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Feb-Mar 2016

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Dearest Readers,

Our cover for this issue beautifully portrays Winter and all of its’ magic. It just reminds me of all the things I love about it, sledding, skating, tobogganing, and of course, hockey out on the ice! There’s even skiing or snow boarding for those of us who are more adventurous, certainly more adventurous than me!

Making snow angels and having snow ball fights with my nieces and nephews brings me back to my own childhood every single year!

As active as Winter can be, I also love being able to just slow down enough to watch the snow fall...so serene, so peaceful, hot cocoa in front of fire and cuddled up to my honey.

Yet as wonderful as winter is, I still find myself counting the days to Spring! The milestones are definitely coming, St.Valentine’s Day, is just around the corner, a few warmer days will start sprinkling into the Winter mix a little more often. Before you know it, it will be the first day of Spring, and then Easter right after that!

I hope that you, my dear reader, are enjoying this season as much as I am.

As always, thank you for your support and readership. Without you we would not be here!

And remember, say you saw it in the Country Register!

Warmest regards,

Harriet

In this Issue

About Our Cover Art 3, 4

Free Patterns 14, 15, 19

Feature Story 5, 25

Recipes..... 6, 7, 10, 23, 27

Special Events 4

Our Search for Cover Artwork –

Across Canada and the U.S, you can always tell *The Country Register* by it’s cover. Our publishers seek to find cover art or photos from the province/state the paper represents. To that end, we are seeking the work of artists from Ontario to feature on our covers. The art must be in good taste and consistent with the theme of the papers.

If you would like your work to be considered, please send an email indicating your interest to OntarioCountryRegister@gmail.com

**Meet our cover artist:
Elena Khomoutova**



This issue’s beautiful cover art entitled, “Festive Ottawa”, perfectly captures how beautiful winter can be in Canada’s capital city, especially during the yearly Winterlude Festival. The mood, energy and life of this time of year have been beautifully recreated by our cover artist, Ottawa resident, Elena Khomoutova.

Elena’s original art works and limited edition canvas and paper art prints hang in private and corporate collections in many countries including Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, China, Cyprus, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, UK, USA and other countries. UNICEF and other publishers have printed millions of Elena’s art cards and distributed them in more than 60 countries around the world. At one point, Elena was even the official artist for the Ottawa Senators! A prolific artist indeed!

Elena was born in 1960, in Moscow, Russia, where her love affair with painting started at the very early age of six. Knowing what she wanted to do with her life, Elena grew up and attended Moscow University for five years, where she completed her studies in Fine Arts in 1985. After leaving university, she illustrated many books and journals for a publishing house.

As a “thirty-something” adult, Elena moved to Ottawa in 1992, where she still resides today. Her 24 years in Canada have brought her to truly appreciate Canada’s natural beauty, and the kindness of her people.

In fact, many ideas for her art works were inspired by discussions with her husband Alexander and this deep appreciation of Canada. Elena is also quick to note that her budgie Gosha has a very artistic spirit too! He is often sitting on Elena’s shoulder and singing or talking when she is painting and giving her a lot of inspiration as well.



from our cover Festive Ottawa

(read more about our cover artist on p. 4)



Calendar of Events

..... ONGOING

NOVEMBER 1, 2015 - FEBRUARY 16: Stitched Together: The Art and Warmth of Quilts, Brampton

JANUARY 29 - FEB 15, 2016: Winterlude, Ottawa-Gatineau

JANUARY 30, 2016: Polar Bear Plunge / Winter Festival, Campbellford

JANUARY 30, 2016: Cross Country Family Ski Day at the Ganaraska Forest, Port Hope

..... FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 03 - FEB 06, 2016: Laugh Out Loud Sudbury Comedy Festival, Sudbury

FEBRUARY 04 - FEB 07, 2016: Feb Fest, Kingston

FEBRUARY 04 - FEB 07, 2016: Td Ottawa Jazz Festival Winter 2016, Ottawa

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 07, 2016: Winterama, Stayner

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 07, 2016: La Magie des Glaces, Hearst

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 14, 2016: Bon Soo Winter Carnival, Sault Ste. Marie

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 15, 2016: Cochrane Winter Carnival, Cochrane

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 07, 2016: Town of Midland Winterfest, Midland

FEBRUARY 05 - FEB 07, 2016: Kuumba, Toronto

FEBRUARY 06 - FEB 07, 2016: Ganaraska Railway Modellers Annual Model Railway Show, Port Hope

FEBRUARY 06, 2016: Winterfest, Newmarket

FEBRUARY 11 - FEB 28, 2016: 2016 Kirkland Lake Winter Carnival, Kirkland Lake

FEBRUARY 12 - FEB 15, 2016: Snowman Mania, Wasaga Beach

FEBRUARY 12 - FEB 14, 2016: South Porcupine Winter Carnival, Timmins

FEBRUARY 12 - FEB 13, 2016: Winter Brewfest, Ottawa

FEBRUARY 13, 2016: St. Valentine, Sault Ste. Marie

FEBRUARY 13 - FEB 15, 2016: Hamilton Kids-Fest, Hamilton

FEBRUARY 13 - FEB 15, 2016: Family Day Weekend, Blue Mountains

FEBRUARY 13, 2016: Winter In The Wild @ Algonquin Provincial Park, Algonquin Park

FEBRUARY 13, 2016: Snow Day - Dinner by the Fire, Pontypool

FEBRUARY 14, 2016: Friends Of Music Present The Xia Quartet, Port Hope

FEBRUARY 15, 2016: Braden's Hot Chocolate Festival, Dundas

FEBRUARY 15, 2016: Arctic Adventure, Aurora

FEBRUARY 15, 2016: Selkirk Heritage Day, Selkirk

FEBRUARY 15, 2016: Family Day in Cobourg, Cobourg

FEBRUARY 15, 2016: SnowDay, Thunder Bay

FEBRUARY 16, 2016: Family Day, Bradford

..... MARCH

MARCH 02 - MAR 04, 2016: Dare 2B Different - 2016 FEO Annual Conference, Markham

MARCH 02 - MAR 04, 2016: London Farm Show, London

MARCH 03 - MAR 05, 2016: Kitchener-Waterloo Comedy Festival

MARCH 04 - MAR 06, 2016: Greater Hamilton Home & Garden Show, Hamilton

MARCH 05 - MAR 27, 2016: Bronte Creek Maple Syrup Festival - Bronte Creek Provincial Park, Oakville

MARCH 05, 2016: 39th Annual Sleeping Giant Loppet, Pass Lake

MARCH 05 - APR 04, 2016: TRCA Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival, Vaughan

MARCH 11 - MAR 13, 2016: Muskoka Arts & Crafts 38th Annual Spring Members' Show, Bracebridge

MARCH 11 - MAR 20, 2016: Canada Blooms: The Flower and Garden Festival, Toronto

MARCH 12 - MAR 20, 2016: March Break at Blue Mountain, Blue Mountains

MARCH 12, 2016: Southwestern Ontario Pet Expo, Chatham

MARCH 12 - MAR 13, 2016: 30th Annual Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival, Warkworth

MARCH 12 - AUG 21, 2016: Portals, Kitchener

MARCH 12 - MAR 13, 2016: London Golf Show and Sale, London

MARCH 12 - MAR 13, 2016: Norfolk Wildlife Festival & Adventure Show, Simcoe

MARCH 19 - MAR 20, 2016: Speed & Custom Car Show, London

MARCH 20, 2016: Friends Of Music Present, Cheng2 Duo", Port Hope

MARCH 25 - MAR 28, 2016: Easter Weekend, Blue Mountains

MARCH 25 - MAR 27, 2016: All Equine Show, London

MARCH 26, 2016: Easter Eggstravaganza, Wasaga Beach

MARCH 26, 2016: Easter Bunny Train, St. Jacobs

MARCH 26, 2016: Maple Syrup day at the Ganaraska Forest Centre, Port Hope

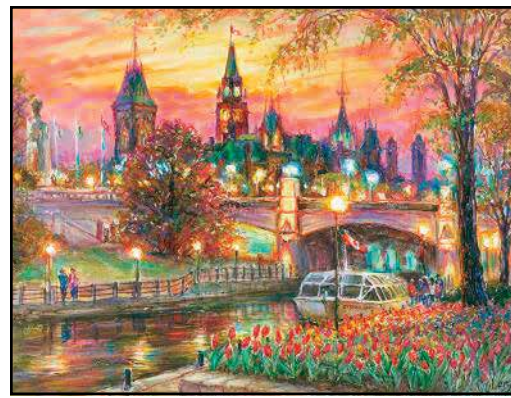
MARCH 29 - MAY 19, 2016: Springlicious at Blue Mountain, Town of Blue Mountains

..... APRIL

APRIL 22 - APRIL 23, 2016: Creativ Festival, Mississauga

APRIL 30 - MAY 1 2016: A Tale of Flowers Quilt Show, Dryden Fairgrounds

(cover artist continued from p. 3)



Ottawa Boat fun art painting 18x24 ab

To show her appreciation for her "team", her signature has a capital letter "A" at the end for Alexander, and a wing for Gosha.

Elena's art work is also a reflection of her belief that art has the power to enhance your life in so many ways. She tells us, "Spiritual Metaphysical Energy Art will help you to unlock your amazing power within to achieve what you want!" She also explained the guiding concept of "Light Art" that touches and influences her work, she explains,

"...Light Art is a very powerful tool for your spiritual growth and life enhancement, especially when used according to Feng Shui principles... We create artwork to bring Good Luck, Success, Rejuvenation and healing to you. Some artworks are designed for Meditation & Spiritual Evolverment. Many people felt a peaceful sense of well-being, happiness and empowerment emanating from our paintings."

