From Our Place to Yours

The Community Restorative Justice Center values all of our partners who work with us to grow a more restorative and compassionate community. Whatever your holiday traditions may be, we wish you a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year.
Warm and tasty comfort food

Baked Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients:
1. 1 lb. elbow macaroni
2. Two 8oz. Bars of Cabot Seriously Sharp Cheddar Cheese
3. 1/4 cup milk
4. 1 Tbsp. butter
5. Pepper to taste

To prepare:
1. Cook macaroni to desired tenderness, then drain.
2. In a sauce pan, melt cut up cubes of cheese with the milk, butter and pepper.
3. Once cheese is fully melted, mix with macaroni.
4. Put macaroni and cheese in an oven safe dish and sprinkle bread crumbs on top.
5. Bake in the oven until there is a crisp top layer.
6. Enjoy!

Kathleen Hunter, Administrative Assistant & Housing Liaison

Neil Favreau, Bookkeeper
Restorative Justice Programs Coordinator

A little poem to cheer you...

A Christmas poem I said I’d do
When asked by my coworker Sue
So I had to make up stuff in rhyme
Before 11:00 am, I hadn’t much time
I can’t make food or cook or bake
So this dumb poem I have to make
Because I panicked and said I would
You’re now reading something not that good
That’s supposed to be about Christmas time
But really isn’t, (at least it rhymes)
So apologies friends for your time I’ve taken
For you to read this godforsaken
Poem I said I’d write
Merry Christmas to all
And to all a good night
A Solstice Story

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.   - Wendell Berry

For years our family held a winter solstice party, it was our celebration of the returning of light. During the year, we gathered anything burnable and piled it up in our field. As our children became teens and enthralled with the idea of burning such a massive amount of brush, they made sure the pile was as high as possible. We used our tractor's bucket to place more and more wood on top. Another preparatory aspect of the wood pile was to make some kind of effigy to burn on the very top. As folks arrived at our house, the effigy was sitting on the front porch with slips of paper and markers so one could write down something they wanted to part with, or give up, for the coming year. It could be something material, or something psychological, or whatever seemed important to let go of. After writing down the thing one hoped to let go of, it was tied to the effigy to be burned on the very top of the pile. One year, my son Ian and his friend Jamie made a paper-mache Grinch to be placed atop the brush. This ritual was enjoyed by everyone, as it seems that all of us connect with fire; bright, sparkling, mesmerizing and warm.
A recipe to treasure ...

Alexis Eickleberry
Transitional Housing Coordinator

Holidays are for cookies!

The Best Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies
(1) large egg
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temp (1 stick)
1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cup old-fashioned whole rolled oats (not instant or quick oats)
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 to 1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 baking soda
pinch of salt. optional and to taste
1 heaping cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup raisins or nuts
Combine the egg, butter, sugars, vanilla, and beat on medium-high speed until creamed and well combined, about 4 minutes. Stop, scrape down the sides of the bowl, and add the chocolate chips. optional raisins or nuts and beat on low speed until just combined, about 30 seconds. Using a large cookie scoop or 1/4 cup measure form approximately 11 equal sized mounds of dough, roll into balls, and flatten slightly. Preheat oven to 350 F, line a baking sheet with cooking spray and bake for about 11 minutes for super soft cookies, longer for more well-done cookies. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet for about 10 minutes before serving.

Alexis says, “My grandma would make about 20 batches every year for Christmas. I would help her in the kitchen making this. She has gotten too old to make it and now my brother is the one making it.” She also says not to worry about the “over” part—the full recipe is on this side of the card.
Family traditions. It is an interesting concept. Over the years, we have had many. When our children were young, it was a tradition to sit down Christmas Eve in front of a roaring fire in the fireplace and hear the Christmas story while drinking a bit of nutmeg dotted eggnog. In the morning, the children would sit on the stairs in birth order waiting for their father to start the Christmas in Carnegie Hall album and turn on all the Christmas tree lights. Dad would don the Santa cap and reach under the tree for presents. The children all had access to their stockings which always included fruits, nuts, and chocolates as well as a toy to play with while waiting for their name to be called. On some occasions, we would find poppers that would make noise and throw confetti all over the place.

Our adult children have relayed to me that they have all found that same Carnegie Hall Christmas album to play for their own children Christmas morning. Funny how memories and traditions keep. The smells of pine, the sounds of singing, the debate about whether this is a spire year, or we put a star on top of the tree. Traditions, memories, family, a sense of belonging to something special. These are all parts of our stories. I find it so interesting how these stories are passed along to the next generation.

As parents, it is fairly normal to wonder if we did things “right”. What does that even mean? Our children have children of their own, they love coming to Gram and Opah’s house — so I guess we did “ok.” They continue to return home for the holidays and love being together. It is a favorite time for me when the family is all together. I don’t think it is as much because of the holidays or the traditions we have established. I think it is because we have a place that created meaning from the word “home” that means we have a connection, similar stories, and shared memories. A place where belonging never grows old.

The Eggnog Recipe

Beat 2 egg yolks until light. Add 1/3 c. sugar and let sugar dissolve. Add 1 cup whole milk and 1/2 c. heavy cream. In a separate bowl, whip 2 egg whites and add 2 tsp. sugar. Fold egg whites into first mixture. Chill. Sprinkle each glass with nutmeg and each adult glass with a bit of Maple flavored liquer.
A wish for you...

This year ends and a new one begins. I meet this time of year with wonder, looking ahead for what will come. And it surely will come, whatever it is. My family’s tradition at year’s end is to gather and raise a toast to the ancestors who have come before, those who are with us now, and those who have not yet arrived. We offer our gratitude for things that have passed and our wishes for an as yet unknown future. I did not write this blessing below, but its simplicity speaks to me of peace and belief that tomorrow may be lighter. I wish for you all good things.

Blessing for the Longest Night

All throughout these months as the shadows have lengthened, this blessing has been gathering itself, making ready, preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed, feeling its way by memory by touch by the pull of the moon even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you this blessing will reach you even if you have not light enough to read it; it will find you even though you cannot see it coming.

You will know the moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long;

a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart; a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

This blessing does not mean to take the night away but it knows its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path, knows what it means to travel in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand. Get up. Set out on the road you cannot see.

This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go, you will be walking toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson
Lilu has a message….

Wag more, bark less.
Pick up your own mess.
Do good, give a smile.
Take a rest, sit a while.
See friends, call home.
Don’t pass up a tasty bone.
Be kind, don’t fight.
At the end of the day, sleep tight.

Happy Holidays everyone!