

Jim Casada Outdoors

December 2013 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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December Quotes of the Month

"Can memories be measured by gold? If so, then I am rich indeed. Who can value in gold the worth of the memory of that first grouse, of that first double, or of the day when five grouse got up from a brush pile, one after another while I, armed with a pump gun, missed them all. There are thousands of memory bonds stored in the safe-deposit box of my memory, and each has its coupon of happiness and health attached."

Burton Spiller, *Drummer in the Woods*.

"Few things are so fatal to ultimate success as an early germination of the idea that you are a 'pretty smart chap on deer.' It is almost as ruinous as the idea that you are a poet. The teachers you need are disappointment and humiliation."

T. S. Van Dyke, *The Still-Hunter*.

"Fruitless hunts are by no means a modern invention."

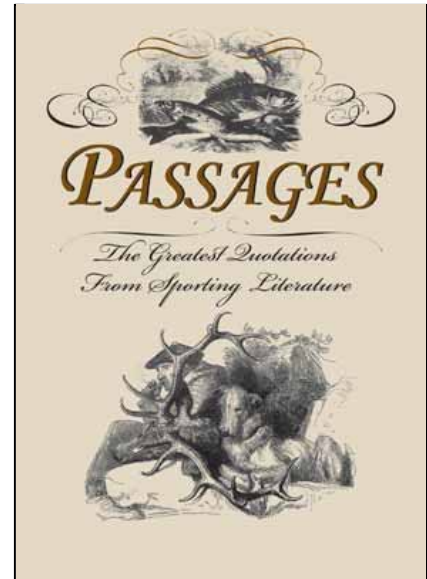
Archibald Rutledge, *Those Were the Days*.

"Hunting is like a game of chess; you can play it a million times, yet never play any two games all the way through in exactly the same way."

Archibald Rutledge, *Days Off in Dixie*.

All of these quotations come from a book I co-edited with Chuck Wechsler, *Passages*. Paperbound copies of the work, which offers hundreds upon hundreds of memorable words from great writers, are available postpaid for \$20. I also have a few of the limited, deluxe edition, which comes in hardbound form in a slipcase, for \$60. See [special offers](#) below.

Two of the quotations come from Archibald Rutledge, and see the [special offers](#) below for a perfect book for the season, *Carolina Christmas*, at a reasonable price.



A Page From My Past

A couple of weeks ago I learned of an honor connected with my past which has a great deal of meaning to me, although it has nothing to do with the normal thrust of this newsletter and probably involves a part of my life of which the majority of you were blissfully unaware.

I have been selected as one of the individuals who will be inducted into the **Winthrop University Athletic Hall of Fame**. The honor comes as recognition of the 12 years I spent as the coach of Winthrop's soccer program for men. I was the sport's first head coach, starting from scratch and leading the program from NAIA to NCAA Division II and then Division I status. In those dozen years the overall team record was 133-110-10.

I coached a number of All-Americans and was three times selected area coach of the year and once southeastern region coach of the year. It was a busy time in my life and one which gave me the opportunity to play at least a small role in shaping a lot of young lives.

Today guys who played for me are teachers and preachers, lawyers and entrepreneurs, but most of all parents and staunch citizens. In truth, the recognition derives not from my achievements or abilities as a coach but rather from having the delightful experience of dealing with scores of guys over that special time in my life.

Upcoming Appearance

I'll be at the [WNC Fly Fishing Expo](#) in the Asheville, N.C. area this coming weekend (Dec. 6 and 7). The event is held at the WNC Fairgrounds off I-26 just a few miles east of Asheville near the airport.

I'll have a booth offering books I have written as well as a stock of out-of-print works on angling and the Smokies, and I'll be conducting a seminar each day on fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

I hope to shake and howdy with some readers who live in the area.



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SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFERS

Christmas Time's A-Coming

Offer #1

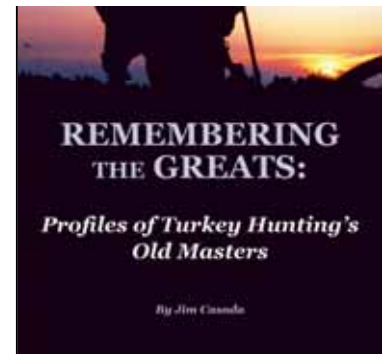
Collection of Five Turkey Hunting Books

If you are looking for a truly special gift for your turkey-hunting spouse, father, or good friend, my first offer incorporates **five books on America's greatest**



game bird which I have written, edited, or contributed to in a significant fashion. They are:

- *Innovative Turkey Hunting*
- *Remembering the Greats: Profiles of Turkey Hunting's Old Masters*
- *The Literature of Turkey Hunting: An Annotated Bibliography and random Scribblings from a Sporting Bibliophile*
- *The Turkey Hunters*
- *The Realtree Turkey Hunting Fieldbook*



The total retail of these books runs over \$200, and one of the books, *The Literature of Turkey Hunting*, is a limited, number edition of only 750 copies.