So, do you want more Good Luck, Happiness, Prosperity, Love, Healing, Slow Aging and... ? Then you are at the right place, at the right time. Check out Elena's, and Alexander's great body of art work at www.LightFromArt.com (or you can follow them on Facebook too) and enjoy!

Thank you Elena, we truly appreciate your contribution to our paper, and to Ontario!



Light of Love heart spiritual feng shui metaphysical art painting

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V.B. SIMKINS SEWING MACHINES

Established in 1863 and located in the Kingston area of Eastern Ontario, V.B. Simkins Sewing Machines is Canada's oldest sewing machine store.

3rd generation owner, Eric B. Simkins has been involved "hands on" in the family business since he was 9 years old!

Describing his business, Eric tells us, "We rely on Integrity, and customer satisfaction to get the job done. In addition to selling new sewing machines and servicing them, we supply parts, and accessories, for all makes and models of sewing machines, and sergers." Sewing machines is what they do, it is all that they do. They have been doing it for more than 150 years! Wow. Looks like they got it right.

V.B. Simkins also gives back to its' local community and beyond. Eric explains, "We also perform machine repairs for MATE- a non-profit organization that sends equipment such as sewing machines to the needy in third-world countries." What a great cause. It's so easy to take what we have for granted until we are reminded. Well done Eric!

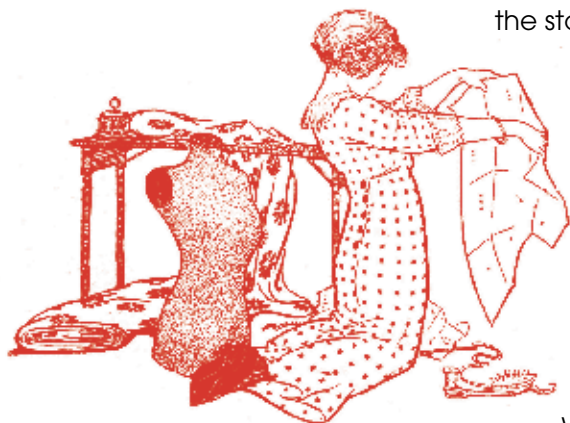
But wait, there's more, Eric adds, "We have sponsored many local community and International events during our 150 years of operation, most notably the 1999-2010 Kingston Exhibitions, 2007-2012 Limestone Skills Competition, and the 1998, 2003, 2008 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo."

V.B. Simkins Sewing Machines has also supported a number of community projects and organizations, including the Kingston Townsmen Chorus and the re-building of the children's playground at Central Public School.

We now know that Eric is a solid businessman running a solid, successful and well trusted business, or in other words, a business institution that is an important part of the community.

What we don't know yet, and what I'd like to share with you now, is how it all happened.

Below is the very interesting history of V.B. Simkins Sewing Machines as written by Ivon Simkins (1920-2004), the youngest son of the founder. This story can also found on the store's website in his memory.



The Story of Simkins Sewing by Ivon Simkins

In 1862, M.W. Simkins at age 19 left the farm to seek fame and fortune. Arriving in Kingston, he saw a Toronto ad in the British Whig, seeking a salesman for the Kingston area. With only \$4.50 in his pocket, and only enough education to read and write his name, he took the chance. He rode in the dark, in the "hold" in the ship to Toronto, as freight, for only \$1.50. Though he had never traveled in any city, he located the



address of the advertisement, and was given the job, and a hand-operated sewing machine, for demonstration.

His convincing sales pitch of the household need for such a marvel in the home that he was soon a very busy man. He was never satisfied with the status-quo, and was soon buying and selling sewing machines, and was soon known as "The Great Sewing Machine Man". He opened a sewing machine store at 9 Montreal Street in 1866, and later as the city expanded west, he moved to 366 Princess street. He had already purchased a large building lot in the village of Newburgh. As soon as his finances permitted, he was building a large home, complete with showroom and repair shop. Having never been inclined to borrow money, the big 12 room house and business was built in stages and was finished in 1875.

He married the first time in 1870, but illness of his wife took her life in 1889.

He forged on alone for 4 years, and was married the second time in 1898.

From 1866 to 1867, he hired a trusted friend to keep his Kingston operation running, while he served in the militia during the year of the Fenian raid from the Americans.

M.W. Simkins had already become a trusted and prominent business man, and was one of the key rebuilders of the village of Newburgh after the fire of 1887, that destroyed over 30 buildings in the little town.

The second marriage berthed a family of 4, 1 daughter, and 3 sons. As the originator Miles Wesley Simkins enjoyed the best of health, until a stroke took him at age 93 in 1936.

Though both older sons were employed in the two stores in the village, they continued repairing sewing machines, and the second son, Vernon B., sold a few machines as well, and the sewing business continued. In 1937, the two older sons formed a partnership and bought a grocery store that came available, and expanded it into a general store operation, including the sewing machine sales and service.

In 1957, Some 20 years later, all three brothers split up, and went their separate ways. Hubert the oldest son stayed with the General store, with the help of Anah. Vernon, the second son, opened the first egg-grading station in Kingston, but still repaired sewing machines at home, but soon he sold that business, and bought a two-story building at 181 Sydenham street in Kingston, that he operated until his passing in July 1979.

Eric, "Mr. Sewing Machine Man", grandson of the Founder, conducts the business like his grandfather and with his technical abilities conducts a positive business in the computerized machines of the second millennium.

This is a remarkable achievement in the field of business that started with a \$1.50 trip to Toronto in the dark freight room of a lake boat in late 1862.

The store actually remained at 181 Sydenham until 2013. In 2014 the store moved to its' present location at 754 Baker Cres., Kingston, Ontario.

V.B. Simkins Sewing Machines, just remarkable... go see them!

Until next time, Cheers!

Damaris Pederson



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Mushroom Risotto with Barley

8 ounces baby portabella mushrooms, chopped
 2 tablespoons butter
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 ½ cup finely chopped onion
 ¼ cup finely chopped celery
 1 clove garlic, minced
 ½ cup Arborio rice (recommended for risotto recipes)
 1 bay leaf
 1 14½ ounce can reduced-sodium beef broth
 ½ cup quick-cooking barley
 ¼ teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
 ¼ cup shredded parmesan cheese
 Freshly ground pepper

Over medium heat, melt butter in large, non-stick saucepan. Add mushrooms. Sauté until moisture released from mushrooms has cooked away. Remove mushrooms from pan and set aside. Heat olive oil in pan and add onion, celery and garlic. Sauté until vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes. Add Arborio rice; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Combine beef broth with enough water to make 2¼ cups broth. Add bay leaf and 1 cup broth to rice mixture. Cook and stir for 10 minutes. Add barley, remaining broth and thyme. Cook and stir until barley is soft, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat and discard bay leaf. Stir in mushrooms and parmesan cheese. Season with freshly ground pepper. Cover pan until serving time. Makes 6 generous servings.

Mediterranean Quinoa Salad

½ cup quinoa
 1 cup water
 1/3 cup Italian dressing
 ¼ cup hummus
 3 thinly sliced green onions
 ½ cup halved cherry tomatoes
 ½ cup diced cucumber
 ½ cup diced red bell pepper
 ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
 ¼ cup slivered almonds, toasted

If specified on package, rinse and drain quinoa using fine-mesh sieve or cheesecloth-lined sieve. (Some quinoa is pre-washed.) Place quinoa and water in saucepan. Bring to boil, reduce heat and then cover and lightly simmer for 15 minutes, or until quinoa is tender and water is nearly absorbed. Remove from heat and allow quinoa to cool. To make salad, whisk together dressing and hummus. Fold into cooled quinoa. Add all vegetables and half of feta cheese. Chill thoroughly. Before serving, top with remaining feta cheese and toasted almonds. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

A trained journalist, Janette Hess focuses her writing on interesting people and interesting foods. She is a Master Food Volunteer with her local Extension service and enjoys collecting, testing and sharing recipes.

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The Power of One: You + Me = We (From Quilts to Airstrips)

by Naomi Gaede-Penner

Between first grade and sixth grades, I changed schools five times; only once was I without a friend. In Anchorage, Alaska, I'd walk through the door and tell my mother, "Mary and I painted on easels," or "We saved our silver crayon for special coloring." In Tanana, along the Yukon River, Sally and I baked oatmeal-raisin cookies. In Tulare, California, Linda and I incessantly colored "stained glass" designs we randomly scribbled and after school rode our bikes with streamers flying on the handlebars. In Soldotna, Alaska, Karen and I tunneled in tall grass along the beach bluffs.



In Browning, Montana, I sat alone in class. No one would be coming to my house after school; no one to whisper to in the clarinet section. That was the year I stopped eating, and I learned to cry without making a sound in the bathroom stalls.

As an adult, I climbed my first of Colorado's 53 mountains over 14,000 feet. Courtney was my guide and inspiration. I followed her deliberate zigzag traverse to the summit. "Just three steps this way – and stop to breathe," she said. I couldn't have done it alone.

Twice a day, I walk my English Cream Retriever. On a mild day, the time goes quickly. I observe Taffy sit and survey the deer, cock her head and watch the cows, or pounce on a vole hole. But on days when the wind howls and I know I'll need long johns and a wool scarf, I'm not eager to go out. (Taffy already has her thick white fur coat on and earflaps down.) I text Melissa. She'll meet us! Her long-legged Vizsla bounds towards Taffy. They race up and down the hills. Melissa and I talk about good books, places we've explored and how we should have worn snowshoes. Forty-five minutes later we smilingly tell each other what a great walk it was. Alone, I might have turned back.

