

The German potato salad Opal Menius often took to potluck dinners was always a tasty crowd-pleaser (see recipe on page 160).

A Part of Our Story

Most of this month's cookbooks are no longer available, the last ones sold long ago to support a ministry or buy a bus. Their value now is in the memories they hold.

Written by DIANE SUMMERVILLE • Photography by MATT HULSMAN

When Opal Menius graduated from Flora McDonald College in Red Springs in 1936, she moved to Pantego, in Beaufort County, to teach first grade in a wooden schoolhouse. Known today as Ye Olde Academy, the school was built in 1874.

In the fall and spring, Menius opened wide the windows to let in the breeze. In the winter, she fed coal to a tall stove. It had a crack down its center, and sometimes an ember would pop through and start a tiny fire. "I would continue to teach," Menius says, "while I walked over to it and put the fire out by stepping on it."

She remembers some of the first advice she got in the classroom: "I was warned not to scold a child for the language he used if I asked where he lived and he replied that he lived on the dam road. There really was a dam road." It ran alongside the dam.

Menius pulls out these memories whenever she reaches for *The Art of Cooking in Pantego*. At age 95, she doesn't cook much anymore. But the book still transports her back nearly 75 years, to the start of her teaching career.

"I like the recipes because it has the Southern cooking that I grew up with," Menius says. "It's my favorite cookbook because I know the names of the people in it. I remember them."

Menius, who now lives in Pompano Beach, Florida, was right when she stated in her letter to *Our State* that her submission will probably be the oldest cookbook we receive. But she's not the only person to send us an older book. Juanita Jackson Kesler sent us *What's Cookin' in Randolph Kitchens?* She, along with a lot of helpers, produced the book in 1964 to raise money for Tabernacle School's Little League team in Asheboro.

"I have a lot of memories of the people who sent the recipes in and the different experiences we had," Kesler says. Nearly 50 years later, Kesler still hears from people about their favorite recipes in the book. Because these

cookbooks do more than tell Menius how to season German potato salad or Kesler how often to baste barbecued spareribs. Our cookbooks with scuffed covers and yellowed pages tell our story.

Kesler thinks back to how busy those days were, when both her sons, Kerry and Dan, played baseball and she volunteered at their schools and took it upon herself to organize the fund-raiser.

For Liz Meador, *The Bateman Clan Cookbook* she sent us captures the essence of the Bateman family reunion, held almost every year since 1929 at Scuppernong Disciples of Christ Church near Creswell.

"Putting the cookbook together, we learned things about our family that we didn't know," Meador says. "We learned about our own origins, the lives our ancestors led, and how food was an important part of that."

Often, the most meaningful moments in our lives happen over meals, and those meals become a part of our story. It's no wonder that we treasure our older cookbooks; they help us remember. 🍴

Diane Summerville is the senior editor of *Our State* magazine.



The Women's Society of Christian Service at Hebron Methodist Church produced *The Art of Cooking in Pantego* to help pay the cost of painting the church, which was built in 1894 and '95.

"It's my favorite cookbook because I know the names of the people in it. I remember them."

— Opal Menius

We want to see *your* cookbook in *Our State*! See page 184 for details.



When Opal Menius left her hometown of Littleton to start her first teaching job, she found that the recipes in *The Art of Cooking in Pantego* helped her feel at home. She recognized the country cooking. Since then, Opal's made mounds of German potato salad — whenever she's asked to prepare a dish representing her nationality.

German Potato Salad

- 5 to 6 potatoes, cooked
- 3 eggs, boiled
- ½ cup celery, diced
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 8 bacon slices, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- ¾ cup vinegar
- 4 tablespoons bacon drippings
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- salt and pepper to taste

Slice potatoes. Add sliced eggs, celery, and onion. Cook bacon until crisp; reserve drippings. Mix mustard, sugar, flour, vinegar, and bacon drippings in a saucepan, and bring to a boil. Pour over potatoes. Add crumbled bacon, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Mix lightly to coat potatoes.

— Marjorie Ratcliff



Devil's Food Cake

- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 squares chocolate, melted
- 3 eggs, separated
- 2½ cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon soda, dissolved in 1 tablespoon boiling water

Cream butter, and add sugar gradually while creaming. Add melted chocolate; mix well. Add egg yolks and beat, mixing well. Sift flour with salt and add to butter mixture along with milk. Stir in vanilla, and then add soda. Fold in egg whites, beaten stiff. Makes 3 layers. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until cake tester comes out clean. Frost with any chocolate icing.