I'm offering the lot, postpaid, for \$125, and I'll gladly sign and inscribe.

[Add to Cart](#)

Offer #2

Marksmanship Primer

I've managed to procure a goodly stock of extra or surplus copies of a book I edited and compiled, *The Marksmanship Primer*. Its small format makes the book, which is filled with dozens of informative pieces on rifle and pistol marksmanship, an ideal stocking stuffer.

I'll send it along, postage paid, for only \$12.50. Again, I'll gladly sign and inscribe copies.

[Add to Cart](#)

Offer #3

Cookbooks

Cookbooks are always a welcome gift, and I'm offering three different ones at most attractive prices. These are:

- *The Complete Venison Cookbook* (\$12)

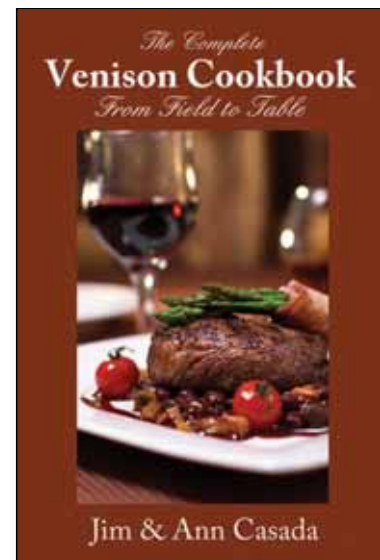
[Add to Cart](#)

- *Wild Fare & Wise Words* (\$10)

[Add to Cart](#)

- *The Remington Cookbook* (\$12)

[Add to Cart](#)



I'll send any (or all) of these postpaid, and the reduction from the normal price is a good one.

Offer #4

Carolina Christmas

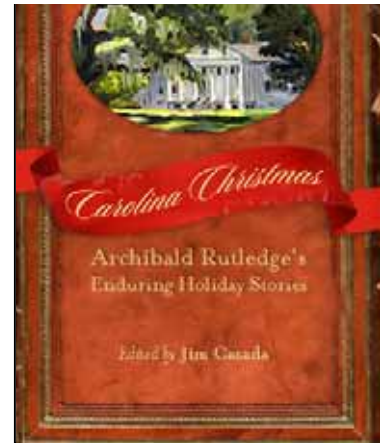


Archibald Rutledge was a great and prolific writer, and a goodly measure of his literary treasure revolved around his beloved Christmas hunts and related activities at Hampton Plantation. He returned there annually during the holiday season when he was teaching at Mercersburg Academy in Pennsylvania, and the joy of the experience almost sings in his prose.

I brought some of the finest of his Yuletide yearnings together in *Carolina Christmas*. It's a hardbound book with what I consider a striking dust jacket (I had nothing to do with its conception but applaud the folks at USC Press who did).

Copies are \$30 and I'll pay the postage.

[Add to Cart](#)



Finally, if you want some simple reading to do in a spare moment or two, at bedside, or for inspiration, consider *Passages*, a collection of quotations from 30 years of issues of *Sporting Classics* magazines and the greatest sporting writers of all time.

I co-edited the book and wrote the Introduction to it. Just \$20 and I'll pay the postage, or I have a few of the limited edition, slipcased, numbered version at \$60 postpaid.

[Add to Cart](#) \$20

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You can order online now by using the "Add to Cart" buttons above, or just send a check to me c/o 1250 Yorkdale Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

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December Delights—Then and Now

The Christmas season loomed mighty large in my boyhood growing up in the Smokies. It wasn't so much the anticipation of presents, the promise of festive food, frenzied shopping, or things so characteristic of the holiday in today's world which gave Yuletide its importance in a mountain boy's mind. Rather, it was the aura of the season and the way it was celebrated. Looking back, I find myself hard put to capture the many-sided essence of Christmas as I knew it, but perhaps touching on some of the things which run warmly and wondrously through the corridors of my memory will convey something of the season's joys. One thing is certain—they have endured and remain as important to me today as they did well over a half century ago. Here, in random order as they come to mind, are some of the things which made Christmas so significant in my youthful years.

