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# Living Family Traditions

By NENA WILSON BADENOCH

When they work at trimming the tree, the older ones doing the lights and higher branches, the youngest reveling in making gay the branches which he can reach and which he will see most. By dusk the holly wreaths are hung at windows and doors. The tree is trimmed and after dinner the family sit around it ready for the ceremonies to begin. The lights of the tree glow like jewels and in the first hush the Christmas candle is placed in the window to guide the Christ child. Then every member of the family circle recites a Christmas poem or sings a Christmas song, including Luke's beautiful story of the first Christmas. From the youngest to the oldest, each one has something to contribute. Then the loved old Christmas carols are sung, and it is time for the children to jump into bed to let "visions of sugar plums dance through their heads," for after all that keen anticipation of the morning—that feeling which makes the children hardly able to bear it, they long so for Santa to come with his sack of toys and gifts—after all who would dull or shorten it? It is more than half the fun.

Morning comes at last, and when all are dressed, descent is made upon the tree. The ecstasy of sitting around while Daddy plays Santa Claus, allows no time for breakfast, so Mrs. Santa has learned to send along some fruit and sandwiches for children who like to picnic around the Christmas tree and she finds it very simple to add a hot drink so that breakfast is set of the way, leaving the table free to set at an early hour for the holiday dinner.

Thanksgiving, Christmas and possibly New Year's Day are occasions for fostering clan spirit and teaching the children to know their aunts, uncles and cousins in festive mood. If we plan our entertainment for the day even before we plan our food, providing games in which both youngsters and grown-ups can take part, the day is bound to be long remembered.

Twelfth-night is a chance for fun which can be easily skipped if the homemaker doesn't watch her calendar. It is a festivity which makes a family ceremony out of what might have been a cleaning-up process after Christmas, for together the Christmas greens are burned. The English have bequeathed us a Twelfth-night cake—made according to the accompanying recipe—with which to start the ceremonies

at the table. Then when all adjourn to the living room there is keen pleasure in sitting by the family hearth watching the crackling pine and holly leap into red and yellow flames or liss into a blue flare.

## Twelfth-Night Cake

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Cupful of Butter                | 1/2 Cupful of Almonds       |
| 1 Cupful of Sugar                 | Cut in Strips               |
| 5 Eggs                            | 1 Pound of Currants         |
| 3 Tablespoonfuls of Fruit Juice   | 2 Cupfuls of Pastry Flour   |
| 1/4 Cupful of Chopped Citron      | 1/2 Teaspoonful of Ginger   |
| 1/4 Cupful of Chopped Lemon Peel  | 1/2 Teaspoonful of Cinnamon |
| 1/4 Cupful of Chopped Orange Peel | 1/2 Teaspoonful of Allspice |
|                                   | 1/2 Teaspoonful of Nutmeg   |

**CREAM** butter. Add sugar gradually and cream thoroughly. Add unbeaten eggs one at a time, beating till light and fluffy after each egg is added. Add fruit juice with chopped fruit and nuts. Mix and sift flour with spices and fold into first mixture. Bake in a slow oven—250° F.—for two hours until firm to the touch, in paper-lined loaf pan.

St. Nicholas Eve, December fifth, is celebrated in a neighborhood where for years all the children in the block have been invited to one home to send messages to old Saint Nicholas. They hear the jingle of his bells and amid enraptured squeals he comes into their circle for just a few minutes to find out what they all want for Christmas. One by one they tell him and receive his kindly admonitions to be a good boy or girl, often effectively supplemented by specific directions, surreptitiously mentioned ahead of time by a struggling parent, which particular knowledge invariably amazes the child. Saint Nicholas' departure is followed by a little party food, and behavior in that block for the next twenty days is above reproach.

St. Valentine's Day is a day for love and its expression, which warms the heart of the mother and father quite as much, maybe more, than that of the children. The homemaker who lets herself and her husband outgrow some little surprise expression of affection on Valentine's Day is missing a family tradition which outlives the presence of children under the home roof.

There is nothing more personal than a birthday. To have others glad that you were born, and tell you so in loving words and gifts makes the marking of the years a happiness. It is a time to gather friends about one and make merry. When gifts whose intrinsic

worth rates about ten cents are made priceless by accompanying poetry and song, grown-ups look forward to birthdays quite as much as children. Years vary in the household and parties with friends are not always possible, but the family celebration with gifts at the breakfast table and a cake with candles at dinner develop family spirit and thoughtfulness.

But how about the mother's birthday? Shall she let it pass without celebration? Husbands and children delight in their shared

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