon
1/8 tsp. salt
6 cups peeled and sliced apples.
Cornflake crumbs
1 lemon

Crust:

3 cups flour
1 cup shortening
½ tsp. salt
1 tbs. orange juice

Sift flour and salt together. Cut in shortening with pastry blender until pieces are the size of small peas. Cut in salt. Sprinkle a bit of the orange juice over mixture and toss with a fork. Repeat until orange juice is incorporated and mixture is moistened. Form into two roughly equal balls. Flatten on lightly floured surface by pressing with the edge of your hand. Then roll from center to edge until dough is 1/8 inch thick.

Place bottom crust in pie dish and then a thin layer of cornflake crumbs on top of that. Combine sugar, cinnamon and salt. Place a layer of apples over the cornflake crumbs and sprinkle with sugar mixture. Dot with pieces of butter and sprinkle with a bit of lemon juice. Repeat additional layers using the same process as necessary to fill pie dish. Bake at 450 degrees until top starts to brown, and then turn down to 370 degrees until done.

Apple Crisp (Brown Betty)

In my house it was called Brown Betty, but today it's probably better known as Apple Crisp. I can't hear the term "Brown Betty" without stirring up one of the very few memories of my Grandmother (my Mother's mother) who died shortly after I turned six. Grandma lived on Irving Street in Wilkes-Barre, but every July or August she would spend a week or two with us at the Lake and, as was the custom in those days, she insisted on helping my Mother with the daily household chores. The back yard was home to an enormous apple tree which dropped apples like raindrops in a tropical downpour. Grandma couldn't bear to see them rot on the ground, so every morning she would police the area under the tree and pick up the useable apples which she placed in her apron. Sometimes she made multiple trips because her apron simply wasn't large enough to carry the bounty. She took it upon herself to provide apple based snacks and deserts for a good portion of the Lake's population. You might say that she was to apples what Bubba, in Forrest Gump, was to shrimp. She made Brown Betty, Apple Betty, Apple Crisp, and apple tarts. Candy apples, baked apples, apple sauce and apple cookies. And even in the pie and cake category there was plain apple pie, apple crumb and apple sour cream, as well as apple cake, apple upside down cake, apple right side up cake, apple sideways cake and apple coffee cake. After weeks of "Applemania", my Sister and I became "appled-out", and we finally went to my Mother to ask her to intercede with Grandma to end the apple onslaught. I remember Grandma as being old. She died at 67 which, coincidentally, is my age at this very moment!

Apple Mixture:

¾ cup sugar
½ cup butter (or margarine)

Crumb together butter and flour.

8-9 apples (peeled, cored and sliced)
1 cup flour
1 pinch baking powder
dash salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
nutmeg to taste
grated orange rind (optional)

In bottom of well greased 2 qt. casserole dish, combine the above ingredients. Sprinkle the crumbed mixture over top of apple mixture. Top with following streisel mixture.

Streisel:

1 cup flour
¾ cup brown sugar
½ cup butter (or margarine)
1 tsp. cinnamon

Cut butter into remaining three ingredients until pea sized. Sprinkle over top of casserole and bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

Coconut Cream Pie

1/3 cup sugar
1/8 tsp. salt
1 tbs. corn starch
1 cup cold milk
4 egg yolks beaten
½ tsp. vanilla
1 ½ cups shredded coconut

Mix sugar, salt and corn starch together. Add ½ cup cold milk and stir. Add ½ cup scalded milk gradually while stirring. Gradually add hot mix to egg yolks and cook another 4 minutes. Stir in vanilla and allow to cool. Add coconut to mix and then pour into a pie shell. Sprinkle with coconut and refrigerate.

Pumpkin Pie (Hilda Blume)

2 raw pie shells (9 inch)
1 lg. can pumpkin (3 cups)
2 cups milk
2 cups evaporated milk (2 cans)
1 ½ cups granulated sugar
½ cup pure maple syrup
4 whole eggs
1 ½ tsp. salt
2 scant tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. cloves
2 tsp. ginger

Put eggs in beater, add salt and beat well. Add sugar and beat. Add syrup and stir, and then stir in pumpkin. Add cinnamon, 1 tsp. salt, ginger, cloves and milk and blend well. Fill pie crust to top and sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes. Then turn oven down to 350 degrees and bake until set, about 45 minutes. Test after 30 minutes with a knife point. Filling may be frozen before baking.

