

'Taste of 'heaven' revives memories of days gone by

By Karen Danielson / April 22, 2006

Mom's Heavenly Salad ~ from the recipe files of Cass Kerr

1-8 1/4 oz. can of pineapple chunks, drained, reserving 1 T. of the juice for later use
1-11 oz. can Mandarin orange slices, drained
2 dashes salt
1 C. flaked coconut
1 C. sour cream
1 C. miniature marshmallows
1/4 C. sliced maraschino cherries
2 T. maraschino cherry juice
1/2 tsp. almond extract
2 T. thin-sliced almonds, toasted, for garnish, if desired

Place the above ingredients, except for almonds, into a medium-sized bowl. Add the 1 T. of reserved pineapple juice and using spatula, fold the ingredients together, thoroughly. Cover and allow to chill in refrigerator for at least 2 hours but overnight is better, as the consistency of the salad becomes creamier the longer it sits, and the sweetness of the coconut and marshmallows has time to infuse through the entire salad.

This salad was one of my childhood favorites. The only time my mother served it was for Easter, and I think the addition of the maraschino cherry juice was her own addition as it added a pretty pink color and gave the salad more of a festive look. I think she may have gotten the recipe from her sister Marge, because whenever Aunt Marge was around when my mom served the salad, Aunt Marge would say "What have you done to my salad now?" referring to the pink color!

The memory of this salad had managed to slip away over the years until a few weeks ago when I was starting to do my "spring thing" and started cleaning out a few closets and kitchen drawers. In one drawer I found this yellowed sheet of paper. It had become wedged behind the drawer and was shoved way back against the wall of the cupboard. When I got it out, I immediately recognized my mother's hand-writing. The moment I saw that paper, I took an audible gasp for breath, a lump immediately formed in my throat and my eyes instantly became brimmed with tears. It was a jolt coming right from the past.

My mother has been dead since 1966. How could someone be gone for so long and yet the writing on this paper looked like it could have been done just yesterday? It's ironic that I stumbled across this recipe just a few days before Easter. Remembering that this was the salad that was one of my childhood favorites, I decided right then and there that this salad was going to be on MY Easter dinner table this year! The salad was still as good as I remembered it to be, and I was momentarily transferred back in time. For a fleeting moment I thought I should be running out back to bring in an armload of wood for the woodstove, before I started hunting for my Easter basket!

I still retain some of the old habits that were in-grained into me when I was a young girl. Spring was the time of year when you had to start cleaning all the coal dust and wood smoke residue off of the windows, wallpaper and furniture.

There was some kind of wallpaper cleaner that resembled Silly Putty. You would grab a ball of it in your hand and then roll it over the wallpaper and it would take dirt and grime off the wall paper, much like Silly Putty will pick up cartoons from a newspaper. Sounds to me like it could have been the same thing as Silly Putty and when it was no longer needed to be used as wallpaper cleaner, they just re-named it and kept it going! All of that deep-cleaning is one "spring" ritual that I don't miss, and I am glad that we no longer have to have wood-burners and coal stoves as our major heat sources. Gas and oil-furnaces provide much cleaner heat.

I remember my Aunt Katy (she hated housework anyway) used to drape all her parlor furniture with sheets and then close the parlor off from the rest of the house for the entire winter. Memories are wonderful, if they are good ones, and they also serve a purpose. They are gentle reminders, when you become old enough, of the way things used to be and therefore make you grateful for the many blessings you have today.

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