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Home Cooking for the Holidays

By Susie Iventosch



Home Cooking for the Holidays

Orinda Mayor Sue Severson, Lafayette Mayor Don Tatzin (middle), and Moraga Mayor Dave Trotter discuss the holidays in Severson's kitchen Photo Tod Fierner

gravy. Christmas Day begins with homemade cinnamon rolls and the day parlays into a ham dinner. Often, lucky friends and family are serenaded by Christmas carols as she delivers gifts of homemade fudge. On New Year's Day she prepares currant-glazed roast pork tenderloin, seasoned with mustard and thyme and accompanied by black-eyed peas and cabbage - in honor of her Irish heritage.

"My mother said that her Irish father always insisted on these vegetables on New Year's Day to ensure you had plenty of coins and green dollars in your pocket throughout the coming year," she said.

Moraga's Mayor Dave Trotter and his wife Debby have a few special holiday traditions they share with their children Andy, Emma, Jack and Patrick. Debby's mom, Ida, recently passed away at the age of 92, but her cookie recipe, which has been in the family for decades, lives on and is enjoyed by the entire family.

"Debby typically makes hundreds of these cookies every year," the Mayor said. "They are very tasty and rarely last more than a day when everyone is home for the holidays!"

Maxine's Holiday Punch, made with ginger-ale, lemon juice, orange juice and Grenadine syrup, is a refreshing and colorful non-alcoholic drink, served slightly frozen and a bit slushy.

"It has been a favorite of my mother Maxine for as long as I can remember," Trotter said. "These cookies and punch feature prominently in our home at Thanksgiving and Christmas time."

Other traditional fare at the Trotter household includes homemade cream of asparagus soup, rack of lamb in mustard sauce, and "Dave's Caesar Salad," along with a Moraga Pear Festival pie or berry pie from the Moraga Farmers' Market for dessert.

"I spend a lot of time in the kitchen on Christmas Day preparing dinner - with plenty of help from the family," he said.

"In addition to listening to holiday music, as our four children have gotten older, we have traditionally spent time at the dinner table talking about the year past and all of the things and reasons for which we are thankful."

For some folks, chocolate is the ultimate answer to holiday culinary traditions and the City of Lafayette staff would not disagree. When I visited last week to inquire about Mayor Tatzin's award-winning truffles, they received rave reviews. This made me hungry and especially anxious to try them. The end result of my quest was a special delivery by the Mayor of two beautiful raspberry truffles neatly tucked into red foil wrappers!

"He always wraps them in different-colored foils and gives us each a different one," said Joanne Robbins, Lafayette City Clerk. "We are always looking to see who got what flavor! We do look forward to Mayor Tatzin's truffles."

The Tatzin truffle tradition started when a friend of Ellen Reintjes (the Mayor's wife) came to the Bay Area for a business trip in the winter of 1984. The friend, Jean, was accompanied by another business associate who knew how to make homemade truffles. Since both Ellen and Jean were self-admitted chocoholics, Jean coaxed her associate into giving a truffle-making tutorial on one particularly rainy evening. Ever since that drizzly night, the Mayor and his wife have made truffles to give away to family, friends, colleagues (and even one reporter!) at Christmas time. They also donate two boxes to the Lafayette Community Center holiday fair to raise funds for the center.

"We've experimented with different flavors and eventually entered our truffles in the Alameda County Fair from 2004 to 2008," Reintjes said. "We came upon our favorite recipes by trial and error! It is also important to note that the

Holiday traditions are like dear old friends - you can always pick up right where you left off and never miss a beat. Whether it's decorating the house, baking cookies, spying on Santa, or adorning the tree with twinkling lights, families wrap the holidays with their own familiar customs. Meals are an especially great time to rediscover old family favorites, whether it's a special cookie, a succulent roast or even a festive drink. This year we thought it might be fun to feature a few of those customary dishes that our local mayors have enjoyed with family and friends over the years. Mayor Sue Severson of Orinda hails from the south, born and raised in Louisiana. Her family fare tends to reveal a Southern touch and one of the family's favorites is traditional Southern Pecan Pie.