Cream Puffs (Hilda Blume)

When I was a kid, there was something real special about cream puffs that made them stand out from most other desserts. They really did have a very special quality. Not only were they neat looking, they were a sweet and tasty dessert that combined the best of a light pastry dough along with the smoothness and sweetness of vanilla cream filling. But the thing that made them really special wasn't their taste, but rather their innate ability to spoil on a hot summer day and make people puke. Back then people didn't pay as much attention to kitchen and food safety as they do today, and it wasn't at all uncommon for cream puffs to be left unrefrigerated for hours at a time. And remember, that was in a time when there was very little air conditioning which meant that "room temperature" might have easily been 85 degrees! A few times every summer you could read in the newspaper or hear on the radio who the latest victims were and where it happened. But despite the wide spread incidence of

food poisoning from spoiled cream puffs, years went by before people finally got the message that cream puffs were much better refrigerated than at room temperature.

Pastry Shell:

½ cup water
½ cup flour
2 tbs. butter
2 eggs

Boil the water and then add 2 tbs. of butter. Stir and boil until butter is totally melted, and then turn off heat. In same pot add flour and mix well. Stir in eggs one at a time mixing well after each egg. Grease cookie sheet. Drop with a tablespoon and bake at 350 degrees for about 50 minutes.

Filling:

½ cup sugar
1/3 cup flour
1 ½ cups scalded milk
3 beaten egg yolk
1 tsp. vanilla
½ cup heavy cream

Put sugar and flour into double boiler. Slowly add scalded milk to the sugar and flour stirring constantly until thick, about 10 minutes. Without stirring, add a bit of the egg yolks to the custard. Then add a bit of the custard back into the yolks, and then slowly add back into the custard. Cook about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and add vanilla. When cold, fold in heavy cream.

Use a pastry bag to inject filling into pastry.

Apple Chocolate Torte

6 eggs (separated)
½ cup sugar
1 cup chopped walnuts or pistachio nuts
4 oz. semisweet chocolate (grated)
2 delicious apples (peeled & grated)
confectioner sugar

Beat yolks, add sugar and beat until very thick. Fold in other ingredients except confectioner sugar. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into mixture. Pour into a 9 inch spring form and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes to an hour. Allow to cool then sprinkle with confectioner sugar.

Cheesecake (Margie Shapiro from Sally Shapiro Martin)

Pay attention kids. This is one of the biggies, the pie (or if you prefer, cake) that launched a thousand ships. At some point in time, and according to legend, my sister Sally got this recipe from someone or some place and mistakenly copied it down calling for much more cream cheese than was called for in the original recipe. Margie got the recipe from Sally in 1969 or 1970. It had to be one of those two years because we were married in January of 1969, and Sally died less than two years later in October of 1970. Margie has since become famous for this recipe which is, hands down, absolutely the best cheese cake ever created. Yes, I do mean “ever”! In fact, it would be much more accurate to call this dessert a cheese “pie” than a cheese “cake”, for the term “cake” infers a certain texture and consistency not indicative of this recipe. When the recipe is baked to perfection (and a minute over or under the required baking time can really make a difference), the cheesecake has a smooth consistency somewhere between a custard and a very thick milkshake. In this state, the filling is just barely thick enough to stand on its own. Like revenge, it is a dish best served cold, because when it is at room temperature the filling will actually slump a bit and sometimes not be able to retain its shape. When served cold, there is also a decided difference (for the better) in the taste.

Now let me attempt to do the impossible, describe the taste. If you’re Catholic, you should probably be thinking about taking confession sometime soon because the taste of this cheesecake is so incredibly good that you’ll think it to be a sin of the highest order. The ultra smooth texture of the sweetened cream cheese and the mild tanginess of the sour cream combine to provide an unexpected and very pleasant taste sensation. The feel of this mixture on the tongue and pallet is like the touch of satin to the skin, and the overall smoothness of it seems a perfect marriage with the taste that accompanies it. You’re pallet will immediately pick up the taste of the sweetened cream cheese with a mild and complimentary undertone of vanilla. It’s best to swirl it around on the tongue for a few moments to milk every bit of flavor from it before it goes to its demise. By the way, it’s an excellent dessert but equally good for a snack, breakfast, lunch, mid day break, before shopping, after shopping or for a main course (if you have enough!).

Pie Crust:

1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
½ tsp. cinnamon
2 tbsp. sugar
¼ lb. butter (soft)

Mix above ingredients together and press into spring form pan.

Pie Filling:

3 8 oz. packages of cream cheese
(Don’t be cheap! For best taste, use Kraft Philadelphia and stay away from “low fat”
cream cheese as well.)
5 eggs
1 ½ cups sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Allow cream cheese to stand until soft, and then beat with 5 eggs. Add sugar and vanilla and beat until incorporated. Pour into spring form and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Allow to cool for 1 hr. before adding topping.

Topping:

8 oz container sour cream
3 tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. vanilla

In a bowl, combine sour cream, sugar and vanilla and mix thoroughly. Spread on top of pie and bake at 350 degrees for 8 to ten minutes. When cooked properly the center of the cake should appear slightly soft, but it will become firmer after it is refrigerated. Always keep finished cheesecake refrigerated.

