
JIM CASADA OUTDOORS

December 2015 Newsletter

Jim Casada
1250 Yorkdale Drive
Rock Hill, SC 29730-7638
803-329-4354

Web site: www.jimcasadaoutdoors.com
E-mail: jc@jimcasadaoutdoors.com

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Jim's Doings

I don't really have much of note to report on this front other than to share bittersweet news related to my wife of 48 years, Ann. On Veterans' Day, November 11, with loving help from my daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter, we moved her into a local assisted living facility with a memory care wing. It was gut-wrenching but it was also time for the move. She's getting better care than I could possibly provide, I can visit whenever I like and even eat with her from time to time, and on the whole she seems to be adapting well even as her decline from early onset Alzheimer's continues at a frightening rate. Though she says less and less Ann still smiles often, readily participates in activities offered to residents, is always glad to see me and other visitors, and seems on the whole to be happy even though her oft-asked words, "When can I go home?" tear at my heart.

That's about all I wish to say on the subject other than to thank those of you who have taken the time, in e-mails and through other means of communication, to offer thoughtful and sometimes insightful words of comfort. Hardened old codger though I undoubtedly am in many ways, the fact remains that I'm appreciative and greatly moved by your support in the most heartfelt of ways.





This Month's Specials

Since it's the Christmas season I'm offering not one but several specials in this December newsletter. Before getting to the specials though, let me note that I have a whole bunch of updated and expanded book lists on my [website](#). In the individual author section the George Bird Evans, Nash Buckingham, and Jack O'Connor lists include new stock, and the Ruark and Rutledge lists will be updated in the next week or two. Likewise, there's lots of material in both the Premier Collection and the African Collection lists, and look for a totally revamped, expanded turkey books list within the next week or two.

Also, don't forget that I'm glad to print out gift certificates and send them to folks who are avid readers. Such folks (and I'm one of them) often are the only ones who know exactly what books they want, don't already have, and would like to read.

TOMFOOLERY 2000

The "lead" special for this newsletter is one filled with bittersweetness for me, because it involves a book written by a longtime friend and truly great turkey hunter, Earl Groves. I had the pleasure of hunting with Earl on multiple occasions, and let me assure you, he was the real deal, a true old-time turkey man. Over the course of his life he killed well over 600 turkeys, and those of you who hunt them will realize what an incredible feat that lifetime count was.

Earl hunted with a consuming passion, and spring before last I was with him on an extended hunt in South Dakota and Wyoming. It snowed 39 inches the night we arrived, and the next morning snow was piled so high in front of the motel doors it was a feat just to get out and make our way to the kitchen. We didn't hunt that day but we did hunt every day afterward, always making our way through slushy snow and melting mess. Although he did well to walk 100-150 yards, Earl was as enthusiastic as a youngster with his first gun, and in the course of our trip he managed to kill four gobblers.

Special though the moments afield were, they paled in comparison to hearing him recount past experiences in his easygoing, gentle way. Keep in mind that this was the man, more than any single individual, who was responsible for the National Wild Turkey Federation as it exists today. He never got all the credit he deserved, and a fallout in the ranks of the nonprofit organization a few years back left him disillusioned and keenly disappointed. Still, there's no denying the way he shepherded the NWTf through its formative years.

Similarly, Earl left us two turkey hunting books of enduring importance, *Tomfoolery* and *Tomfoolery 2000*. The latter is my first offering, and I'm pretty sure I obtained the last couple of cases of the book that

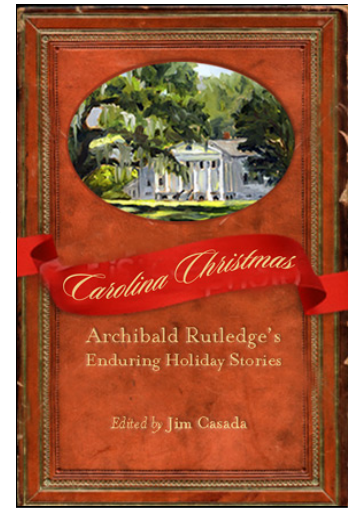
remained. For \$15, and I'll pay the postage, you can add a copy to your library or that of a favorite turkey hunter.

