



Atwood Farm's Secret Devil Cake

by Nancy Nicol

My Grandmother Gertrude French ran the kitchen at Atwood Farm. From the moment she set her foot on the linoleum that summer day in 1949, she took over.

She gathered the vegetables, she skinned the fish, and she canned jelly, pickles and relish. When we ran out of something she would make the call to Ellis' Market and the delivery boy would show up later that day, sometimes balancing the entire order in a carton on his bicycle handles.

Grandma had her own particular style and scheme and if a baking dish or a serving spoon were out of place, she knew it and we heard about it.

"Where is that pie pan, the one I use for deep dish, not that new glass one?" or "Who took my bread knife, I just had it in my hand."

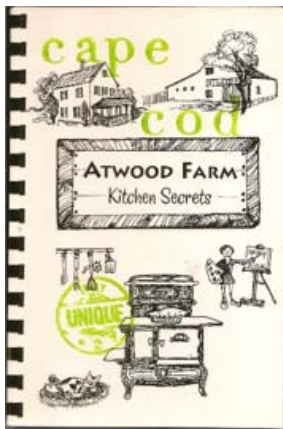
This was important to her because our cooking equipment was simple and basic – one sauce pan; one double boiler, which could also be used as two sauce pans; one frying pan; one cast iron kettle; one tea kettle; a set of nesting bowls; a hand operated egg beater and a lobster pot.

Grandma always used a sterling silver fork for whipping heavy cream and was suspicious of the whisk someone brought as a present, refusing to give it a try.

She experimented with spices and herbs from the garden, made spicy sauce and gravy even though she may have secretly preferred food that was sweetened with a tablespoon of sugar, "to bring out the flavor."

At eighty-five years old she knew recipes by heart and thought using a cookbook was a form of cheating.

She was determined to teach me how to put ingredients together – "it's like mixing your paints", she said. "You know how to make purple, you don't have to consult a color wheel, do you?"



Devil Cake and Orange Frosting

recipes are taken from
"Atwood Farm Kitchen Secrets"

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Part of my training was Devil Cake.

"Nancy, wash your hands first and put on an apron."

The squares of bittersweet chocolate were already melting in a pan on the back burner of our kerosene Kitchen Queen.

I would start creaming the butter in a large bowl using a fork: yellow turned fluffy white and then, and only then, granulated sugar was added. A delicious combination but I knew if I kept sampling it there wouldn't be enough for the cake!

Grandma separated the eggs and beat the whites until they were stiff. If one tiny bit of yolk got in we'd start over. "I'll call Ellis and have that young man bring more eggs" she'd say.

The best part was the ending, putting the icing on the cake. We set it outside to cool first. Grandma would ask Mom to make her special orange frosting: powdered sugar, hot, fresh squeezed orange juice and butter, topped with orange essence and a drizzle of melted chocolate.

One more thing...

"Nancy, do you want to lick the bowl?"

Silly question, Grandma.

DEVIL CAKE

¼ c. butter
1¾ c. sugar
2 eggs
3 tsp. baking powder
1¼ c. flour
2 squares unsweetened chocolate
½ c. milk
1 orange

Cream butter, add gradually half of the sugar and melted chocolate.

Separate egg yolks and beat until thick and lemon colored and add gradually the remaining sugar.

Combine mixtures, add milk alternately with flour then fold in egg whites (beaten stiff) and grated orange rind. Pour into 10" round spring form pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes.

Frost with orange frosting and when cool, drizzle a thin layer of melted chocolate on top.

MOM'S SPECIAL ORANGE ICING

2 c. powdered sugar
½ c. hot orange juice
1 T. melted butter
1 T. grated orange rind

Mix together powdered sugar, hot orange juice and melted butter. After well mixed, add grated orange rind.

Don't forget to drizzle with chocolate!!



Nancy Nicol owns Gallery 5, at 5 East Commercial Street in Wellfleet.

Two of her short stories/memoirs have been selected for publication this summer by "Telling Our Stories," Lewisburg, PA. She also joined Nicola Burnell's writing group and is in revisions of her first novel.

For more information about the gallery and to order her cook book check out her website:

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