* Getting two full weeks of vacation from school. It wasn't so much the freedom from classrooms and homework assignments which captivated me. Rather, it was the opportunities that freedom provided. I could hunt every day, although Daddy had some strict rules about no overworking our beagles. That meant only three outs a week with them, one of which would come on Saturday when the adults were off from work and the whole party could venture farther afield. The rest of the time hunting, usually with a bevy of buddies but sometimes just my canine companions and me, was confined in a geographical sense to areas within walking distance.

* The delights associated with procuring materials from nature for household decorations. In our house these included mistletoe, white pine cones, small limbs from honey locust trees, hemlock boughs, galax leaves, running cedar, and of course a Christmas tree cut from the wilds. I particularly

enjoyed gathering mistletoe, since it involved precarious climbs high up in trees or, more frequently, some target practice with a .22. Also, on a few occasions, I was able to sell mistletoe for some most welcome cash money. The white pine cones, along with various nuts, nut hulls, smaller pine cones, sycamore balls, and the like were used by Mom to fashion wreathes, table centerpieces, and the like. Similarly, she would decorate each thorn on the honey locust limbs with a sugar-coated gumball and dare any of her offspring to eat it. The galax leaves and running cedar were used on the mantle, in wreathes, and other ways. We didn't buy much but found plenty of lovely, colorful decorative material provided by the good earth.

* The family Christmas tree was always special. Daddy would have been scouting for one from sometime back in the opening days of squirrel season, and his search became more serious as rabbit season opened and the year moved into December. Nothing but a shapely Virginia pine would do. He reckoned cedar to be too prickly, whereas a pine was easy to work with and lent itself to a bit of careful reshaping if need be. The actual tree cutting always came on a Sunday afternoon and involved the whole family. We would set out to the place where Daddy had picked out a tree, cut it, and put it in the trunk of the car with considerable ceremony.

* Decorating the tree was also a family effort. Daddy got it set up, reshaped or "fixed" it as he thought necessary, and then left things to Mom, my brother and sister, and me. Over the years we made all sorts of decorations by hand—strings of popcorn, sometimes mixed with cranberries for a bit of added color, as garlands; colorful loops of construction paper clued and linked, one by one, to make long garlands; sticky popcorn balls; and more. Mixed with some electric lights and carefully preserved ornaments, they produced a striking effect.

* Mom's great delight with everything connected with the season. She had grown up poor and with a troubled childhood which saw her parents separated, her being adopted in less than ideal circumstances, and a peripatetic life which gave her little chance to establish roots or be loved. She never said much about it, but I suspect that her Christmas experiences as a girl were less than memorable. Indeed, the fact she said so little about them is quite suggestive. Maybe that explains why she was as excited as any child when Yuletide rolled around. Wide-eyed with excitement, she would shake packages, wonder aloud "Now what could that be?," and on Christmas Day mutter time and again, "I can't believe I'm so lucky. This has to be the best Christmas ever." She also took the family penchant for gag gifts in good stride, laughing heartily at pranks pulled on others—such as Daddy getting a pair of Mickey Mouse underwear or a Sammy Davis, Jr. tape (he detested the man) or yours truly receiving a primitive fire starter rig from a nephew as a reminder of a time I went camping without any matches. But she was equally good natured when the joke was on her. My favorite was when she received a box full of dried beans with the accompanying description, "Smoky Mountain Bubble Bath," from my brother and his family.

* Daddy's oft-told and heartbreaking story of the Christmas when he was a small boy who desperately wanted a pocket knife. He received one, but it was only a hard candy replica. His parents simply did not have enough money, especially with nine children in the house, to buy the real McCoy. It clearly tugged at Daddy's soul, and he made sure, Christmas after Christmas, that first his sons and later his grandsons received knives. He did not want any of them to be without the cherished tool he failed to get when he was a youngster.

* Grandpa Joe's tales of Christmas and his celebration of the season. My paternal grandfather was a decidedly peculiar man. He could not and would not endure any type of supervision while he worked, never mind that he was in no way shy of an honest day's labor. As a result he tended to do subsistence farming, the occasional job (pruning orchards was one which comes to mind) where he could work by himself, and be consistently short of ready cash. Yet he could enchant with stories of money earned from gathering American chestnuts for sale or gallackin', kept me constantly in a state of wonder with recollections of December hunts from long ago, and particularly enthralled me when he told of killing a cougar on one occasion. He was also a great one for setting rabbit gums in

the Christmas season, and together we cobbled together many of them from scrap wood or hollow sections of logs.