[Add to Cart](#)

CAROLINA CHRISTMAS

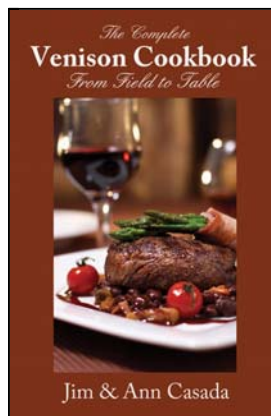
My second offering is for one of the quintet of Archibald Rutledge anthologies I have edited, *Carolina Christmas*. The book normally sells for \$30, plus shipping and handling. **I'm offering it for \$25 postage paid.**

The book contains a bevy of my favorite Christmas stories by Rutledge along with an original chapter on food traditions and recipes from the season as it has long been celebrated in Lowcountry South Carolina. That chapter means a great deal to me since it was the last literary effort dealing with culinary matters in which my wife was involved. One day when I was musing about why Rutledge wrote so much about food yet never provided recipes, she came up with the perfect answer. "You just tell me the dish he mentions and we can come up with the recipe through some experimentation in the kitchen." That's exactly what we did, and even though we did a number of cookbooks together, somehow this single chapter has the greatest meaning to me.



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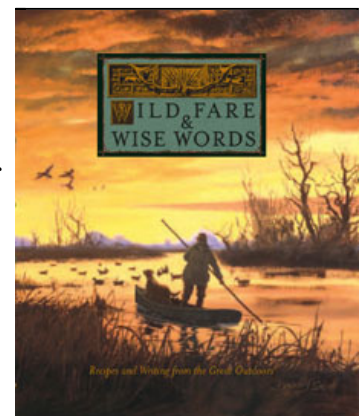
A PAIR OF COOKBOOKS



Still on the food theme, I'm offering a pair of cookbooks that would make great stocking stuffers, additions to your own library, or a special "something" for a foodie friend.

For \$20 (and again I'll ship free) you'll get a copy of *The Complete Venison Cookbook* as well as one of *Wild Fare and Wise Words*.

Together they offer several hundred scrumptious recipes with the first one dealing exclusively with deer meat while the second runs the gamut of fish, game, and assorted side dishes.



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THE MARKSMANSHIP PRIMER

Finally, here's a sho' 'nuff bargain for anyone who shoots rifles or shotguns. This is *The Marksmanship Primer*, an anthology offering insight and advice from many experts in the field past and present, which I edited and compiled a few years back.

At only \$10 for a signed copy, and that includes postage, here's a shooter's stocking stuffer at a truly bargain price.

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[Back to Top](#)

FOND DECEMBER MEMORIES

Not long ago my daughter complained, “Dad, you’re impossible when it comes to gifts for Christmas.” Basically she’s right, but that shouldn’t suggest that the season has little meaning for me. Quite the opposite is true. It’s just that my holiday joy comes from remembering, recalling special moments and traditions associated with Yuletide, and savoring the pleasure it provides others. Among the memories it evokes are those associated with the real reason for the season and church activities from my childhood; the way our extended family celebrated together; the two weeks of freedom from school right in the middle of the small game hunting season; the rituals of decorating and my involvement in them; and the wonderful holiday fare provide by Momma, Grandma Minnie, and a whole host of aunts. All these women could cook like nobody’s business, all had their specialties, and looking back I rather suspect there was a bit of friendly rivalry involved in their preparation of dishes consumed at big family gatherings.

Here’s a series of snippets, or snapshots from my memory if you wish, I associate with Christmas from yesteryear. There wasn’t all the commercial hoopla of today—Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and other cash-driven nonsense. Instead there was simplicity, love, joy, family closeness, realization of the true meaning of Christmas, and celebration without an all-consuming obsession with gifts.