"My mother and grandmothers rarely used recipes," the Mayor said. "I also make many dishes by learning from their example and thus have few [written] recipes to share." Mayor Severson usually hosts big family gatherings at her house for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year.

"I enjoy the holidays as a time to renew faith and cherish family," she said. "An attitude of gratitude helps balance a lot of challenges throughout the year."

The Mayor prepares a traditional Thanksgiving feast, complete with turkey, mashed potatoes, yams, dressing and

ideal temperature for the truffle work station area is 68 degrees Fahrenheit. If it is too warm, the truffle centers are difficult to handle."

The truffles are affectionately named "Mountaindog Truffles" in deference to the household dogs that are named after various mountains - Siskiyou, Sierra, Lassen, Tioga, etc. One day, Sierra managed to steal 20 truffles off the edge of the counter.

"She had a cast iron stomach and was none the worse for having consumed this much chocolate," Reintjes assured. The truffles that Lafayette's first couple entered in the fair were double-deckers, decorated and hand-painted to look like animal critters. The panda, chipmunk, penguin and snowy owl truffles won first-prize ribbons at the fair, while the bald eagle took home second.

I do not find myself with ample talent to create little animals of these truffles, but I did make the Mayor's (Chipmunk-less) Maple Walnut truffles in plain round shapes and they were absolutely divine!

Happy Holidays from our kitchen to yours!



Photos provided

Grand Marnier Truffles

Ingredients

- 1 pound Guittard French Vanilla semi-sweet chocolate
- 2 1-oz. squares Baker's unsw choc
- 6 oz. whipping cream
- 6 oz. Grand Marnier liqueur
- Grated rind of one orange
- Cereal bowl full of Guittard dark chocolate
- A 'Peels (or small wafers) for dipping chocolate

Directions

Melt the semi-sweet choc and 1 oz. unsweetened choc in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in GM and orange rind. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour. Scoop out balls using a spoon or melon scoop to make centers. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. Chill for at least one hour. Melt A'Peels and 1 oz unsw choc in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a center in the dipping choc. Swirl around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet. Allow to cool. Continue until all centers are dipped. Makes 60-80 depending on size.

Mayor Severson's Pork Tenderloin with Currant Glaze

(New Year's Day Tradition)



This dish is absolutely delicious and very easy. What could possibly be better for the holidays?

Ingredients

- 2 pounds small pork tenderloin roast
- 2 tablespoon dry mustard
- 2 teaspoon dry thyme
- ½ cup pineapple juice
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dry ginger

Directions

Place tenderloin in shallow pan. Rub with dry mustard



and thyme. Combine pineapple juice, soy sauce, garlic and ginger. Pour over meat. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Turn meat over frequently to marinade. Pour off marinade when ready to cook, reserving some to use as basting while roasting. Roast uncovered at 325 degrees for 1 hour. Slice pork into medallions and serve with currant glaze.

Currant Glaze

- 1 10 ounce jar currant jelly
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 tablespoon pineapple juice

Over medium heat melt the jelly with added soy sauce and pineapple juice. Stir and simmer for 2 minutes. Serve over pork slices. Recipe serves 6 people (about 1/3 pound per person).

Maxine's Holiday Punch

My family really enjoyed this delightful drink, and the color is so festive for the holidays.



Ingredients

- 1 quart ginger ale or 7-Up
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 cup grenadine syrup

Directions

Pour together into a large bowl, stir well and place in the freezer until slushy. Serve immediately. Optional: Can also add pomegranate berries/seeds to slush. Take care to remove all rind from the berries as you clean the pomegranates. The Trotters have also added a citrus fruit-pomegranate skewer for decoration and it was very festive.