Anyone who has quilted knows how time progresses more quickly, and with more pleasure, when more than one person engages in the process. "Look how much we got done!"

When my five-year-old grand boy relocated from Canada to Colorado, his parents wanted him involved in Drama Camp, Lego Camp and Vacation Bible School. He is outgoing and social, yet he protested loudly, "But I don't have a friend." No one.

In a letter to my father's parents in California, my mom wrote on January 13, 1963, "We wanted to work on the homestead Wed. morn but didn't have the courage to go out in the bitter cold, we did however go out yesterday in the heavy fog... the snow is getting deep enough that it really bogs us down, we cut and trimmed 12 trees, even got a fire going after sprinkling on some gas."

It took my parents three winters to clear an airstrip, nearly a half-mile long. Imagine if only one of them had been working? Six years? Would one have given up in the hip-deep snow? In the below-zero temperatures? One and one equal two; and two makes "we."

If you're not an extroverted person who gleefully assesses a group of people like a bee views a patch of clover, "we" doesn't have to be a group. One come-along-side person is all the encouragement we need. One is a powerful number.

Find and purchase Naomi's Prescription for Adventure books, at www.prescriptionforadventure.com or by calling 303.506.6181. Follow her on Facebook (Prescription for Adventure) or read her blogs at: blog.prescriptionforadventure.com.



The Different Layers of Time

by Kerri Habben

I've been contemplating time. I shouldn't because, being time, it travels as it ever has, passing at its own pace without any thought of what I think. Which is as it should be.

I'm pondering that time has layers. It has the top strata, the most simple. Be here at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. That bill is due by next Tuesday. The casserole bakes for half-an-hour. These things are inherently easy to behold if you just keep up with each one, fulfilling each need as required.

Then there is the undercurrent beneath that. The one where I look forward to January for the fresh, new year. I take a few deep breaths, turn around a couple of times and March is flowing into April with nearly a quarter of that year slipped silently into the past. Suddenly, the car is due for inspection once again. The garden is finishing up even though it seems like we just planted it.

Even then, it is easy enough to just grin and laugh at myself. After all, I am not the first human being, nor the last, to get immersed in life and lose track of time. And it is time that I'm grateful to have had, especially with the luxury of it passing smoothly enough that extra attention wasn't necessary. This affirmation eases the mind when another year is spent and then another until somehow a decade and half had dripped away, one second at a time.

Which brings me to the deepest layer. The one where time weaves a blanket. It is this warmth deep inside that redeems us when it seems the world is spinning far too quickly. It is this genuine energy that reminds us who we truly are just in case we've forgotten. The beauty of this level of time is that it doesn't ask permission or give advance notice of its presence. It requires something seemingly insignificant to spark it, and when it arrives, it slips past every emotional defense. It demands that you feel it, breathe it in right then and it quietly glides the answer to every question into your bones.

In that moment, you are utterly and completely alive. You are a combination of sadness and joy, dormancy and vitality. You are everything you have ever been and everything that has ever mattered most to you.

My mother and I had a moment such as this on a late winter day at the Farmer's Market. There we bought red onions and rutabaga. We talked about how empty the market was due to the season and smiled as we compared the dearth to spring and summer's abundance. We said the time of peaches and blueberries would roll around before we knew it. We walked across the parking lot to the fish and seafood restaurant, ordered and received our meal at the counter. It was as ample and delicious as always.

I saw the man in the plaid shirt as I was refilling our cups with sweet tea. Through shorter in height, his stance, white hair and attire reminded me of my Dad. I brought the tea back to our table.

"Kerri," Mom said. "Look at that man over there. He's even holding his arms the same way."

"I know," I answered. "I saw him."

We looked at each other and smiled wistfully at each other with tears glazing our eyes.

"Fifteen years, soon," Mom shook her head slightly.

I responded on a wisp of a sigh, "Or perhaps it was yesterday."

Kerri Habben is a writer, photographer and crochet instructor living in Raleigh, NC. An avid crocheter and knitter, she learned these skills from her grandmother and mother. She donates many of her yarn creations to those in need. Kerri has gathered a decade of essays she is working to publish. She can be contacted at elhserenade@earthlink.net.

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A Cup of Tea with Lydia

by Lydia E. Harris



Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice

Sugar and spice and everything nice, that's what tea parties are made of. But what if you have health challenges and sugar isn't nice for your body? Does that mean tea parties are over? Hardly! Here's a tea menu to enjoy even if you must limit your wheat or sugar intake.

Serve delicious foods.

For my seven-TEA-eth birthday, our daughter, Anita, delivered a tea party to our home. Since she has celiac disease and cannot eat gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and other grains), she prepared a tasty gluten-free tea supper that we all enjoyed.

Her menu included three-bean salad, fruit kabobs, cucumber boats stuffed with hummus and grilled chicken, and strips of cucumber and pastrami. For dessert, she served a creamy, frozen raspberry pie made with cashews and a gluten-free graham-cracker crust.* It tasted delicious with our peach herbal tea.

Spice up the presentation!

"Teatimes are mostly about the presentation," Anita said. So she served the foods in appealing ways. The bean salad sat mounded on a large chunk of orange pepper with sliced beets for garnish on the side. Cantaloupe, red grapes, blueberries, and basil leaves looked pretty threaded onto skewers.

The cucumber boats were new to me but are easy to make. Simply cut a cucumber into 2 1/2-inch pieces. Then cut each chunk in half lengthwise to make two boats. Scoop out some of the cucumber and seeds in the middle and heap the boat full of your favorite filling, such as hummus, cottage cheese, chicken salad, or egg salad.

The dessert looked especially appealing topped with whipped cream, raspberry freezer jam, and a lemon slice. We enjoyed our colorful, healthy tea supper from the first to last bite.

Make everything nice.

When I posted pictures of our teatime on Facebook, friends commented: "Yummy and beautiful," "lovely presentation and healthy." And "I wish someone would bring me such a delightful tea! What a precious daughter you have." I couldn't agree more. We enjoyed everything about our teatime.

As you can tell from our daughter's menu, teatimes can be sweet and lovely without a lot of sugar. If you want to serve desserts and scones, serve small portions. Dainty tidbits are perfect for teatime. And when going out for tea, consider ordering a salad with protein and a scone on the side.

Tea itself is definitely part of the "everything nice" at teatimes. With virtually no calories and loaded with antioxidants, tea is good for you. And green tea, which is unfermented, is considered especially healthy. If you haven't developed a taste for it, try a flavored green tea such as Bigelow's Constant Comment, which makes a spicy brew.

Besides the health benefits of drinking tea, a tea break relieves stress. The ritual of brewing, sipping, and relaxing with a fragrant cup of tea provides a soothing interlude. If you're sensitive to caffeine, select from decaffeinated choices.

So what are tea parties made of?

- Sugar: the sweetness of time shared (and maybe a little sugar).

- Spice: the beauty of the presentation (and perhaps some spiced tea).
- Everything nice: the joy of teatime (with tea, delicious food, and cozy conversation).

As you gather for tea, here's a blessing for your teatime.

Heavenly Father, sweeten our teatime with your presence. Warm our hearts with your love. And fill our cups to overflowing with friendship and joy. Amen.

I'm ready to plan a sweet teatime without adding a lot of sugar. Won't you join me?

*Anita adapted this recipe to make her dessert: <http://mywholefoodlife.com/2015/07/14/vegan-strawberry-cheesecake-bites/>

*Lydia E. Harris holds a master's degree in Home Economics. She is blessed with five grandchildren who call her "Grandma Tea." Lydia authored the book, *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting* (AMG Publishers).*

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From Lydia's Recipe File:

Cucumber Baskets with Veggies

Cucumber boats are quick and easy to make. But during the spring and Easter season, you might enjoy making cucumber baskets.

You'll need:

- Large cucumber (makes 3 or 4 baskets)
- Small yellow zucchini
- Small grape tomatoes
- Small radishes
- Baby carrots or thin strips of carrots
- Celery leaves
- Toothpicks
- Hummus, or filling of choice



To Make:

1. Cut off 1 1/2-inch piece of cucumber. Make sure the cut ends are flat. Set on cut end to make basket.
2. Hollow out some of the center of the cucumber, but leave some for the sides and bottom of the basket. Fill with hummus.
3. Cut a 1/4-inch slice of cucumber to become the handle. Cut off the lower 1/3 of the slice. Then use a cookie cutter or knife to cut out some of the inside of the slice. What is left is the handle with the peel on top.
4. Cut zucchini and radishes into 1/4-inch slices. Put all vegetables except carrots on individual toothpicks. Arrange vegetables in the basket to make a colorful bouquet and poke the toothpicks into the hummus. Also poke in carrots. You should be able to fit two or more pieces of each vegetable into the basket.
5. Place the cucumber handle on top of the basket. The other veggies will hold it in place. Add a few celery leaves to fill in as greenery.
6. Make one basket for each guest.

These cute, healthy baskets can also serve as place-card holders. Cut strips of paper, write names, attach toothpicks, and poke into the basket.

Variation: Add other colorful veggies of your choice, such as yellow, orange, or red peppers. Green olives look nice as well.

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Essential Oils for Flu and Colds

By Wanda Headrick



Cold, wet, windy, weather brings us an unwanted guest – The Flu and its frequent companion, a Cold. Several friends have been suffering from this lately, so it seems like a good time to share information on some essential oils that might bring some relief if you should happen to experience flu and cold-like symptoms. First of all, I do not believe there is ever a perfect solution for flu or cold prevention or relief, and what works for you might not work for me. As I am a currently employed registered nurse, I am required by my employer to accept the flu vaccination each fall. I have had more flu symptoms since being required to be vaccinated than I ever had without vaccination, so I am not a promoter of the flu shot. I also know people who feel they would surely die from the flu or a cold if they did not receive vaccination each year. I prefer prevention. That includes keeping well hydrated with water, good nutrition – including vitamins and supplements – adequate rest and using pure essential oils in my environment that help keep down bacteria and virus.