- Church-related activities. These included manger scenes or perhaps children in the church putting on a play connected with the birth of Jesus, special musical events, carolers from the church making the rounds of homes of those in the congregation, visits (with food) to the needy and those trapped at home and known by the all too descriptive term “shut-ins,” and gift bags for the youngsters. These were nothing fancy—just a number 8 paper poke stuffed with some candy, nuts, and orange and an apple, and maybe an inexpensive toy such as a yo-yo or a bag of marbles.
- Grandpa giving something to each of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It might not be much, because for him cash money was never in plentiful supply. Likewise, honesty compels me to acknowledge that his selection of gifts—a pair of socks, a handkerchief, or something similar, might not always have been ideal. But his sentiments were genuine, his capacious pockets always held some hard candy, and he could be counted on to buy a bunch of those raisins you never see anymore—the kind known as seeded Muscats that came dried on the bunch and had a wonderful taste.
- Still thinking of Grandpa, there would be his obvious delight when he opened a big box of his favorite chewing tobacco, a dry type known as Apple Jack or Apple Twist. Chewing was his only real vice, unless you include his undoubted ability to eat great quantities of food, but Daddy always indulged him with the makings of many a “chaw” at Christmas. In my mind’s eye I can still see his smile when he opened that particular gift.
- One other enduring image of Grandpa is his storytelling of times when the American chestnut was a big part of the holidays, and that in turn invariably led to things I loved such as tales of squirrel hunting and recollections of big snows and times of bitter cold. He talked with his hands as well as his voice, punctuating each sentence or making points of emphasis as he alternated using one hand then the other. I’m not sure he could have talked with his hands still.
- Momma’s delight in everything associated with Christmas. She had grown up extremely poor, adopted by family members, and had a youth characterized by so many moves that she was in effect rootless. When life finally became settled for her with marriage, she often declared that once she and Daddy had a home “I never wanted to move again.” At Yuletide she made up for the lack of joy in her youth. She was just like a child, and any and every present filled her with inexpressible delight. She would say “For me?” then open the gift with great care (after all there was no reason whatsoever to tear perfectly good wrapping paper; it could be recycled and used the following Christmas). You could tell she would have loved to tear into the package with abandon, and in later life, with ample support from grandchildren, she actually did so. Once the gift was open, her eyes would glitter with excitement and she’d mutter an involuntary “ooh”

with her mouth contorted with indecision—unsure whether to opt for a big smile or to make a perfect circle of surprise.

- Preparations for the holidays. This involved the whole family going out to cut a Virginia pine Daddy had already spotted during a rabbit hunt and Momma using things from nature such as galax leaves, white pine and hemlock cones, nuts, greenery from she holly trees and cedars, honey locust limbs with the thorns adorned with gum balls, mistletoe to decorate the house.
- The heavenly smell of the season—baking aromas, the spicy fragrance of evergreens used in decoration, the hearty smell of chicken, and a sort of enduring perfumery that I still associate with Christmas so strongly that it almost seems as if my olfactory glands have a memory of their own.
- Christmas Eve gift opening at the home of my paternal grandparents. The living room, with space taken up by the tree making things even more crowded, would be packed with family—assorted aunts and uncles with their offspring, cousins enough older than me to be married and have children of their own, and the folks there were never quite the same from year to year. Kinfolk living afar might or might not be present, but enough of the family lived in the little town of Bryson City to make sure there was a crowd.

It was hectic, there was always eager anticipation on the part of the kids because we never opened any presents until an uncle and aunt who had two family gatherings to attend that evening arrived. But there would be hot, spicy Russian tea and all sorts of sweets to help make the waiting a bit easier. One of my aunts would recite “Twas the Night before Christmas,” and then, if urged just a little, she would render a wonderfully scary recitation of James Whitcomb Riley’s “Little Orphant Annie.” It was realistic enough that for several years I dreaded the thought of going to bed upstairs later that night because I worried the “Gobble-uns” would get me (if you wonder why and don’t know the poem, look it up and read it).