* Foods of the season. This was the only time of the year for treats such as ambrosia, a whopping five-pound white fruit cake Daddy always got from the plant where he worked, and some canned white peaches which were so delectable that I wish, time and again, I knew how to locate them today. Mainly though, it is recollections of home cooking which run through my mind. During Christmas season and New Year's we had a lot of pork—canned sausage, cracklin' cornbread, leather britches beans cooked with streaked meat, turnip greens with bits of turnips cooked with streaked meat, and the special treat provided by cured ham. The latter was a delicacy with lots of culinary ramifications. Among them were redeye gravy, ham biscuits, fried ham and eggs, diced ham and potatoes, and big slabs of ham served as a main dish. Of course for Christmas Day all the cooks in the family outdid themselves, and there were a bunch of dandy ones. Grandma Minnie ruled supreme, but Aunt Emma, Aunt Hildred, any visiting aunts who lived out of town, and of course Momma did their part. Samples of some of their Christmas fare are given in recipes below.

* Innocent pleasures associated with the season were always important to me. They included sledding any time there was a snow, and when snow was lacking you could still get a fine ride on a broom sedge hillside where the sedge had been dried by the winter sun. Such rides were usually taken on large sheets of cardboard, which meant you had no steering control whatsoever. Another pastime was "skating" on frozen ponds. We didn't have skates but shoes with leather bottoms worked quite well. I have bittersweet memories about that particular type of play, because a friend pushed me from behind on one such occasion and my face met the ice without my arms doing anything to ease the fall. It caved in my four upper front teeth and has resulted in all sorts of dental problems over the years since then (root canals, additions to the base, etc.).

* Christmas Eve family gatherings at Grandma and Grandpa Casada's house. We would leave home shortly after dusk for the brief drive (perhaps a mile or slightly more) to the home of my paternal grandparents. However, prior to reaching our destination we would take a tour around the little town of Bryson City and into some of the outlying neighborhoods to look at Christmas lights and decorations. Daddy would have the radio playing, and if by happy good fortune Bing Crosby's rendition of "White Christmas" came on, Momma would be delighted. It was her favorite non-spiritual song of the season.

Once we arrived the living room would be crowded with a host of aunts and uncles, first and second cousins, and maybe a guest or two. At some point fairly early on, while we waited for Uncle Hall and Aunt Hildred, who had two family visits to make and as a result always ran late, Aunt Emma would recite all of James Whitcomb Riley's poem, "Little Orphan Annie." Then she'd ask the kids to join in and help her with Clement Moore's timeless classic, "Twas the Night Before Christmas." Once that was out of the way, with anxious kids awaiting the beginning of present opening, Grandpa would distribute his gifts. Cost-wise they weren't much, and Grandma, who could be a bit of a termagant at times, would fuss about hard candy coming from coat pockets or socks which didn't always fit. For my part though, it was the thought that counted, and Grandpa Joe, whatever his faults, was a giving man

Once the presents had all been opened (the adults drew names while the kids got gifts from all their aunts and uncles), it would be time for some serious dessert. Various cakes and cookies, along with fruits of the season, entered into the picture, all of it washed down with steaming cups of Russian tea. Grandpa Joe, who pronounced it "Rooshan" and probably had no idea that Russia was a country, much less where it might be located, would smack his lips with pure delight. It was one of his favorite drinks, and Mom always saw to it that he had plenty of the brew for the holiday season (her recipe appears below).

I do have one early Christmas Eve memory to accompany those which stretched over the better part of two decades. At the age of six I discovered, or more accurately I guess the adults did, that I had

been blessed with a first-rate case of chicken pox on December 24. I don't recall the subsequent period of itching and discomfort, but right now I have a prescription for a shingles shot to be taken in the coming weeks which will be a reminder dating back well over six decades.