Mayor Trotter's Traditional Holiday Recipes

Grandma Ida's Christmas Cookies

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup soft shortening or butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt

Directions

Mix the shortening, sugar, eggs and vanilla in a mixer. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to mixer. Chill cookie dough for at least one hour. Roll out the dough on a floured cutting board and cut shapes with cookie cutters. Decorate with sugar and sprinkles. Bake cookies at 400 for 8 to 10 minutes or until edges turn golden brown.

Sue's Southern Pecan Pie

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup corn syrup
- 1 cup pecans
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 unbaked pie crust

Directions

Cream softened butter and sugar. Add remaining ingredients and pour in unbaked pie crust. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 1 hour. Severson likes to double recipe and do two at a time. Freezes well.

Mayor Trotter's Traditional Holiday Recipes

Grandma Ida's Christmas Cookies

Ingredients

¾ cup soft shortening or butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
2 ¼ cups flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt

Directions

Mix the shortening, sugar, eggs and vanilla in a mixer.

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to mixer.

Chill cookie dough for at least one hour.

Roll out the dough on a floured cutting board and cut shapes with cookie cutters. Decorate with sugar and sprinkles. Bake cookies at 400 for 8 to 10 minutes or until edges turn golden brown.

Panda Berry Truffles

Ingredients

1 pound Guittard French Vanilla semi-sweet chocolate
1-oz. square Baker's unsweetened chocolate (unsw choc)
6 oz. whipping cream
6 oz. Chambord (raspberry) liqueur (Ch)
1.5 oz. raspberry syrup
Cereal bowl full of Guittard white chocolate A'Peels (dipping choc)

Small paint brush

Directions

Melt the semi-sweet choc and 1 oz unsw choc in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in Ch and raspberry syrup. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour. Scoop out balls using a spoon or melon scoop to make centers. Use two different size scoops, one medium and one small. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. Slightly flatten two opposite side of the larger ball and one side of the smaller ball. Chill for at least one hour.

Melt some A'Peels in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a center in the dipping choc. Swirl quickly around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet. Allow to cool in the air and then chill. Some of the dark chocolate ball may have melted into the white chocolate so the outer coating is "dirty." If so, then dip again in fresh bowl of A'Peels, and then chill. Repeat dipping and chilling steps until outer coating is "pure." Continue until all centers are dipped.

To assemble the truffle, put a larger ball with one of its flat sides down on a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper. Place a smaller ball on top of a larger ball, flat side to flat side. "Cement" together with a little melted white chocolate. Melt some dark chocolate. Dip a small paintbrush into the melted dark chocolate and paint the design of a panda bear onto the truffle (ears, eyes, nose, arms, legs, tail, smile). Let dry. Enjoy!

Chipmunk Maple Walnut Truffles

Ingredients

1 pound + of Guittard French Vanilla semi-sweet chocolate
1-oz. square Baker's unsw choc
6 oz. whipping cream
6 oz. high-grade maple syrup
¼ cup finely chopped walnuts, plus some extra larger pieces of walnut
Cereal bowl full of Guittard dark chocolate A'Peels (small wafers) and white chocolate A'Peels (dipping or coating choc) in equal proportions
1 large and 1 small melon scoop

Note* This recipe makes one pound. To make 40 or so chipmunks, make two pounds.

Directions

Melt the semi-sweet choc and 1 oz unsw choc in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in MS and chopped walnuts. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour.

Scoop out balls using a melon scoops to make centers. Make equal amounts of large and small balls. Chill for

30 minutes. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. On the small balls, slightly flatten one side. On the large balls, slightly flatten two opposite sides. Chill for at least one hour.

Melt dark and light chocolate A'Peels together in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a center in the dipping choc. Swirl around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet. Allow to cool. Continue until all centers are dipped.