My first line of prevention for several years has been two of my own blends: Sinus Opener Spa Blend and My Defense Spa Blend. I love to use these two blends together in a humidifier during the winter months, and we feel it helps

us prevent being affected when we are exposed to the flu and cold bugs. I also love to apply three drops of Sinus Opener Spa Blend and three drops of My Defense Spa Blend to a Kleenex and place it in a pocket (women can stick it inside their bra) and allow your body heat to vaporize the oil into the nasal/respiratory system. You can also place this oil-infused Kleenex in your vehicle, where it will help keep your respiratory system open and clear. After a day working with sick patients, I love to come home, run a tub full of warm water, add ¼ to ½ cup Dead Sea Mineral Salt or Himalayan Mineral Salt. To 1 tablespoon whole milk or half-and-half, add 8 – 10 drops Sinus Opener Spa Blend and 8-10 drops My Defense Spa Blend and add to bath water. Then lay back and relax for 30 minutes. You will be amazed how clean and refreshed you will feel. If you do not like warm bath soaks, apply the oil blends to your wash cloth before you shower and allow the warm water to steam the oils into your environment as you shower.

The mineral salts include multiple minerals that are helpful in reducing stress, and it is pretty commonly accepted that stress increases our risk of illness. Adding the essential oil blends to whole milk or half-and-half provides a good carrier for the essential oils to be evenly distributed throughout the warm bath soak.

If we do happen to be affected by the flu or cold bugs, here are some ways we find helps us to feel better and we recover faster:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil 2 teaspoons
Sinus Opener Spa Blend 3 drops
My Defense Spa Blend 3 drops

Blend all together and rub on your chest, under your armpits, on your back and --- my favorite – on your feet, then put socks on (especially at nighttime)

I can always tell when my husband feels like he is catching the flu or cold as he will come in from feeding livestock and go get the bottle of Colds and Coughs Massage Oil Blend and ask me to apply it. This blend is already diluted in carrier oils and ready to apply directly to the skin out of the bottle.

If you would like to make your own **Blend for Flu and Colds**, here is a recipe you might like to try:

Grape Seed Oil 8 ounces
Pure Eucalyptus Essential Oil 90 drops
Pure Tea Tree Essential Oil 70 drops
Pure Cinnamon Leaf Essential Oil 50 drops
Pure Thyme Essential Oil 30 drops

Blend all the above together in a dark colored bottle with a tight lid. It is best if you can allow it to set for 4 days to blend together or synergize. It can be used immediately if needed. To use, apply to the chest, back, armpits and feet. Apply socks to the feet especially at bedtime. You can also add this blend to a warm bath soak.

Eucalyptus Essential Oil is considered to have antiviral action on the respiratory tract, soothing inflammation and easing mucus. It is also considered to have a cooling and deodorizing action on the body, soothes general aches and pains, and has an uplifting effect on the mind.

Tea Tree Essential Oil is considered refreshing and revitalizing to the mind, and thought to be beneficial to help the immune system fight infections. It is one of the pure essential oils considered to have anti-fungal properties. Both Tea Tree and Eucalyptus Essential Oils have been used for centuries by the native Australian Aborigines, who used the leaves of both trees to cover and cure infected wounds. During WWII, Tea Tree was included in the Australian military aid kits for treatment of wounds and disease, especially in tropical areas. It was referred to as a "medicine cabinet in a bottle"

Cinnamon Leaf Essential Oil comes from a very old spice that was once regarded as a precious substance. Cinnamon Leaf Essential Oil is preferred over Cinnamon Bark or Bud essential oil as in most cases there is less skin sensitivity. Never apply Cinnamon Leaf, Bark, or Bud Essential Oil to the skin without being diluted in a carrier oil like olive oil, grape seed oil or almond oil. Cinnamon Leaf Oil is considered to have strong antiseptic properties, be warming and calming to the body, and have a positive uplifting effect on states of exhaustion and feelings of weakness.

Thyme Essential Oil with its sweet, strong herbal fragrance was a favorite of the Romans and used during the Age of Chivalry where it was thought to provide courage. Later in the Middle Ages it became an important part of the judicial system where sprigs of Thyme were carried by judges into their courtrooms to ward off infection. Today Thyme Essential Oil is still considered to have strong antiseptic properties. It is also considered strengthening to the mind as it aids concentration and lifts feelings of exhaustion. Thyme Essential Oil is also considered beneficial to the immune system and circulation.

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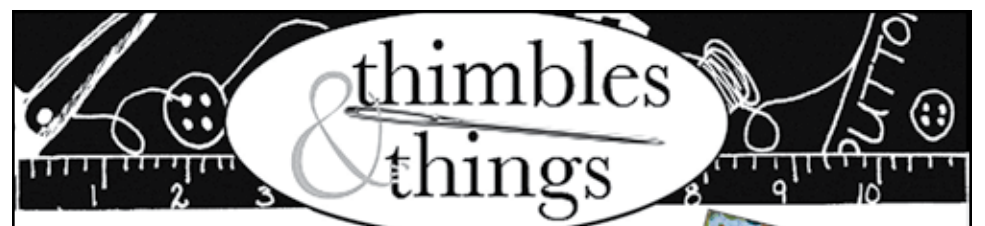
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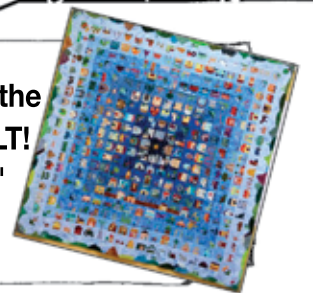


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- 0.25m Bunnies on Blue 148.3
- 1m Large Bunnies on White 146.1
- 0.25m of each of twelve colours: 146.2, 146.3, 147.1, 147.2, 148.1, 148.2, 149.1, 149.2, 149.3, 150.1, 150.2, 150.3

Cutting Instructions

Grey Bumbleberries Background

1. Cut six strips 2 1/2"XWidth of Fabric (WOF)
 - a. Cut three strips into nine 2 1/2"X4 1/2" squares each
 - b. Cut two strips into four 2 1/2"X5 1/2" and four 2 1/2"X4 1/2" squares each
 - c. Cut one strip into four 2 1/2"X6 1/2" and three 2 1/2"X4 1/2" squares
2. Cut two strips 2 7/8"WOF
 - a. Cut each strip into fourteen 2 7/8"X2 7/8" squares
3. Cut two strips 1 1/2"WOF.

Small Flowers on Blue

1. Cut five strips 1 1/2"XWOF
 - a. Cut three strips into twenty-seven 1 1/2"X1 1/2" squares each for the checkerboards
 - b. Cut one strip into one 1 1/2"X10 1/2" and twenty 1 1/2"X1 1/2" squares.

Bunnies on Blue

1. Cut four strips 1 1/2"XWOF for inner borders
 - a. Trim two strips to 40 1/2"
 - b. Trim two strips to 32 1/2".

Large Bunnies on White

1. Cut four strips 4 1/2"XWOF
 - a. Cut two strips into two 4 1/2"X18 1/2" squares each
 - b. Trim two strips to 4 1/2"X32 1/2"
2. Cut five strips 2 1/2"XWOF and set aside for binding.

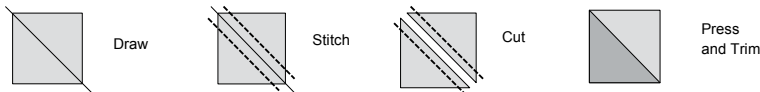
Twelve Assorted Colours

1. Cut the following from each colour: one 4 1/2"High X 6 1/2" Wide; two 2 7/8"X2 7/8"; four 1 1/2"X1 1/2"; and, two 2 1/2"X2 1/2".
2. For six of the colours cut an additional eight 1 1/2"X1 1/2" squares for the border blocks.

Egg Blocks

1. Make four Half Square Triangle (HST) blocks using two 2 7/8" squares of Grey and two 2 7/8" squares of a colour.

To make HST's: Place the Grey and the Colour squares on top of each other, right sides together. Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner. Sew a 1/4" seam on either side of the drawn line. Cut the triangles apart along the line and press to the dark half.



2. Sew one HST to both sides of a 2 1/2"X2 1/2" Colour square. Make two.
3. Row 2 is a 4 1/2"X6 1/2" Colour square.
4. Assemble the block in three rows.
5. Trim the block to 8 1/2" High X 6 1/2" Wide.
6. Make thirteen blocks in assorted colours (the twelve listed plus the Large Bunnies on White).



Egg Block

Checkerboard Blocks

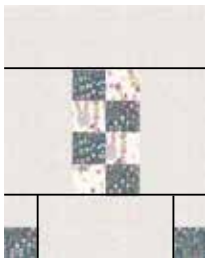
1. Sew one 1 1/2"XWOF Grey strip to a 1 1/2" WOF Small Flowers on Blue strip.
 - a. Crosscut twenty-seven 1 1/2" squares



2. Sew the 1 1/2"X10" Small Flowers on Blue piece to the remaining 1 1/2" Grey strip. Crosscut five 1 1/2" squares.

Checkerboard Block A

1. Make the center checkerboard with four 1 1/2" squares of Small Flowers on Blue and four 1 1/2" squares of a chosen colour.
2. Sew a 2 1/2"X4 1/2"Grey square to both sides.
3. Sew a 2 1/2"X6 1/2" Grey square to the top.
4. Sew a Grey/Blue square set to both ends of a 2 1/2"X4 1/2" Grey square.
5. Sew the unit from step 4 to the bottom.
6. Trim the block to 8 1/2" High X 6 1/2" Wide.
7. Make the block in four different colours.



