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Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

When I was little there were children in the White House. Not only that, one of them, Caroline was more or less my age. We were both from Massachusetts and spent summers on Cape Cod. I even had a little brother named John although we never called him John-John. We often called him Johnny; some of us still do.

I think that it's great that there are children in the White House again. The Obama girls will have a lot to deal with in the coming months, new school, new friends and a new house which is more museum than home. It is their great good fortune to have their grandmother with them, at least while they settle in. My sister, brother and I were very lucky to grow up with all four of our grandparents.

My mother's father, Grandpa Westland was the jokester. Much to our delight, he made funny faces, used silly voices and clowned around a lot. His antics landed him in the hospital at least once. He was entertaining my then four or five year old sister by prancing through a field with his trademark exaggerated skip. He landed in a mole hole and destroyed his knee. All-in-all he felt it was a small price to pay for her giggles.

My father's father, Pop Nye was a carpenter. He was the one who could fix anything. He was a man of few words; his humor was as dry as saw dust and he was one of the kindest, gentlest human beings you could ever meet.

We loved visiting with both our grandmothers. Nana Westland was always so cheery and a soft-touch. We'd convince her that a trip to the toy store was in order. Or at the very least that we needed some ice cream, even if it was 10:00 in the morning. Nana was always fun to be with, so agreeable and cheerful.

Nana Nye was a bit more no-nonsense but she loved to tell stories and her tiny house was filled with fascinating treasures. There were old games, toys and books of my father's and a wonderful hammock. There were funny old antiques like my great-grandfather's firefighter's helmet and ancient portraits of two very stern looking people. I was never quite sure who they were but I found them terribly interesting.

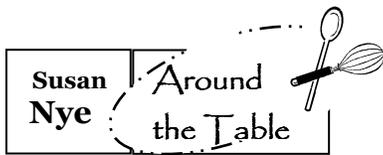
As a little girl I loved visiting my grandmother's kitchen. That's not a typo. It is grandmother's not grandmothers'. Nana Westland was not a cook. As the saying goes, her favorite thing to make for dinner was reservations. Nana Nye was an altogether different story. She was an award winning cook and had the \$5 prize from the Boston Post newspaper to prove it!

She was a plain and simple cook. Her repertoire tended towards chowders, pot roasts and meatloaf, although, she was justly proud of her French onion soup. For many years we rented a cottage near my grandparents in the summer. When the tide was low my sister, Brenda, and I wandered over to Nana's to help her in the kitchen. She always seemed to be making something. We'd get in her way, listen to her stories and make jam tarts from leftover scraps of pie crust.

Now I am lucky to have nieces who occasionally wander over and cook with me. It doesn't happen often enough but it's always fun. We bake cookies or birthday cakes, chat and tell each other stories. They particularly like it when I tell them about my grandparents.

When the temperature plummets and arctic winds blow, it's a time to have some fun in the kitchen. Gather up your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews. No family close by? Borrow the kids from next door. Warm up your kitchen with a little baking, a few stories and lots of laughter. Enjoy!

Bon appétit! -- Susan



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just look like one!

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Apron

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### Root 'n' Tooty Good 'n' Fruity Oatmeal Cookies

*Warm up your kitchen with the scent of cinnamon and spice; add some children's giggles and you'll have a wonderful afternoon and some delicious cookies. Enjoy!*

Make about 6 dozen cookies

1/4 cup dried cranberries  
1/4 cup dried cherries  
1/4 cup chopped dried apricots  
1/4 cup milk  
1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice  
2 cups quick cooking oatmeal  
3/4 cup sweetened coconut  
3/4 cup roughly chopped pecans  
3/4 cup (1 1/2 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1 3/4 cup lightly packed light brown sugar  
2 large eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/4 cup sour cream  
1/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips  
1/4 cup milk chocolate chips  
1/4 cup white chocolate chips

1. Set 2 racks in the middle and upper third of the oven. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Warm the milk in a small pan or microwave, do not boil. Put the dried fruit in a small bowl, add the milk and set aside.
3. Put the flour, baking powder, baking soda, spices, oatmeal, coconut and pecans together in a medium bowl and whisk to combine.
4. In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar together until well blended. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until fluffy. Turn the mixer down to low and gradually add the flour-oatmeal mixture and combine. Add the sour cream, dried fruit mixture and chocolate chips and combine.
5. Drop tablespoons of dough (a mini ice-cream scoop works great) onto nonstick or parchment-lined cookie sheets about 3 inches apart. With moistened fingers, flatten the cookies a little. Turn the pan once for even baking and bake the cookies until they are lightly browned, about 14 minutes. Let the cookies set for a minute and then transfer to a rack to cool.