

Bereaved Families of Cape Breton

Remember Your Loved One with a Memory Cookbook

By Harriet Hodgson

After the death of a loved one, some families make quilts from their loved one's clothes. Other families compile memory books. I did something different for my family: I made a memory cookbook. After my mother-in-law died, my sister-in-law and I looked through her old recipe box. Actually, there were four boxes, and the recipes inside were grouped loosely into categories.

There were handwritten recipes, lots of newspaper and magazine clippings, and many duplicates. We threw out the duplicate recipes and saved family favorites - recipes that grandchildren and great grandchildren would enjoy. Reading the recipes brought back memories of family picnics, holiday dinners, and snacks Nana prepared for her three growing boys.

I typed the recipes (one per page) and compiled them in a three-ring notebook. The title of the book: "Favorite Recipes From Nana's Recipe Boxes." For the cover I used holiday stationery with a candy cane border. Each cover had a photo of Nana on it. To protect the recipes from splatters and drips I put them in plastic notebook sleeves. There were only 25 recipes so I didn't index them. However, I did write a short introduction and it contained a story that is still clear in my mind.

Nana served Sunday dinner at 1 p.m. After one dinner she announced that supper would be cake and ice cream. I laughed because I thought Nana was kidding. But Nana, the only person I have ever known who would eat cold butter rolled in sugar, had a sweet tooth, and supper was just as advertised. We had huge bowls of French vanilla ice cream and hefty slices of yellow cake with Penuche frosting. What a memory!

Because the cookbook was a glimpse of family history, I typed the recipes as Nana wrote them, including abbreviations such as "refrig" for refrigerator, and references to family members and friends. I grouped the pages into sets, put the pages in the notebooks, and tucked rubber spatulas inside. Then I wrapped the books in holiday paper and ribbon, and tied measuring spoons to each one.

So much love had gone into the cookbooks that I could hardly wait to give them to family members on Christmas morning. A few fancy gifts were exchanged, but my homemade gifts were the hit of the day. Family members told Nana stories as they paged through their cookbooks. If you are looking for a meaningful way to remember a loved one, think about compiling a memory cookbook.

Your cookbook will spark stories about the meals you have shared, and link the older generation with the younger. I didn't have time to put more photos in the books, but a photo on each page would make the cookbook extra special. Now you are probably wondering about the recipes. My favorite recipe is the one for fudge. Though I don't make fudge, I love the ending. Here is the recipe, just as Nana wrote it so many years ago.

NANA'S FUDGE 1920

2 c. sugar
3/4 c. milk
2 sq. chocolate
1/2 t. salt
1 T. butter
1 t. (teaspoon) vanilla
nuts

Mix and cook all ingredients except vanilla & nuts. When it boils up once, lower the heat to a slow boil. After 5 min. begin testing for the soft ball stage (1/2 tsp. fudge in a saucer of ice water.)

When you can pick up a soft ball in 3 fingers, it's ready. Cook it 1 minute more. Remove from stove and cool completely before stirring. Add vanilla and nuts and beat until it looks [like] it's glass and begins to set. Pour into a small square cake pan.

Cut when hard. (If it gets too hard add a few drops of cream at the end of beating.) Cut, enjoy. Save some for mother and dad. Be a good scout and clean up the kitchen afterwards.

From:

<http://www.americanhospice.org/grief/91-remember-your-loved-one-with-a-memory-cookbook>