Block "A"

Step 3

Step 1 and 2

Step 4 and 5

Block "B"

Step 3-5

Step 1 and 2

Step 3-5



Checkerboard Block B

1. Make the center checkerboard with four 1 1/2" squares of Small Flowers on Blue and four 1 1/2" squares of a chosen colour.
2. Sew a 2 1/2"X4 1/2"Grey square to both sides.
3. Sew a Grey/Blue square set to the left side of a 2 1/2"X5 1/2" Grey square.
4. Make two.
5. Sew these to the top and bottom.
6. Trim the block to 8 1/2" High X 6 1/2" Wide.
7. Make the block in four different colours.



Checkerboard Block C

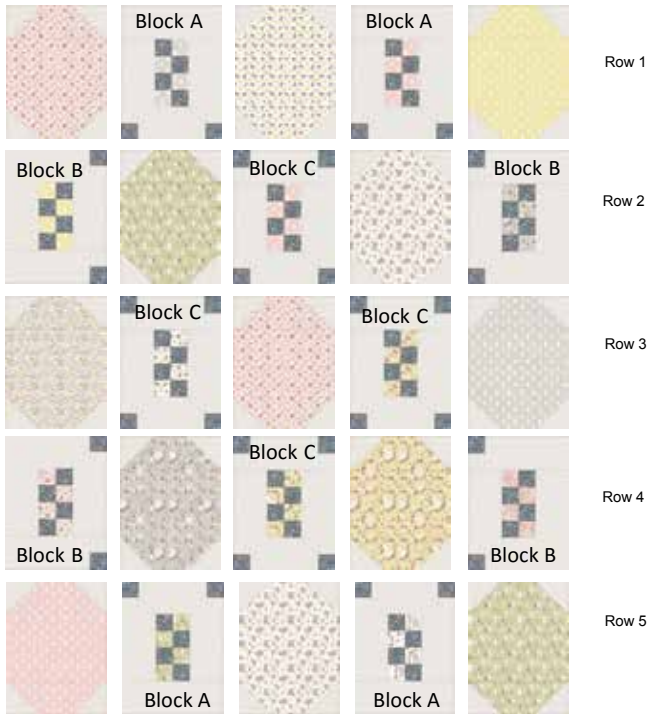
1. Make the center checkerboard with four 1 1/2" squares of Small Flowers on Blue and four 1 1/2" squares of a chosen colour.
2. Sew a 2 1/2"X4 1/2"Grey square to both sides.
3. Sew a Grey/Blue square set to both ends of a 2 1/2"X4 1/2" Grey square.
4. Make two.
5. Sew these to the top and bottom.
6. Trim the block to 8 1/2" High X 6 1/2" Wide.
7. Make the block in four different colours.

Border Checkerboards

Assemble these blocks in rows. Make **six** four-by-four checkerboards from different colours.



Lay out the blocks, alternating Eggs with checkerboards. The quilt layout is five blocks wide by five blocks tall. When you are happy with your colour placement, sew the quilt together in rows. Note the placement of the checkerboard "A", "B" and "C" blocks.



Inner Borders

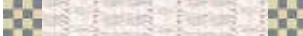
Add the inner border pieces, sewing the side borders on first (the sides should measure 40 1/2"). Add the top and bottom inner borders (32 1/2").

Outer Borders

Sew a 4 1/2"X18 1/2" Border strip to the top and bottom of a checkerboard block. Place the block so that the Colour square is in the top left position. Make two. Sew to the sides of the quilt.



Sew a checkerboard block to both ends of a 32 1/2" border strip. Make two. Sew to the top and bottom of the quilt.



Layer, baste, quilt and bind. Don't forget the label! Try an all-over meander stitch for the quilting: draw some swoops and swirls with your machine.



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MacGyver Would Be Proud

By Andrea Springer



I'm all about gadgets. I love electronics, apps for phone and tablet, and there are two drawers and a pitcher on our kitchen counter full of utensils. I'm well fixed for knitting do-dads, too. I enjoy and use them, but some of my best tools weren't found in yarn or craft stores. Here are a few of my favorites:

Zipper Bags – I'm not sure I could knit without plastic zipper bags. The gallon sizes will hold a large project in progress, yarn for a project and anything else you think will fit in one of these lovelies. Smaller sizes work for smaller projects, leftover yarn, any necessary notions and the odd peanut butter sandwich when you take your knitting on the road. I like being able to see everything in the bag without needing to open it and love that they're reusable. Bedding Bags – the clear zipper bags that blankets and sheets come in – are also great containers for larger projects like afghans.

Sheet Protectors – Found in office supply stores, clear sheet protectors help keep paper patterns organized. They make it easier to keep all the pages of a pattern in one place and can be kept for reference in a three ring binder.

Binder Clips (also called Bulldog Clips) – When you have a couple of these in your gadget bag, you can secure a pattern to keep pages from getting separated or hold the edges of two knitted pieces for sewing together. You can also improvise a yarn bowl by clipping one on the side of a small box or bowl and feeding the yarn through the handle.

Snap Hair Clips – Snap hair clips are the perfect way to secure the outside end of a skein of yarn that was wound on a ball winder. We've all been in that situation. We're in the middle of a project, pulling our working yarn from the inside, when suddenly, that outside tail goes "rogue" and starts to wind around the working yarn. Secure a hair clip on your "outside tail" and you'll never have that problem again.

Binder Rings – A small binder ring can hold a lot of stitch markers in your gadget bag or hold several sheet protectors with patterns together in one spot.

Hard Back Book – Need a lot of fringe for a tassel or other project? Wrap your yarn around a hard back book, securing the end along the side where the book opens. When you've wrapped it around the book as many times as you need, you can easily cut the strands with a pair of scissors along the same side where you started. Bingo – your strands will be the same length.

So I challenge you to think outside your gadget bag and come up with your own solution to your project needs. Remember, the latest and greatest knitting gadgets may be fun and useful but your favorite tools might just be in your desk or kitchen drawer!

Andrea Springer blogs at www.knittingsavant.com where she helps folks remember that they have everything they need to be successful in knitting and in life. You can share comments or ideas with her at andrea@knittingsavant.com or follow Knitting Savant on Facebook and Twitter.



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Clean Out Your Scraps And Make a Great Quilt!

by Deb Heatherly

It's that time of year—time to sort and organize. For some reason, I feel the need to do this once every year in my sewing room.

First, I neatly fold all of the yardage that has been haphazardly tossed back into the closet during frenzied moments of creations during the past year.

Next, I take out all of the scraps that have been piling up in my scrap basket and sort and press each piece. I then cut these pieces into 'usable' pieces, such as 2 1/2" strips, and 5" and 10" squares. My now 'usable' scraps are then placed into labeled boxes and ready to be stitched at a moment's notice.

Finally, I cut a box full of light and dark 2 1/2" x 4 1/2" rectangles. These will go into my annual "Twist n Shout Rectangles" quilt. The blocks in this quilt are a great way to use up scraps and are super easy. By themselves, they look pretty boring but, once they are sewn together, they form a secondary pattern that will have you shouting and doing the happy dance.

This simple pattern makes a fast gift and is fun to do with friends. You could even organize a scrap exchange to give your quilt more variety.

Make sure to email me pictures at Debscatsnquilts@aol.com. I would love to see your creations.

Deb Heatherly is a Creative Grids® designer and author of the books *Cat'titude* and *Strippy Stars*. Ask for her Creative Grids® CGRDH1 Cat's Cradle Tool and CGRDH2 Strippy Stars tools, and these companion books at your local quilt shop. Deb owns Deb's Cats N Quilts in Franklin, NC. She is a former freelance writer and designer for *QUILT* magazine.

Twist N Shout Rectangles 60" x 60" Lap or 85" x 85" Queen

Cutting:

- **Lights**- (I used a variety of light scraps because I want to use up my scraps, but you can also use the same light throughout if desired.)
Cut a total of (144) 2 1/2" x 4 1/2" rectangles for lap and a total of (324) 2 1/2" x 4 1/2" rectangles for Queen
- **Darks**- Use lots of dark scraps
Cut a total of (144) 2 1/2" x 4 1/2" rectangles for lap and a total of (324) 2 1/2" x 4 1/2" rectangles for Queen
- **Inner border**- 1/2 yd. lap/ 2/3 queen Cut (6) 2 1/2" strips WOF for lap (Queen (9) 2 1/2" strips WOF)
- **Outer border**- 1 yd. lap/ 1 1/4 yd queen Cut (6-7) depending on usable width of fabric 4 1/2" strips WOF for lap (Queen (9) 4 1/2" strips WOF)
- **Binding**- 1/2 yd. Cut (7) 2 1/2" strips WOF for lap (Queen (9) 2 1/2" strips WOF)

(Directions are on next page)

Directions:



1-Sew 1/2 of your lights side by side as shown. Make 36 units for Lap and 81 units for Queen. (Unit A)

2-Add a dark rectangle on the top and bottom of the unit A's created in step one. (Unit B)



3-Sew a dark and light end to end. (Unit C) Make (72) for lap and (162) for Queen.