- Our immediate family’s Christmas Day celebration. There would be more gift opening, and I could always count on certain types of presents. There was invariably a box of shotgun shells (the only time in any hunting season I had a whole box all at once—normally I bought them by the shell, which you could do at eight cents each or, if you could really splurge, you got a baker’s dozen for a dollar), almost always an item of Duxbak clothing, a fixed blade or pocket knife or other sharp-edged item (Daddy had sad memories of keen boyhood disappointment in not getting a knife and saw to it his sons and later his grandsons had no such regrets), a book or two (from boyhood I was an avid reader and I still have the first book ever given to me, a copy of Zane Grey’s *Spirit of the Border*), and the most memorable gift of all, my first shotgun. I still have it as well, a Savage Model 220A 20 gauge choked tight as Dick’s hatband.
- An afternoon hunt on Christmas Day, and it always felt good to get outside after all the frivolity and slight sense of claustrophobia that affected me when there were so many people around.
- The carefree days off from school before and after December 25. Every day, except Sundays, would be devoted to hunting or outdoor activities of some type. Daddy wouldn’t let me take the rabbit dogs out every day, wisely insisting they needed some rest, so typically some buddies and I hunted with them on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and then there would be a big hunt with adults involved on Saturday. The intervening days found me wandering, usually alone, from dawn to dusk. I’ve always been something of a misanthrope, and I treasured those days of all-purpose hunting—for squirrels, quail, the occasional grouse, and rabbits—at my own pace. If I wanted to sit on a log and think about the things boys think about, I did so. If I took a notion to see how far I could walk, I just carried a big lunch in my Duxbak jacket and set out. There were enough springs scattered around in the areas I covered to make water readily available, and strange as it may seem, I can still vividly remember numerous little tidbits of such rambles.

Usually there would be a snowfall sometime during the break, and that mean sledding, snowball fights, snow cream, and other types of fun. In my later teens, when I was on the high school basketball team, a bunch of us would also sneak into the gym, cold as a morgue though it was, and play pick-up games.

- And of course there are all the culinary memories. Merely scratching the surface of those would require a newsletter of three times the length of this one, so I'll restrict my offerings to what I recall with the greatest clarity and fondness—desserts. There were cakes, pies, and cookies seemingly without end, and they were available for at least a week before and a week after Christmas. Mind you, we had dessert of some kind with great regularity--almost all the time—at home, but the ones at Christmas were special and to some degree limited to the season. Mom's applesauce cakes, rich with raisins, black walnut kernels, and the goodness supplied not only by the applesauce but by periodic applications of a few dollops of wine or placing fresh slices of apples atop the cake, were a wonder to behold and to eat. Grandma Minnie, for her part, countered with another applesauce treat—stack cakes of seven layers with sauce made from dried apples between each layer. Both Momma and Aunt Emma fancied orange slice cakes, and Mom always had a big batch of oatmeal-raisin-black walnut cookies on hand for whenever a youngster got peckish. In the pie department Mom's pumpkin chiffon stands out, although Aunt Hildred could and did make a marvelous deep dish apple pie. Another dessert favorite, and it is one I haven't had in a 'coon's age, was a rich and moist prune cake.

[Back to Top](#)

You'll find recipes for some of these Christmas treats below, and really all that remains is for me to wish each and every one of you the best for the season. **As I have more than abundant reason to know this year, hold those you love close, cherish all that is good in your lives, and savor the moment. We never have real awareness of what lies ahead, but things such as friends, family, the good Earth, and the true meaning of Christmas and the derivation of the word, are enduring.**

RECIPES FOR SOME SEASONAL SWEETS

APPLESAUCE CAKE

If you asked me for my all-time favorite dessert, this would be my choice. Momma made it and my wife, Ann, learned from her guidance and also made it wonderfully well. I don't know that I'll ever have it again, but since I like it so much and like to think of myself as a fair-to-middlin' hand when it comes to baking, maybe I'll just whip one up for the holidays.