To assemble the truffle, put a larger ball with one of its flat sides down on a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper. Place a smaller ball on top of a larger ball, flat side to flat side. "Cement" together with a little melted dipping chocolate. Cement a small piece of walnut onto the "tummy" of the chipmunk. Paint some arms/hands around the walnut with the coating chocolate. Melt some dark chocolate. Dip a small paintbrush into the melted dark chocolate and paint the design of a chipmunk bear onto the truffle (ears, eyes, nose, tail, mouth, fingernails/toenails, stripes – 5 down the back and 2-3 on each side of the face). Let dry. Enjoy!

Chipmunk Maple Walnut Truffles

Ingredients

1 pound + of Guittard French Vanilla semi-sweet chocolate
 1-oz. square Baker's unsw choc
 6 oz. whipping cream
 6 oz. high-grade maple syrup
 ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts, plus some extra larger pieces of walnut
 Cereal bowl full of Guittard dark chocolate A'Peels (small wafers) and white chocolate A'Peels (dipping or coating choc) in equal proportions
 1 large and 1 small melon scoop
 Note* This recipe makes one pound. To make 40 or so chipmunks, make two pounds.

Directions

Melt the semi-sweet choc and 1 oz unsw choc in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in MS and chopped walnuts. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour.

Scoop out balls using a melon scoops to make centers. Make equal amounts of large and small balls. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. On the small balls, slightly flatten one side. On the large balls, slightly flatten two opposite sides. Chill for at least one hour.

Melt dark and light chocolate A'Peels together in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a center in the dipping choc. Swirl around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet. Allow to cool. Continue until all centers are dipped.

To assemble the truffle, put a larger ball with one of its flat sides down on a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper. Place a smaller ball on top of a larger ball, flat side to flat side. "Cement" together with a little melted dipping chocolate. Cement a small piece of walnut onto the "tummy" of the chipmunk. Paint some arms/hands around the walnut with the coating chocolate. Melt

Penguin Blackberry Truffles

Ingredients

17 oz. Guittard 61% chocolate wafers
 6 oz. whipping cream
 6 oz. blackberry liqueur
 Bowl full of Guittard dark chocolate A'Peels
 Bowl full of Guittard white chocolate A'Peels
 1 large and 1 small melon scoop
 Flat wooden toothpicks colored with orange food coloring (for beaks)
 Small paint brushes

Directions

Melt the semi-sweet choc in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in blackberry liqueur. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour. Scoop out balls using a spoon or melon scoop to make centers. Use two different size scoops, one medium and one small. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. Slightly flatten two opposite side of the larger ball and one side of the smaller ball. Chill for at least one hour.

Melt some white chocolate A'Peels in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a large center in the white dipping choc. Swirl quickly around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet. Allow to cool in the air and then chill. Some of the dark chocolate ball may have melted into the white chocolate so the outer coating may be "dirty." If so, then dip again in fresh bowl of white A'Peels, and then chill. To decorate each body, hold top and bottom between thumb and a finger and dip half the body into the dark chocolate so that half the ball is white and half is dark. Chill. Paint feet and wings on the body with some melted dark dipping chocolate.

Paint the toothpicks orange and allow to dry. Follow basic dipping procedure above for small centers dipped in dark chocolate A'Peels. Stick a toothpick in the dark dipped head to be the penguin's bill. Chill. Paint eyes on with some melted white dipping chocolate.

To assemble the truffle, put a white/dark ball with one of its flat sides down on a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper. Paint some melted chocolate onto the top

some dark chocolate. Dip a small paintbrush into the melted dark chocolate and paint the design of a chipmunk bear onto the truffle (ears, eyes, nose, tail, mouth, fingernails/toenails, stripes – 5 down the back and 2-3 on each side of the face). Let dry. Enjoy!