4- Next add the Unit C's created in step 3 to both sides of the Unit B's created in step 3. **When doing this final step to create the blocks, you must make sure that place the darks and lights on each side of the center unit in the same position on every block. EXAMPLE: In this graphic the outside dark rectangles are on the top left and bottom right. All of your blocks must have this placement for the pattern to work. (You could also place them top right and bottom left but ALL of the blocks MUST have that same placement.)

Make 36 blocks for lap/ 81 for Queen.

Now its time to put the quilt top together.

For the lap size you'll stitch 6 rows of 6 blocks each.

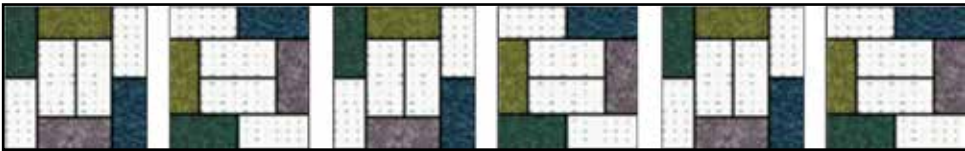
Notice how the lights are horizontal in block 1, and vertical in block 2 immediately to its right.



ROW 1,3,5 (all odd numbered rows)



ROW 2,4,6 (all even numbered rows)



When the odd numbered rows and even numbered rows come together, that's when the pattern magically appears!

For Queen you'll stitch 9 rows of 9 blocks each.

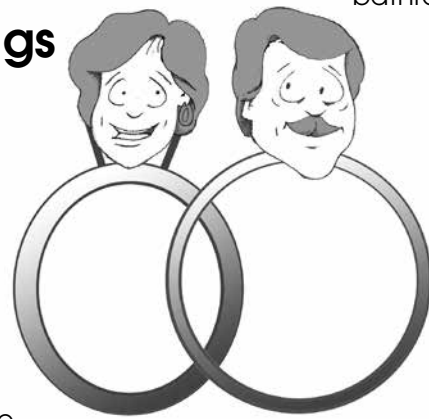
Add a 2 1/2" inner border, and a 4 1/2" outer border for either size



Building Harmony

Episode 45: A Tale of Two Rings

By Jeff Cappis



There are more than a few things in marriage that are sacred. These are understandings developed between a couple over the years that you just don't fool with. Right? I think it's good to keep some order in a relationship and show your partner respect. That's one way to say "I love you" without any big deal or drama. Here are our top 5:

1) Neither of us will eat the last cookie. Leaving it for your partner to enjoy is just a nice thing to do. For that reason, there is always one stale, hard, ignored cookie in the jar. After that, if you do eat it, you're doing everyone a favor. Sort of a family version of throwing yourself on a grenade to save your platoon.

2) If you can read a whole chapter of your favorite book while in the bathroom, turn the fan on.

2) Binge watching TV is a couple's sport. If you watch an episode by yourself, this is considered cheating. This is serious, ladies and gentlemen. Your partner could get so mad she'll make you sleep on the couch.

Apparently making me sleep on a fluffy couch in front of a big screen TV and home stereo system is considered a punishment. I plead guilty. I plead guilty a lot. Cathy gets to be right a lot of the time. I just swallow my shame and accept my punishment.

3) Never use a face cloth to clean the bathroom. As we later determined, the bathroom also includes various other parts of the house, the vehicles and the dog.

4) You must always endeavor to put your partner in the best light. This is a tricky one. Things like, "Wow, that dress takes a lot of years off your actual age", or, "I even love you when you're mad. I love you a lot", surprisingly, can backfire on you.

5) Always wear your ring. This is very important and it is clear right in the beginning. If your hand is missing that ring, your finger better be missing with it. It is a symbol of everything you stand together for. It's not just piece of jewelry, it is sacred.

My ring cost \$1600. Not that the money was important, but it is part of a matching set my wife and I share. A totally unique and one of a kind set. Naturally I never want to damage it.

One time, when I was working on my car, I took it off so it wouldn't get damaged. I thoughtfully found a safe place to put it. Somewhere were it couldn't get lost or damaged. I was proud of myself for taking the time.

However, a few hours later when we went for drive, Cathy noticed the ring wasn't on my finger. Busted. I'd forgotten to put it back on. The look she gave me felt bad. What was worse, I looked over and there was my ring, spinning around on my car antenna as we travelled down the highway.

Then I got the look and the silent treatment.

The worst time though, came one year later. I'd lost a little weight and it became loose on my finger. One day I was cooking steak on the Bar-B-Q when I noticed the ring was missing. I started to panic. I know I was wearing it when I started so it must have fallen into the bar-b-q. I had that thing apart, hosed down, and clean, but no ring. I couldn't find it anywhere. It was lost and I was going to be in the biggest do-do of my life.

Finally (and in desperation), I called the jeweler for another one. No problem. Two weeks. (Two weeks? She'll notice it's gone within the next two minutes). Oh ya, double the price. (Aw \$@#%&!).

I should have just been a man and 'fessed up' about it, but instead I kept my left hand hidden for the two weeks. It was always in my pocket or conveniently behind something. It wasn't easy.

One day I was Bar-B-Qing again when I got a call from the jeweler. The ring was ready. oh goody. Then, just as I got the news, I looked down to see my original ring sitting between 2 deck boards. I asked the jeweler if it was too late to cancel the order. He laughed.

Now I had 2 rings. I wore the new one and put the original safely away. Thinking about the experience though, I realized I hadn't seen Cathy's left hand in quite a while either. I was thinking about this when I bit into a stale two week old cookie... and found her ring.

6) Know when to shut up and don't gloat.

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We're sixteen years into the new century. We have a new provincial premier and a new prime minister; our southern neighbours will have a new president in a few months. These changes in leadership will undoubtedly set our countries on new paths and we often feel insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Prime ministers and presidents come and go, but everyday life will continue much as it has in the past for most of us. The past year has not been a happy one. There is no need to recount the world-wide disasters and terrible events that have affected so many; we are all too aware. Some have gone so far as to suggest we're entering a new dark age.

So I am proposing that each of us tries to lighten the gloom in some small way. This is not a new idea by any means, but what would happen if every quilter or handicrafter made some small effort to make a stranger's life a little brighter (e.g. a lap quilt for someone who is wheelchair bound, a fidget quilt for an Alzheimer patient, a cheery pillowcase for a sick child, a crib quilt for a new mother who has little, a prayer shawl for an elderly person...) and presented it in person, not through an agency?

There is always a vast outpouring of donations of gifts around Christmas to innumerable charities and the food banks which support so many people, and rightly so. These contributions are extremely important. But what about the rest of the year? Dare I suggest that we each make two personal donations throughout the year – or even monthly ones? Poverty and need are present all year. Now I do realize that a great number of quilters already far exceed this imaginary quota year round. Our thanks and admiration go

out to them. However, there are many more, myself included, who could do more. What better time to start than the new year?

There is never a lack of recipients, and one small act can have far-reaching consequences. Over 30 years ago when I had ESL (English as a Second Language) students, one newly-arrived teen seemed lost and completely bewildered by her new surroundings, even though she did have family here. Her birthday is in July, when school is closed, so I sent her a card and a small gift. She was appreciative far beyond reason, I thought, but that small act resulted in a 35-year family friendship which I greatly value. (Incidentally, she became an R.N. and now has 2 sons who are university graduates – a success story indeed).

Within the next year we will have more opportunities than ever as bewildered immigrants and refugees who have lost everything arrive on our shores with hardships in their recent pasts that we cannot even imagine. Some may never recover from their trauma, but perhaps we can help, even a little.

Let's work – individually and together – to make 2016 a brighter year for newcomers and those already in our midst. It has been said that it's better to light a candle than curse the darkness, but perhaps an old song says it best. "Brighten the corner where you are!" Happy New Year!

Barbara Conquest writes her column from Blue Sky Quilting in Tofield, AB. © Barbara Conquest.








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by Marla Wilson

Old Funnel Hanging Planter

With Spring fast approaching (not fast enough for some of us), thoughts turn to gardening and decorating our porches and patios. For this project, I found an old funnel used on the farm for various tasks. They come in lots of sizes and are readily available at flea markets, farm auctions and antique malls. The dents, scratches and rust are a bonus in my book, but since these were often used for oil or chemicals, a thorough cleaning is a must. Use hot water, de-greaser and a brush to clean your funnel and rinse it well. Your plants will thank you.

Decide what you want to use to hang your funnel. Wire, jute, twine, rope or small chain work well. Drill four appropriately sized holes equally spaced around the rim of the funnel. I used jute and knotted it on the underside of the rim. You can stop there if you want, but I think it is fun to add interest by wiring a piece of grapevine garland around the top of the funnel. I then used wire to attach some old farm tools and a rusty star garland. Some of the tools can hang or you can wire them up tight. Use your imagination to find other items to decorate the funnel.

Place a piece of screen in the funnel hole to keep the dirt from falling through, fill with soil and your favorite plant. Enjoy!

Marla Wilson is the owner of *The Rusty Wheel*, a gift boutique in Scandia, KS. The shop features her floral designs and repurposed "junk," as well as kitchen and baby gifts, home decor and fashion accessories. Follow *The Rusty Wheel* on Facebook, or www.therustywheel.vpweb.com or contact her at stumpy1954@hotmail.com





Heart to Heart

by Wendy Carmichael Bauld

By the time Country Register is in your hands, we'll be at least half way through feeling the chill of Jack Frost and as this issue covers February/March, I'd like to talk about chocolate. Why chocolate you ask? Here we are, smack in the middle of the Northern Hemisphere's version of wintertime so why not divert our attention from the freeze to that mouth watering decadent treat. In fact my family history is steeped in chocolate as my Great Grandfather founded a company called McLeans Cocoa Mills in the early 1900's which later became known as McLeans Hot Chocolate. I suspect my love of chocolate must have somehow been passed down through DNA, therefore I'll blame my kryptonite-like weakness of it on my forebearers!