— Sallie Swindell





Five generations contributed recipes to *The Bateman Clan Cookbook*. The individuals who provided recipes also included the names of the Batemans from whom they're descended. Copies of the cookbook, produced to raise money to support the cemetery at the Scuppernong Disciples of Christ Church in Creswell, are available. To order, contact Liz Meador at (919) 735-2316 or lizmeador@earthblink.net.

Corn Pudding

- 4 cups corn, drained
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons green pepper, chopped
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- ½ cup butter or margarine

Mix corn, flour, sugar, seasonings, and green pepper. Beat eggs until light. Add to corn mixture. Add milk. Melt butter in 2-quart casserole as you preheat oven to 350°. Tilt casserole dish to coat sides with butter. Stir in corn mixture. Bake for 1 hour or until firm in center.

— Mary Kate Swain Daniels (Kate)



Seafood Bisque

- 1 stick butter
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 can or jar chopped pimiento
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons white pepper
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic
- 1 teaspoon dill weed
- 1 pound crabmeat
- 1 pound shrimp
- 2 quarts half & half

In large pot, sauté butter, celery, pimiento, and onion. Add both peppers, garlic, and dill weed. Gradually add half & half. Cook on low heat, stirring constantly, until creamy. Do not let soup boil. When soup is creamy, add crabmeat and shrimp. Ready to serve when shrimp and crabmeat are cooked.

— Nellie Leary (Alice)



In 1978, the softball team of Bethlehem Community produced ***Favorite Recipes From Our Best Cooks***. Not only did the organizers collect recipes from people throughout the community, but they also received support from several advertisers, including Johnny's Sporting Goods in Carrboro and Davis Grocery and Service Station in Graham.

Angel Biscuits

- 5 cups flour, unsifted
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 package dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons warm water
- 2 cups buttermilk
- melted butter



Sift together flour, soda, baking powder, and salt. Add sugar. Work in shortening. Meanwhile, dissolve yeast in 2 tablespoons warm water, and add with the buttermilk to the flour mixture. Mix well. Turn out on a floured board, and roll ¼-inch thick; cut out biscuits. Dip in melted butter, and fold over for pocketbook rolls. Bake at 400° for about 15 minutes or until done. You may store dough in a plastic bag or glass container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

— Mildred Lasley



Lemon Chess Pie

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornmeal
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 4 eggs
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 4 teaspoons lemon rind, grated
- ¼ cup milk
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 pastry piecrust, unbaked

Mix all ingredients, and beat until smooth. Pour into large, unbaked piecrust, bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

— Mary C. Lloyd



It was Juanita Jackson Kesler's idea to produce a cookbook when Tabernacle School's Little League team announced it wanted to buy a bus. As recipes for *What's Cookin' in Randolph Kitchens?* came in from throughout the community, Kesler tested each one. "That was a task," she recalls. "Of course, my family enjoyed it."



Barbecued Spareribs

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| 3 to 4 pounds ribs, cut into pieces | 1 teaspoon chili powder |
| 1 lemon, sliced | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 1 large onion, thinly sliced | 2 dashes Tabasco sauce |
| 1 cup ketchup | 2 cups water |
| 1/3 cup Worcestershire sauce | |

Preheat oven to 450°. Place ribs in shallow roasting pan, meaty side up. On each piece, place a slice of unpeeled lemon and a thin slice of onion. Roast for 30 minutes. Combine remaining ingredients; bring to a boil, then pour over ribs. Continue baking at 350° until tender, about 45 minutes to 1 hour, while basting ribs with sauce every 15 minutes. If sauce gets too thick, add more water. Makes 4 servings.

— Mrs. Roland Hinesley



Pecan Dream Cookies

- 1/2 pound butter
- 6 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 teaspoons water
- 2 cups pecans, chopped

Cream butter, sugar, flour, vanilla, and water. Add chopped nuts. Form in oblong drops, and bake 40 to 45 minutes at 350°. Sift additional powdered sugar; drop hot cookies in, and roll around until coated. Lay on wax paper to cool.

— Mrs. Clifford Bowers