1 cup butter
 2 cups sugar
 4 cups flour
 1/3 cup cocoa
 4 teaspoons baking soda
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 2 teaspoons allspice
 2 cups raisins (I like yellow ones but dark ones work just as well)
 3 cups applesauce
 2 cups chopped black walnut meats
 2 teaspoons vanilla
 Pinch of salt

Cream the butter and sugar. Add applesauce and remaining ingredients a bit at a time. When everything is well blended, place in a prepared six-inch tube pan (you can use a 10-inch one but the cooking time will vary) and bake at 325 degrees for 75 minutes. Check with a toothpick and bake longer if necessary. Allow to cool completely before removing from the pan.

This is a rather dry cake but Momma resolved that either by making a buttermilk icing to top it or, and this was my preference, putting it in a cool room (our house did not have central heat so a spare bedroom or a closet in a bedroom was ideal) and "treating it occasionally with a bit of apple juice, a dollop of wine, or a layer of thinly cut apple slices.

PUMPKIN CHIFFON PIE

3 eggs
 1 cup sugar
 1 ¼ cups cooked pumpkin
 ½ cup milk
 1 tablespoon orange juice
 ½ teaspoon grated orange rind
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon nutmeg
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin
 ¼ cup cold water

Separate eggs, and to yolks add ½ cup sugar, pumpkin, milk, orange juice, orange rind, salt, and spices. Cook in double boiler until thick. Soften gelatin in cold water and add to hot pumpkin mixture. Mix thoroughly and cool. When it starts to thicken, add in egg whites which have been beaten to stiffness with remaining ½ cup of sugar. Pour over a graham cracker crust. Chill in refrigerator to allow gelatin and pie to set for three to four hours.

BLACK WALNUT POUND CAKE WITH BUTTER FROSTING

1 cup butter
 ½ cup shortening
 3 cups sugar
 6 large eggs
 3 cups sifted flour
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1 ½ cups finely chopped black walnuts
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 cup half-and-half or whole milk



Cream the butter and shortening thoroughly, gradually add sugar, creaming as you go until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each is added. In a separate bowl, sift flour and baking powder and add black walnuts. In a measuring cup, add the vanilla to the half-and-half. Add flour and walnut mixture, alternately with the half-and-half mixture and a bit at a time, to the creamed mixture. Blend and mix well (beating—at lot of it—is the secret to a good pound cake). Pour resulting batter into a prepared 10-inch tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for an hour and 15-25 minutes or until done. Cool for 10 minutes and remove from pan. Frost with Black Walnut Frosting (see following recipe).

BLACK WALNUT FROSTING

1 stick butter, melted
 1 (16-ounce) box powdered sugar
 Half-and-half or whole milk
 ¼ to ½ cup finely chopped black walnuts

Blend melted butter and powdered sugar. Add enough half-and-half to reach desired consistency. Fold in walnuts and frost cooled cake (do not put atop cake until it is fully cooled).

OATMEAL/CHOCOLATE CHIP/WALNUT COOKIES

1¼ cups softened butter
 ½ cup granulated sugar
 ¾ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1 large egg
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
3 cups quick-cooking oats
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
¾ cup black walnuts, chopped and toasted

Beat butter at medium speed with a mixer until creamy and gradually add sugars, beating well. Add egg and vanilla, beating until combined. Mix flour, baking powder, and salt and then gradually add to the butter mixture, beating until blended. Stir in oats and remaining ingredients. Drop by rounded tablespoonfuls onto baking sheets. Bake at 375 degrees for 12-15 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool cookies on baking sheets for one minute and then remove to wire racks to cool completely.

[Back to Top](#)

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