Over the course of the winter months comes two of the most important dates for chocolate sales; that being Valentine's Day and Easter. We'll definitely be offered an array of goodies such as chocolate valentines, chocolate bunnies, boxed chocolates and everything chocolate in between! Even now in January as I write for a February deadline, the stores are full to the brim with every possible beautiful Valentine's Day items but the one you can always count on to be there is chocolate. Each year Canadians on average consume 5.5 kilograms of the good stuff. Along with that gorgeous, delightful, rich, luxurious, myriad of infinite sensations we've come to know as chocolate, you'll also find greeting cards, candy, toys, lingerie, clothing...you name it, its out there.

Valentine's Day, also known as Saint Valentine's Day, or the Feast of St. Valentine, is a celebration observed on February 14 each year. It's celebrated in many countries around the world, although it's not a public holiday in most of them. St. Valentine's Day began as a liturgical celebration of one or more early Christian saints named Valentinus. The day was first associated with romantic love in the High Middle Ages. In 18th-century England, it evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering chocolate or candy and sending greeting cards. Valentine's Day symbols currently used today include hearts, doves, and the illustrious figure of a winged cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produce greeting cards.

After an explosion of chocolate on store shelves in February, it starts all over again in March for Easter. Modern symbols of Easter, such as the egg and the bunny, have their origins in paganism. Rabbits were the most potent symbol of fertility and the egg, the start of all life, was often thought to have magical powers. The legend of the Easter Bunny bringing eggs appears to have been brought to the United States by settlers from southwestern Germany. The German tradition of the Easter Bunny migrated to America in the 1800s and of course it transitioned right along into Canada. Over the past 200 years, the Easter Bunny has become the most commercially recognized symbol of Easter.

So there you have it. I guess one could say it's all about the chocolate! After coming off the heels of Christmas, the cycle of chocolate really just continues but makes its annual transformation into hearts, bunnies and eggs. It's this apparent commercialization of holidays that seems to have become integral to the ways in which holidays are celebrated. Like it or not, its here to stay and I for one enjoy all of the celebrations and excitement it brings into our lives, even if it all seems so commercial and contrived. The down side can be that we're cooped up indoors having those couch potato moments, all the while snacking in front of the endless TV programs, so indulge in these confectionary goodies but as they say, we need to remind ourselves that less is more.

By all means, these well-marketed holidays can be a delightful winter distraction; especially if you're experiencing cabin fever, by helping engage us and boost our spirits during the reign of old man winter. Anything that makes life more enjoyable is welcomed but I'll reinforce it again "anything

in moderation" is a good rule because too much of a good thing can wreck havoc with your waistline.

Despite its impulse-driven nature, chocolate stands out as one of the affordable luxury goods and is therefore often labelled as being recession-proof. The Guinness World Records lists the largest chocolate bar at a whopping 12,770 pounds, 4.48 ounces (5792.50 kg) and although I don't think anyone's rushing out to buy one that big, we seem to have a little spare change for a Valentine's Day or Easter chocolate treat. It's the spice of life to enjoy giving whether it's family, friend, child, or lover. If that isn't enough and you need another excuse to satisfy your cocoa fixation, its been said that the smell of it also increases theta brain waves, which triggers relaxation. Another discovery is that the antioxidant flavonoids in unsweetened dark chocolate can even lower blood pressure and reduce inflammation.

Ultimately chocolate and holidays seem to go hand in hand but don't forget the reason we celebrate Valentine's Day in the first place; it really all comes down to love... and love begins with the human heart. The continuously beating heart is a miraculous organ essential to life...its remarkable, that is, as long as you're looking after it. Do indulge in this universally loved product or do go out and buy that mouth watering treat but that said, there's no greater gift than the gift of good health. Even if old man winter is still hanging around for a while yet, enjoy the heavenly, sweet taste of chocolate but remember too, you'll come out of hibernation feeling wonderful if you don't over indulge!



Angel's Easy Truffles

1 egg yolk

5 tablespoons of unsalted butter

2/3 cup sifted confectioners sugar

**3 squares Baker's semi-sweet chocolate
(melted then cooled)**

1 teaspoon vanilla

1/2 cup of finely chopped nuts or toasted Baker's Angel Flake coconut



Cream butter with egg yolk and gradually add sugar - blend well

Stir in chocolate and vanilla

Chill until firm enough to handle and then shape into 1 inch balls

Roll in nuts and then chill until set.

Store in refrigerator - makes about 30

As an extra added touch:

Prepare Truffles as directed

Melt a couple extra squares of semi-sweet chocolate, place cooled truffles on wax paper and drizzle melted chocolate on top - while chocolate is still soft, add your favourite toppings (fine bits of crushed candy canes, butterscotch or even assorted candy sparkles)



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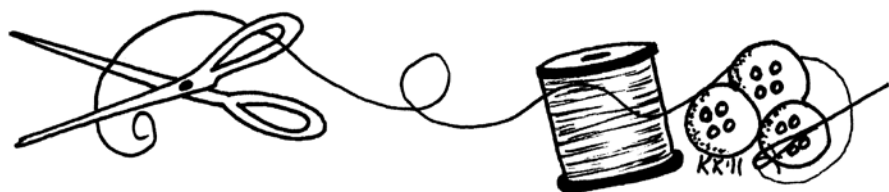
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The bond is strong and permanent, so you have the option to leave the edges unfinished; they will not fray or lift. If you prefer to incorporate decorative stitches, the adhesive will not gum up your needle. It is, of course, machine washable and dryable, however when laundering, avoid using fabric softener as the chemicals erode the fusible web over time.

The grid paper, easy to see through and write on, makes it easier to trace your designs, and it is now printer friendly! Perfect for use with quilting cottons, *Lite Steam-A-Seam 2* is ideal for layered appliqué, adding embellishments, and enhancing art quilts.

We offer *Lite Steam-A-Seam 2* 'off the roll', and will be demonstrating and using this fabulous fusible in February's Magical Thread Art upcoming Bargello Wall Hanging class.

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Back Porch Break

by Nancy Parker Brummett

Late-in-Life Love



Valentine's Day is often billed as a day for young lovers, but what if the lovers are merely young at heart? A close friend of mine, a widow, recently told me with stars in her eyes that she "met someone." Both my friend and her new beau are in their seventies, but as she described their meeting she said it was as if she were thirteen again—all the same butterflies flitting around inside her!

The "sweet nothings" they whisper to one another may have to be spoken a bit more loudly at this age, she confessed. And instead of getting-acquainted questions like "what's your sign?" it's more likely "are you on any medications?" But the sparkle in her eyes and the giggle in her voice told me this is true love all the same.

Is it ever too late for love? I don't think so. Years ago my mom was also in her seventies when she began a long companionship with Cecil, a dear family friend. He had lost his wife and my dad had passed away. The two couples had known one another since junior high. Mom and Cecil kept being asked to the same social gatherings, so eventually he said, "There's no reason for both of us to drive. I'll swing by and pick you up." Thus began a 15-year relationship that nurtured them both.

"We don't even have to tell each other entire jokes," Mom said the day she called to let me know what was going on with Cecil (lest I hear rumors of impropriety!). "We know all the same jokes, so one of us just remembers a punch line and we have a good laugh!"

Many seniors would be open to late-in-life love but aren't sure how to meet someone if they don't have a lifelong connection like my mom and Cecil shared. Some actually have success with online dating sites, but more likely they connect through a mutual acquaintance or a shared interest. Other couples reconnect at a 50th or 60th high school reunion, after both are single again, and pick up right where they left off—although not as likely in the back of the pick up! Psychologists explain that the spark of "first love" is one that is easily rekindled, and every summer this romantic phenomenon repeats itself around punch bowls in gymnasiums from coast to coast. It gives new meaning to the phrase "take my hand again" that I've been using for adults helping aging parents.

Is it ever too late for love? I think not. As for me, I'll stick with the love I married when I was forty. A good man is hard to find at any age!

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. "Like" her author page on Facebook, or to learn more about her life and work, visit www.nancyparkerbrummett.com. Portions of this column are excerpted from the author's book, *Take My Hand Again*, Kregel Publications, 2015.



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Whether you live, work, or play in Northwestern Ontario, or even if you are just passing through for that matter, you know what a special and unspoiled part of the country this is. There is wilderness everywhere and it's just so lovely, so peaceful... I could go on and on. Now that's all fine and good, and I certainly don't mean to be short about it, but where in this region of the country can you go to get your quilting fix? Where can you find an oasis where your passion for quilting and sewing and, yes, even your quilting quirks, and sewing eccentricities, are understood by one and all?

A very good answer to these burning questions is to stop in and see Stefanie Armstrong at Fabric Fusion, located on Queen Street, in Dryden, ON (Dryden is located about midway between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg on Trans-Canada Hwy 17).

Rest assured you will be welcomed with open arms!

Fabric Fusion's beginnings come from owner Stefanie Armstrong being in the right place at the right time. During 2013 a number of long standing fabric stores in the region closed due to retirements and, unfortunately, illness.

Formerly a small business advisor and business trainer, Stefanie, a seasoned quilter and seamstress was looking for a challenge that would match her passion for creation and design. Stefanie explains, "The time was right, the need was there and I felt I could work at something that would feed my soul as well as others." After this realization, Fabric Fusion was born, with its' doors officially opening in February, 2014.

Stefanie and her sister-in-law Leanne Hus bring together a passion for all things sewing. This passion along with their combined long term retail experience has helped them create a wonderful space.