* Solitary hunts. I mentioned freedom to hunt at the outset, and I enjoyed every outing during the Christmas season to the fullest. Strangely though, and maybe this is an index to the degree to which I am a misanthrope, some of my fondest memories are of outings by myself, with nothing but a couple of canine companions for company. I could walk all day without really thinking about it, and a Duxbak jacket carrying a hearty lunch, my trusty single-shot 20 gauge, and that most precious of ingredients, time, were all I needed. There was a covey of quail near the house which I could almost always flush. Not that it usually made much difference, because that 20 gauge was choked tight as a miser's purse and my wingshooting skills were indifferent at best. Squirrels were another story, and woe be unto one which happened to let me catch sight of it. Rabbits were, of course, my primary prey, and a day which found one in the game bag was a success, while two or more cottontails was something for the memory banks. It's surprisingly difficult for a lone hunter to get a shot at a circling rabbit being chased by dogs, and more often than not I'd miss opportunities on "the jump." Seldom did I come home completely empty-handed though, and when the game bag bulged I always knew that Momma, who was one of those gracious souls who invariably said the right words at the right time, would brag on me a bit. My did I ever cherish such moments.

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A Sampling of Christmas Recipes: The Bounty of Black Walnuts

Black walnuts always figured prominently in our Yuletide foodstuffs. We would have gathered a bunch of nuts in late October and November, and well before Christmas the family would have cracked and shelled enough nutmeats for Mom to work her kitchen magic. I plan to devote more coverage to gathering, storing, cracking and shelling the nuts in my newsletter for mid-December. In my family, as was true for many others in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, black walnuts were rightly viewed as a gift from the good earth which no self-respecting person with a decent degree of gumption would overlook. For now though, here are several recipes using black walnuts, although the first one did not come from Mom.

NUTTY SPREAD

1/3 cup softened butter
 3 ounces softened cream cheese
 1 cup finely chopped black walnuts
 1 tablespoon of honey
 ¼ teaspoon of salt (or to taste)

Cream butter and cheese together. Add finely chopped nuts, honey, and salt. Serve as a spread for bagels, biscuits, or crackers.

CHRISTMAS FUDGE

I don't recall Momma ever making fudge except at Christmas, although she may have done so. Also, I don't think Grandma Minnie ever made it, one of the relatively few desserts she didn't produce at holiday time.

½ pound butter (no substitutes—a comment sure to please one reader who rightly chastised me for mentioning margarine as a substitute in another recipe)

1 thirteen-ounce can evaporated milk
 5 cups sugar
 2 twelve-ounce packages semi-sweet chocolate morsels

1 seven-ounce jar marshmallow cream
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 2 cups chopped black walnuts

Melt butter in a large saucepan and add milk. Stir to blend well, add sugar, stir constantly, and bring to a boil. Boil vigorously for eight minutes, stirring constantly; remove from heat. Add chocolate morsels and beat until chocolate is melted. Add marshmallow cream and beat until well blended and melted. Add vanilla and chopped nuts; blend well. Pour into 12 x 7 x 2-inch buttered pan. Cool at least six hours before cutting into squares and storing in air-tight containers.

APPLESAUCE CAKE

Simple mention of this recipe leaves me a bit teary-eyed and choked up for the simple reason it was THE staple of Christmas desserts in my youth. To make the emotions even more poignant, when my wife dug the recipe out from the array of boxes which are scattered around our kitchen, it had been typed by Momma on her old manual typewriter with the telltale blurred a and s letters. Seeing that typed 3 x 5 card, with Mom's pen notations added, brought back a flood of memories. She always made applesauce cakes, a whole batch of them, on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. That was a day we always went rabbit hunting, and the night before Mom would say something to the effect of "once I get all you men folks out of my hair and out of the way, I can do some serious cooking." By the time we returned in the gloaming, tired and usually with a bunch of rabbits to be dressed (I was "privileged" to get to do all the cleaning, although in truth there's not much to working up cottontails), she would have a bunch of cakes baked.

They were stored away on the open porch or maybe in the downstairs bedroom (if it wasn't in use, which was the case before my brother was born 10 years after me). The first slice would not be cut until close to Christmas. Meanwhile, Momma would periodically give the cakes a bit of a soaking with red wine to keep them moist. Indeed, my wife seems to think that at some point Mom made the wine she used. I don't recall that (although I do know it wasn't "store bought" wine, but it would be in character, because there was much in the culinary line she wasn't willing to experiment with or try. At any rate, this is one of my all-time favorite desserts.

1 cup butter
 2 cups sugar
 4 cups flour
 1/3 cup cocoa
 4 teaspoons baking soda
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 2 teaspoons all-spice
 2 cups raisins (Mom sometimes used a cup each of white and dark raisins)
 3 cups applesauce
 2 cups black walnut meats
 2 teaspoons vanilla
 Pinch of salt

Cream butter and sugar. Add applesauce and remaining ingredients a small amount at a time.

