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CHRISTMAS WITH A REAL NUT-CRACKER AN UPSIDE-DOWN TRADITION

We love tradition as it connects us with past and hope for our future. Christmas is loaded with tradition. Our most prized are passed from one generation to the next. Traditions create family intimacy as we share something special to our clan. When I'm frying chicken on Great-grandma's iron skillet, I sense something special.

Every Christmas, our family connects through traditional recipes prepared on cast-iron cookware. Without ritual rules cast-iron may be ruined. The ritual also creates the family fun. Anyone visiting our kitchen knows our detailed rules for our cast-iron care. The implements don't know soap. After each meal stove-top heat chars remnants as we scrape with a spatula. A paper towel wipes them clean and spreads an oily coat on iron. The pan is stored away in the oven.

With a 12 inch iron skillet, a real nutcracker, and my mother's recipe, we will share a Christmas recipe. Preheat

your oven to 350 Fahrenheit and try this...

Have your nutcracker shell 1 cup of pecans. Coarsely chop and soak them in 1 TBS sweet bourbon. In a big bowl (leaving room for later) combine ½ stick butter, 1 cup white sugar, and 2 large eggs. Beat. Separately drain 1 cup cubed pineapple. Keep ½ cup of the juice with 1 TBS sweet bourbon for later. In another bowl sift 1 ½ cups of cake flour, 2 tsp baking POWDER, and ½ tsp salt. In fine, combine (alternating by ½ cup parts) dry and wet, each to the creamy mix in the big bowl. Set this aside for later.

Set a 12 inch iron skillet on the stove melting ¾ stick of butter and 1 ¼ cup brown sugar. Add ½ tsp of cream. Simmer. Next drop a dozen drained maraschino cherries, and piece by piece the cubed pineapple in a decorative pattern. **DO NOT STIR.** Without disturbing the caramelizing layer, gently place along the insides of the skillet the previously chopped pecans. Next avoiding the skillet's inside edge, drip spoonfuls of the cake batter covering the caramelizing layer. Do not disturb the layers. When the caramel first bubbles through the batter layer move the whole skillet into the pre-heated oven baking for nearly 45 minutes. Remove skillet-o-cake, let stand on a cool stove-top.

Now the fun. Place a 14 inch cake plate, correctly oriented, atop the 12 inch skillet. Quickly (two hands clasp plate and skillet together) flip so the cake plate is supporting the down turned skillet upon the counter. The namesake cake rests upside down on the larger plate. Let cool. Cut and serve topped with wiped cream.

For our friends starting a tradition, we recommend the above. Visit www.happyhealthy.com and find this article linking holiday cookware and cookbooks. Have a Merry Christmas!

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