Stefanie and Leanne are delighted with the feedback from customers who tell them they enjoy the bright, friendly and comfortable location. Add to this that the store carries designer fabric collections, basic blenders, notions, quilting rulers, tools and a variety of patterns and you can come to a very easy conclusion: Fabric Fusion is a one stop shop!

The store's vision is **Gather - Learn - Create**. "People can create new items, or bring in unfinished projects and be re-inspired to complete them." Stefanie adds, "There is generous classroom space and drop-in sewing is welcome." Working in tandem with area instructors, Fabric Fusion offers classes at various levels of quilting and sewing, for adults and children. The shop's atmosphere and location nurtures a sense of community. "Watching customers' confidence grow is the greatest reward from each day in the shop."

"Our customers are our greatest inspiration and we are grateful for their support and the recognition we have received from the Dryden District Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards, Dryden High School and the Dryden 4-H Club."



Located at 123 Queen Street in downtown Dryden, the store is open 6 days a week, Tuesday - Sunday during the fall and winter, closed on Sundays in the spring and summer. There is plenty of off street parking too!

"The future of sewing is bright," Stefanie asserts, "and the momentum of young seamstresses is exciting to witness. Inspiration from social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram are bringing hands-on activities back to the forefront, providing a much needed change of pace from computers and other electronic devices."

We couldn't agree more Stefanie!

Next time you're in Dryden make sure you stop by and say hi to Stefanie and Leanne. You'll be glad you did!

Cheers,

Damaris Pederson





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Madeline's Musings

The Sleuthy Professor's Note

The year was 1966. A freshman college student, in an English Composition class taught by a professor only a few years my senior. Applying the rules of grammar was safe; the freedom to give impact and purpose to those guidelines was frightening. I relished the study of the English language: sentence structure, diagramming, conjugations, spelling; I had not delved into the world of subjective writing. On one particular assignment she jotted a note which was to become a catalyst for me. "You should publish this," she wrote. And some years later, published I became. In a 1976 Troy-Bilt® Tiller cookbook. No, not the English class assignment. Rather, an original recipe.

Fast-forward to November, 2015. Now published several times over, I knew it was high time to let my teacher know of the impact her words had made. I sent her an email, referenced her assignment, and attached my latest work.

A few days later, this was her reply:

WOW!! Can you believe I remember that assignment?? I really enjoyed teaching that class--we had a good time, and I always hoped it would inspire someone!! Glad it is you!! But I don't think I knew you as (my pen name). What name did I know you by? Thanks for sharing your writing with me...I'm impressed! Keep it up. All the best.

I responded by filling her in on my educational pursuits and my publishing journey. I vented my frustration with "just one space after a period" and the literary license to start sentences with And and But. And remained unidentified. Knowing how hectic life can be, I forgave her silence.

The end of the year is a good time to clean up loose ends. Nagging at the back of my mind was the fact that I had not revealed my identity to the one who had so generously encouraged me. I decided it was time to come clean. I 'fessed up and signed off with the name by which she would have known me. I was unprepared for her revelation. As mischievous as a scallywag, she wrote,

Well..., I have to admit--the cat was already out of the bag!! I'm a better detective than I thought I was!! Let me tell you how it happened.

After reading the pieces you sent me, I was figuratively patting

myself on the back. They are really well written, with good sentence and paragraph structure, and the subject flows really well. You definitely would get a good grade from me!

So, I remembered that, once upon a time, I had a file folder of some of the best work from that class-- How it survived a moving van fire when I moved to Alberta in 1973, and all the moves and changes in my life since then, I'll never know. So, I went looking--and I found it...Old paper, old typewriter...but as good as ever!! And your name on the bottom. So, once I figured that out, I decided I would just wait for your confession!?! Which I now have.

I wish you all the best in your future writing endeavours. If you want to send me some to look at, I 'might' be able to provide a bit of feedback. Mostly, I encourage you to do it for pleasure, and not stress yourself too much with deadlines, etc...Keep in touch...

And she signed off with the name by which we, her students, had known and loved her.

As I think back to that assignment, I'm grateful for her "fitly spoken word", or in my case, simple notation. A moment's impression she took time to pass on; like a hand on the shoulder, a nod from a distance, a twinkle in the eye; golden chances to challenge, and encourage. Don't let these opportunities slip through your fingers. Someday someone will remember, be emboldened to pursue their dream, and yes...you may even unearth their name.

Happy sleuthing to you,

Madeline Lister, Trent Lakes, Ontario Canada

PS If someone from your past was "a hand on your shoulder", I'd love to hear your story. Please email me at madelinesmusings@gmail.com





It's Party Time with Lesley

by Lesley R. Nuttall

How About a Winter Theme Party?

Happy "2016" to everyone! May this be your best year ever! Life is so much more fun when you have a party with friends or family. It's time to bring some more happiness into your life and enjoy that friendship time.

Winter party themes are not something we think about, but it can be an exciting and fun event. Here, where I live, our winter is white and sparkling snow wherever you look. I decided to make this winter party theme about the colors white and silver. The decorating, tableware, the food, a game, and even what to wear can be about either the colors white or silver.

The decorating will be easy with hanging white or silver cutout snowflakes. Snowballs can be little white styrofoam balls and you could even wrap some of them in tinfoil for silver balls. You could also use some of your silver Christmas tree ornaments to place in fancy large glass bowls or vases to place around the party room.

The dining room table is a place I always like to dress up. Set your table with a white table cloth, white napkins with silver napkin rings, or silver/grey napkins with white napkin rings. Add a couple white or silver candles and have some novelty piece you have on hand in silver as your center piece.

When sending out your invitations (or personal phone call,) let your guests know what your theme is, suggesting that they wear something in one or both of those colors. Of course, men can get away with wearing a "white shirt." Now, at this time, if you wish, you could tell your guest that this will be a "pot luck" dinner, and each guest could bring one dish in these colors. Of course, something in a silver food would be difficult, but they could put it in a silver serving dish.

I suggest going "pot luck" as it makes your planning time cut in half and makes it less of a chore! My friends (or cousins) and I do this quite often. It adds a lot of interest in what someone else has made, and you end up getting a new recipe! Now, I know I normally advice not to have food all in the same color, but in this case, I will applaud the effort as I know it will work out.

As hostess, you will be responsible for supplying the dishes, cutlery, and beverages. You could make an appetizer if you wish, but not necessary. You could also make one "white food dish" yourself, and I am adding a salad that you could make the morning of the party.

If you would like to play a game with the guests, make up a "word game" using winter words. This is relatively easy to do. Try to have about 15-20 words which you will scramble, and your guest will have to put them in the proper order in, say, ten minutes. Have paper and pencil/pens available for them to use. Have the guests work in pairs, as it makes it so much more fun. I'm including a few words to start you off: snowballs, snowflake, icicles, slippery, blizzard, snowshoes, snow machine, snow bank, sliding, skating. Snowing, freezing. Now just add a few more of your own. If you wanted, you could have a small silly prize to give to the winners. Remember, it's all in fun. And fun and laughter lowers stress level, so what ever you do, make it fun for your guests!

For a successful party, the pre-planning is very important. So, be precise and plan out each part of the party. I always put my husband in charge of looking after the drinks, ice, drink glasses, etc., which also takes some pressure off of you.

With all this in mind, your party will be a big "hit!" Have a wonderful time with your guests, and best wishes to everyone in the new year!

NIPPY CUCUMBER SALAD

3 large cucumbers (washed and cubed)	1 large onion (quartered and sliced)
1 cup cauliflower florets (bite size)	1/4 cup chopped chives or scallion tops
1/4 cup sour mayonnaise	1/4 cup sour cream
salt & pepper to taste	

Combine all ingredients, but add the sour cream and mayonnaise just before serving. Yield: 6-8 servings

©2016 Lesley R. Nuttall is the author of *Secrets of Party Planning, a guide to easy entertaining*. She lives with her husband in Dryden, Ontario, Canada. Email: lesleyrose@shaw.ca

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ST. VALENTINE

by Jo Branham

Who was St. Valentine? From the research I've done, I've found that it's really hard to tell fact from fiction. There are at least three different saints named Valentine. No one is absolutely sure which of these is celebrated as the Saint of Lovers – or if it's a combination of the three.

The one that is most well-known was a priest in Rome who was executed on February 14, 270 AD.

Around this time period, the Emperor of Rome made a decree that no one was allowed to wed. He felt that marriage made a man weak – and he needed strong soldiers to fight his battles.

Valentine was sympathetic to the young lovers who came to him and soon was performing secret marriage ceremonies for these couples. Of course, it was only a matter of time before the secret got out, the Emperor found out and Valentine was arrested.

The Emperor was impressed with Valentine. He found him to be a very learned man. But when Valentine refused to denounce his Christian faith and worship the Roman gods as the Emperor wanted him to – the Emperor grew very angry and sentenced Valentine to death.

While in jail, Valentine formed an attachment to the jailer's blind daughter. One version of the story says that by Valentine's strong faith in God, he prayed for the girl and her vision was restored. No one knows if that part is true, but it is recorded that he and the girl became very good friends. So when he knew he was condemned to death, Valentine asked for pen and paper to write her a farewell message. Tradition states he signed it "from your Valentine."

The holiday evolved over time and by the 18th century, gift-giving and exchanging hand-made cards had become common in England. Eventually the tradition spread to America. In the 1840s, the first commercially produced Valentine's Day cards hit the stores. Hallmark began mass-producing cards in the early 1900s. Now, Valentine's Day is second only to Christmas as to the number of cards that are sold and mailed.

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