

# Mennonite Recipes *for a traditional Christmas dinner*

By Charlene Peck

For the Mennonites of Otter Lake the Christmas season is both a time of fellowship and reaching out in the community.

"It's very much family time, while trying to be sensitive to needs around us, as well," says Glenda Todd, wife of Otter Lake Mennonite Church Pastor Thomas Todd.

The season is celebrated with carolling at hospitals and at different homes in the community, especially where they know residents will be alone during the holidays. Cookies are baked and taken to inmates at prisons.

The student body and faculty at the Mennonite Christian day school also carol in the neighbourhood and usually have a Christmas program centering around the birth of Christ.

"There's a lot of singing and reflecting on what God has done for us," says Glenda. "The most important thing to us is that Jesus came to live among men to redeem them. That's why Christmas is important to us.

Because the Otter Lake group of approximately 20 Mennonite families settled as a mission outreach in the early 1970s, Christmas is a popular season for travelling.

"A lot of people travel to see family and friends because none of us were originally from this area," says Glenda. "It was started as a mission outreach of the churches, so many of us have families in other areas that we go and see."

Gift giving for the Otter Lake group of Mennonites is a mix of purchased items and hand-sewn presents, woodworking, crafts, and home-made specialties from the kitchen – depending on the various talents of the particular givers.

"And of course we're all used to having traditional Christmas dinners," Glenda adds.

Some of the Otter Lake Mennonite ladies have graciously agreed to share favourite holiday recipes which have been passed down from generation to generation in their families, along with a few creative tips they've discovered in their own kitchens.



## Dressing

Edna Martin says she is still trying to make this dressing recipe just the way her mother did. "My family likes it because it's one of our special family traditions," she says. "Mother often would use it to stuff a goose for Christmas." Edna finds that the egg and milk make it moister than other dressings. When making this dressing, her mother always used saffron, which she grew on the farm.

½ cup butter  
1 small onion, chopped  
½ cup celery, chopped (optional)  
½ cup carrots, shredded (optional)  
4 beaten eggs  
1 tsp. tumeric  
¼ tsp. poultry seasoning  
1 tbsp. chicken soup base  
1 tsp. salt  
½ tsp. dry mustard  
shake of pepper to taste  
1 tsp. parsley  
1 tsp. dry saffron (optional)  
6 cups milk (3 cups water may be substituted for the milk)  
1 ½ loaves bread, cubed (or 24 cups cubed bread)

## Method:

In a large saucepan, melt the butter, then sauté the onion, celery and carrots lightly.

Add bread cubes and stir to avoid scouring and to ensure the mixture is well blended. Stir in parsley and saffron.

In a blender, mix the eggs, tumeric, poultry seasoning, chicken base, salt, dry mustard, pepper and three cups milk. Blend well and add to the bread mixture. Mix well. Add three more cups of milk or water.

Place in greased crockpot and cook on high for two or three hours until set, or on low for three or four hours until set. Or bake this dressing inside your Christmas turkey.

To add Mennonite flavour to the dressing, Ednas suggests placing it in a serving bowl and drizzling it with browned butter.

## Browned butter

Place 1/3 cup butter in a small pan and cook until it is golden brown. ½ tsp. flour may be added to give body to the butter.

## Swedish Mashed Potatoes

Sheri Martin got this recipe from her mom, who remembers her own mother making it.

"We like these because you can make them ahead and freeze them, or make them the day before your gathering and store them covered in the fridge – it saves a lot of last minute rushing around," explains Sheri. "These can be heated in a slow cooker or in the oven, but when you're cooking a large meal there isn't usually enough oven space, so that's why we like this recipe."

10 large potatoes  
1 – 125 gram pkg. cream cheese  
¾ cup sour cream  
1½ tsp. onion salt  
2 pinches of pepper  
2 tbsp. butter  
milk until right texture

Cook potatoes until soft and mash with hand beater.  
Add all ingredients, with just enough milk to reach a smooth texture.  
Put in a large 3-quart casserole dish.  
Dot with butter.  
Bake covered at 350° for 35 to 45 minutes.

**Stirrin' With Steph**  
Online Recipe Video



See North Star reporter Stephannie Johnson create the Christmas Fruit Salad recipe online at [www.parrysoundsideroads.com](http://www.parrysoundsideroads.com)



## Christmas Fruit Salad

Brenda Gingrich remembers her mother serving this fruit salad with a plateful of fancy Christmas cookies and squares.

"It was a light dessert after a big Christmas dinner," Brenda says. "My mom remembers it being served at Christmas and weddings. The peaches and pears used were home-canned ones."

1 quart canned, cubed peaches  
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1 large (540 ml) tin pineapple tidbits  
1 or 2 oranges sectioned, and sliced OR 1 - 2 cups orange juice  
1 to 2 cups red seedless grapes, halved  
1 or 2 bananas, sliced (optional)\*  
1 box each of yellow, red, and green Jello

Prepare Jellos in flat dishes according to directions, but use ½ cup less cold water than called for on the package. When the Jello is set, cut into cubes. Combine all ingredients, including juices, for a refreshing dessert.

\* Add bananas just before serving. If bananas are included, this salad doesn't keep more than a couple of days.

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