

## Family Recipes for the Holidays by Laura Stoll

In our house, the holidays are synonymous with food. From Thanksgiving all the way until New Year's, all we talk about is what we're eating. About 15 years ago, my parents, husband, two kids, and I crammed into our family minivan to drive to Thanksgiving dinner at my grandparents' house. On the way back, our conversation kept turning back to the same topic: food. We had just eaten an enormous dinner with all the trimmings and our stomachs were full but we still spent the 90-minute ride talking about what Christmas cookies we were planning to make, our favorite snacks for eating around the tree, and what constitutes the best breakfast on Christmas morning.

I love to cook and the holidays are a great reason to make old favorites and try new things. Many of my recipes are handed down from my mom, mother-in-law, grandmothers, and aunts. Some of them are so old that no one knows where they originated; others are from well-worn cookbooks. Here are some of my family's favorite food writers, cookbooks, and recipes we like to make from them. All of them are available at the Kirkland Town Library or through the Mid York system.

When it comes to learning how to cook the basics, "The Joy of Cooking" by Irma S. Rombauer, Marion Rombauer Becker, and Ethan Becker has everything you need to know. The explanations are clear and easy to follow and with more than 1,000 pages, you're guaranteed to find what you're looking for as well as inspiration for new ideas. I recommend their basic roasted chicken recipe, which is a good alternative for a holiday meal when everyone is tired of turkey. For a new twist on a favorite side dish, I use their rice pilaf recipe but substitute orzo.

Martha Stewart is a family favorite for her reputation as a great entertainer. In my opinion, her talent begins with her tried-and-true recipes. In "Martha Stewart's Cakes," she offers recipes for 150 classic cakes to make and share. This holiday, I'll be trying the New York-Style Cheesecake, one of my son's favorite desserts. With only about ten ingredients, it looks easy and delicious.

Speaking of desserts, "Betty Crocker's Ultimate Cookie Book" has a fantastic recipe for my husband's favorite cookie, Snickerdoodles. The colorful photographs and tips for bakers are helpful whether this is your first batch or your 100th. The book has more than 175 of the best cookie recipes from around the world.

"Moosewood Cookbook" has been on my mom's bookshelf ever since I could read, but until recently, I didn't know that it came from the Ithaca-based eatery. "Moosewood Restaurant Daily Special" features recipes from their ever-changing menu board since they opened in the 1970s. Each one showcases seasonal produce and ethnic flavors, all vegetarian. There are lots of recipes for soups, which make a great meal for family and friends that visit over the holidays.

Another great meal for holiday visitors comes from "The Silver Palate Cookbook" by Sheila Lukins and Julee Rosso. Chicken Marbella is a salty-sweet combination with the unusual addition of capers and prunes. The chicken is tender and flavorful and tastes wonderful with rice and a simple vegetable. Both my mom and my mother-in-law make this recipe whenever they are expecting a big crowd. We also like Lukins' and Rosso's other books, "The New Basics" and "Open-House."

One show that the women in my family agree on is "Downton Abbey" and "The Official Downton Abbey Cookbook" by Annie Gray has some recipes we'd all love to try. Divided into an

“upstairs” section with dishes that would be prepared for the Granthams, and a “downstairs” section with food for the staff, the book is filled with photos from the show, including some memorable meals. If I was going to attempt one of the recipes, I think I’d go for “Toad-In-The-Hole,” which is a batter pudding made of milk, flour, eggs, and sausage meat.

Finally, back when I was in college, I entered a raffle to win a copy of Jacques Pepin’s book “Today’s Gourmet.” Although I was the lucky winner, the book wasn’t particularly useful for someone who lived in the dorm and ate in the cafeteria. Instead, I regifted the book to my mom for Christmas. “Today’s Gourmet” is currently out of print, but now that I have a well-stocked kitchen of my own, I’ll be borrowing “Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home” by Julia Child and Jacques Pepin. Jacques’ classic omelet looks perfect for New Year’s Day.