Bake at 350 degrees for approximately minutes and check for doneness with a toothpick. Bake longer if needed.

BLACK WALNUT POUND CAKE

While this walnut pound cake recipe is a dandy that I thoroughly enjoy on those rare occasions when I can convince my long-suffering wife that, waist size notwithstanding, I need to consume, I must confess it is not my all-time favorite. That recipe is, alas, lost forever. There was a wonderful black lady, Beulah Suddreth, who was a family friend and community icon in the little mountain town where I grew up for many decades. After Mom died, she did quite a bit of house work—ironing, an occasional through cleaning of the house, and other chores—for Dad. Also, her visits to work lifted his spirits immeasurably, because she had a way of dispelling

loneliness while dispensing good cheer anytime she was around. She also happened to make a walnut pound cake which was so toothsome that Daddy felt like there was a crisis any time there wasn't at least one of them, and preferably two, in the freezer. Sadly, although I'm sure she would have shared the recipe, none of us had the foresight to ask for it, and when she died, none of her relatives seemed able to come up with it.

Still, the recipe given here was long a favorite at Casada family reunions, and it comes from the kitchen of a deceased cousin, Frankie Ledford, who could be counted on to have one on prominent display at the annual family gatherings in late July. I would note that it tends to be a slightly dry cake—just the kind to be enjoyed with a cold glass of milk.

Cake

2 sticks (half pound) unsalted butter
 ½ cup solid shortening (Crisco)
 3 cups sugar
 6 eggs
 3 cups sifted all-purpose flour
 1 cup half-and-half (or try substituting 8 ounces of sour cream for a bit more moistness)
 1 ½ cup chopped black walnuts
 1 teaspoon vanilla

Cream margarine and shortening thoroughly and beat well. Add sugar and cream until smooth and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time and beat well after each addition, adding vanilla with last egg. Sift flour and add chopped black walnuts to the flour. Add flour and walnut mixture alternately with half-and-half to creamed mixture. Blend and mix well (beating well is the secret to a good pound cake). Pour into a greased and floured 10-inch tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for an hour and 25 minutes or until done (do not preheat oven). Cool for 10 minutes and remove from pan.

Black Walnut Icing

1 stick melted butter
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 box confectioner's sugar
 Half-and-half milk
 ½ cup chopped black walnuts

Blend melted butter and confectioner's sugar. Add enough half-and-half to reach correct consistency and stir in vanilla. When the right consistency is reached, stir in walnuts and frost the cake. Reserve some kernels to sprinkle atop the completed cake.

BLACK WALNUT BARS

This was a sweet I could eat until fit to pop, and a bar or two was never anywhere near enough. It's a recipe I've shared before, but in keeping with the black walnut theme, here it is once more.

Crust

½ cup butter
 ½ cup packed brown sugar
 1 cup flour

Filling

1 cup brown sugar
 2 eggs, beaten
 ¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla
 2 teaspoons flour
 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 1 ½ cups shredded coconut
 1 cup chopped black walnuts

For crust, cream butter and brown sugar, then slowly add flour and mix until crumbly. Pat into 7 x 11-inch baking dish. Bake for 8-10 minutes at 350 degrees until golden.

For filling, combine brown sugar, eggs, salt and vanilla. In a separate bowl, add flour and baking powder to coconut and walnuts. Blend into egg mixture and pour over baked crust. Return to oven and bake for an additional 15-20 minutes or until done. Cut into bars and place on wire racks to cool.

RUSSIAN TEA

Momma always made a big batch, or maybe two or three of them, of this seasonal delight. It was served at family gatherings, to visitors who just happened to drop by, at church functions, and just as a refreshing hot drink on a cold winter's day.

½ teaspoon cloves
 1 cup sugar
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 1 gallon water
 1 tall can orange juice concentrate
 Extra sugar if desired

Bring these ingredients to a boil and continue for five minutes. Then add:

4 tea bags steeped in a pint of boiling water for five minutes.
 ¾ cup fresh lemon juice
 1 tall can pineapple juice
 1 quarter apple cider (optional)
 1 ½ cup fresh orange juice

The quantities of juice can be varied if you prefer one taste to another. This recipe will make 20 generous helpings, and leftovers and be stored in the refrigerator and reheated as desired.

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