Snowy Owl Hazelnut Truffles

Ingredients

17 oz. Guittard 61% chocolate wafers
6 oz. whipping cream
6 oz. Frangelico (hazelnut) liqueur
About 20 hazelnut filberts, chopped fine
Additional whole hazelnuts for beaks
Bowl full of Guittard white chocolate A'Peels
1 large and 1 small melon scoop (or spoon)
Candy dipping utensil (or fork)
Small paint brushes

Directions

Insides: Melt the 61% chocolate wafers in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in Frangelico liqueur and chopped hazelnuts. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour. Scoop out balls using a spoon or melon scoop to make centers. Use two different size scoops, one medium and one small. Chill for at least 2 hours. Roll lightly between fingers to make a smooth ball. Slightly flatten two opposite side of the larger ball and one side of the smaller ball. Chill for at least one hour.

Covering: Melt some white chocolate A'Peels in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a large center in the white dipping choc. Swirl quickly around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet; flat side of truffle should be down. Allow to cool in the air and then chill. Some of the dark chocolate ball may have melted into the white chocolate so the outer coating may be "dirty." If so, then dip again in fresh bowl of white A'Peels, and then chill. **Decoration:**

Consult a bird book to decorate to look like a snowy owl. Mix some yellow food coloring into some white chocolate A'Peels and paint yellow eyes onto the smaller truffles. Cut a whole hazelnut filbert in half vertically and, using some melted white chocolate, "glue" the half a hazelnut point down between eyes for the beak (trim hazelnut as desired to make more pointed). Refrigerate. With white chocolate, paint wings, a tail, and feet onto the larger truffles. Refrigerate. When cold, using some melted white chocolate, "glue" the head onto the body – flat side to flat side. Refrigerate. When cold, using 61% dark chocolate, paint dark feathers onto head, wings, and tail. Paint talons onto the feet. Let dry. Enjoy!

flat side. Place a smaller dark ball on top, flat side to flat side. Let dry. Enjoy!

Bald Eagle Dark Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients

17 oz. Guittard 61% chocolate wafers
6 oz. whipping cream
6 oz. Godiva chocolate liqueur
Hazelnut filberts for beaks
Bowl full of Guittard white chocolate A'Peels
Bowl full of Guittard dark chocolate A'Peels
1 large and 1 small melon scoop
Small paint brushes
Candy dipping utensil (or fork)

Directions

Insides: Melt the 61% chocolate wafers in the whipping cream using a double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Do not allow to boil. Mix in Godiva liqueur. Chill for ½ hour. Whip until slightly thicker than consistency of thick meringue. Chill for one hour. Scoop out balls using a spoon or melon scoop to make centers. Use two different size scoops, one medium and one small. Chill for at least 2 hours. Roll lightly between fingers to make each ball smooth. Slightly flatten two opposite side of the larger ball and one side of the smaller ball. Chill for at least one hour.

Covering:

Melt some white chocolate A'Peels in double boiler or microwave (med setting; one min at a time, stirring in between until choc is totally melted). Put a small center in the white dipping choc. Swirl quickly around with candy dipping utensil or regular fork. Lift coated center out of dipping choc and let excess dipping choc drip back into bowl. Place truffle on a waxed-paper covered cookie sheet; flat side of truffle should be down. Allow to cool in the air and then chill. Some of the dark chocolate ball may have melted into the white chocolate so the outer coating may be "dirty." If so, then dip again in fresh bowl of white A'Peels, and then chill. Dip large centers in dark chocolate A'Peels using same method.

Decoration:

Consult a bird book to decorate to look like a bald eagle. Refrigerate between steps as necessary. Cut a whole hazelnut filbert in half vertically and trim as desired to make more pointed. Paint with yellow food coloring. Using some melted white chocolate, "glue" the hazelnut onto front of the white head. Using dark chocolate, paint large eyes on either side of the beak. Mix some yellow food coloring into some white chocolate A'Peels and paint yellow irises on top of the dark eyes, and feet on the front of the body. Using dark chocolate, paint pupils on top of yellow iris. With white chocolate, paint tail on back of body. Refrigerate. When cold, using some melted white chocolate, "glue" the head onto the body – flat side to flat side. Refrigerate. When cold, paint dark wings onto sides of body. Paint talons onto the feet. Let dry. Enjoy!

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