Raspberry Sauce

½ cup sugar
1 ½ cup water
1 basket of fresh raspberries

Boil sugar and water until sugar is totally dissolved. Add the berries, remove from heat and let cool with cover on. When ready to serve, add 1 level tbs. of corn starch diluted with some of the berry juice and boil until thickened. Allow to cool before serving.

Rice Pudding (Edith Leventhal)

If you're into rice pudding, and I am, this is a great recipe!

4 eggs
1 ½ cups (scant) cooked rice
1 qt. milk (hot)
1 tsp. vanilla
½ cup sugar
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. (scant) nutmeg

Beat 4 eggs with sugar. Put cooked rice in bowl. Pour hot milk on rice and then slowly add the rice and milk mixture to egg mix. Beat well together. Pour into a 2 qt. greased casserole dish and set into a pan of hot water. Place in oven and cook at 325 degrees for 1 hour. Test with knife and top with a bit of nutmeg and cinnamon. Keep refrigerated.

There is one incident in particular from Harvey's Lake which stands out in my memory because it illustrates my Dad's love of technology. I can well imagine how he would have dived head first into the

pool of today's technology. At the time, it was nothing more than an incident of moderate interest, but looking back on it sixty years later, I now realize that I had witnessed history in the making. Much like the unveiling of sliced bread, air conditioning in cars or night baseball, all of which are now a part of our daily lives, I remember well this "seminal" event, and it took place at the Lake.

It was a hot and humid (very hot and very humid!) evening as my Father turned up the driveway returning from work. As was my custom, I went out to greet him and found him removing a very large carton from the trunk of his car. I should probably point out that the cars of that day were very different from the cars of today, and especially so when it came to trunk size. The trunks of the cars of the 1940s and 50s were large enough to accommodate a small village, including their inhabitants, and with room to spare! So my Dad unloaded this humungous cardboard box from the trunk and managed to drag it down to the house and onto our back porch. For the next twenty minutes or so he unpacked this strange looking *thing* which was like nothing I had ever seen before. Some of the neighbors wandered over, and one of them said to my Dad, "Mel, what the hell is that?"

"Give me another few minutes, and you'll see," he proudly responded.

During the next fifteen minutes or so a small crowd of curious neighbors assembled to see what was going on. The main component was a small table of sorts constructed of metal with a cutout in the center about eighteen or twenty inches square. (Check out this historic grill on the bottom right photo on page 173.) Into that hole Dad inserted a square metal box which was open on the top and about eight or nine inches deep with a lip around the perimeter that kept it from falling through the cutout in the table. On top of the metal box was then placed what looked like miniature steel bars all fastened together. Pausing to look over his creation to make sure everything was properly assembled, Dad proudly announced, that this was a charcoal grill or, if you prefer, a barbecue! It was the first of its kind to be seen at the Lake, and it was obvious that Dad's audience did not truly appreciate the full significance of what they were witnessing.

The response was less than enthusiastic. It was as if he had said something in a foreign language, and looking back on it now, I can understand why. "What the hell is a charcoal grill?", asked one of the bystanders looking at my Father with a totally perplexed expression on his face. I too was somewhat befuddled because in all my years (I was probably six at the time) I had not heard terms such as these or seen anything like this charcoal grill.

When you stop to think about it, not only were "grill" and "barbecue" not a part of our vocabulary back then, most people had no idea what charcoal was, so putting two of those three words together in a sentence did little to explain the device which sat in front of them. Dad then went on to explain that he was going to start a fire in the metal box and then cook some steaks on the metal bars, and that's when the real fun began. He had taken a few old newspapers from the house and began to crumble them up into small balls which he dropped into the metal box. When the box was about half full with newspaper, he then opened a large bag he had pulled from the trunk of the car and began to slowly cover the newspapers with these odd looking black cubes he poured from the bag. Setting the bag aside, he then struck a match and lit the newspapers. During the next twenty minutes or so he continued to rapidly add more balled up newspaper to the fire while intermittently fanning the infant embers with a *Colliers* magazine. Finally, when he was sweating profusely and looked like he might be ready to drop from exhaustion, the black cubes began to develop white edges which, I was told, meant that they had finally caught fire. Well, they may have caught fire, but it was at least another fifteen minutes before they were all covered in a white ash and ready for real cooking.

The actual process of cooking the steaks was also interesting. Everyone watched quite intently as my father stood there with a can of water occasionally pouring some on the hot coals to subdue major flame ups which threatened to burn the steaks to a crisp. But probably the most important result from the whole incident, at least from my father's perspective, is that that everyone present at dinner than night enthusiastically agreed that it was the best steak, the very best steak, they had every eaten. I guess that's what you call "vindication".

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