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It was Easter Sunday in Austria, the year was 1945, but no one was allowed to go to church because of the Allied air raids. We always – that is, every day, every one – sat in the cellar for cover, from 11 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon, until the danger was over and we could go about our chores again.

On that Easter Sunday my Oma cooked a most delicious soup. Then with her fists she banged on the dining room table for our attention, and said: “Today we are not going down to the cellar to take cover. We are going to eat our soup!”

So we three children – my older sister, myself, and my younger brother – sat around the table with my mother and Oma and started eating our soup, while outside the usual war game went on.

All at once, in a split second, one of the Allied planes came flying low and bang-bang-bang shot at our window. We all screamed and ran down to the cellar for protection. When we came back up at 3 o'clock, we went outside and saw that the bullets had missed our window by only an inch! We believed that because God takes care of His children, the bullets did not come into the window and hit us. That

Easter Sunday He showed us that He is God – and we praised His Name as holy.

That day I remembered an Easter Sunday a couple of years earlier in Traunau. Early in the morning my whole family went to my grandparents' house to see what the Easter Bunny had brought us. [In Romania the climate is warm in the spring, so the children can go out into the garden for the Easter Bunny hunt.] We three children stormed into the garden and discovered two beautifully hand-woven reed-doll carriages, one for my sister and one for me. For my brother there was a beautifully hand-carved wooden horse for him to pull. That day we were the happiest children in town. On the way home our hearts overflowed with praises and hallelujahs.

In Germany a couple of years after the war, we learned that the dawn of Easter Sunday is very important. Everyone goes to church with a basket of food. There the food gets blessed and taken home so that each member of each family eats of the blessed food. And so Easter Sundays unfold in an endless aura of grace and goodness.

Now those were Easter Sundays of long ago and far away places. Many of us here in the



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Greater Toronto Area still gather at dawn every Easter Sunday and have breakfast at the church. Ours is splendidly decorated and the food is of fine quality. There are people with us from all the continents of the world and each has an interesting story to tell about how they celebrated this day in their homelands. Before we eat, we pray for the poor, not only here in Toronto but in those many faraway lands. We pray, so our hearts will be filled with inner joy, with peace and with happiness.

Why is Easter Sunday so special in all these lands around the world? Because this is the time when our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose up again. He died on a cross and was laid in a tomb. A great stone was put in front of his tomb to make certain no one would open the grave to take away his body. At dawn on Easter Sunday, some women wanted to go to the grave to embalm Jesus' body. But they knew the stone in front of the tomb was very heavy and so they were worried about who would roll it away for them. As they came into the garden they saw a man whom they thought was the gardener. The women asked him to help them roll away the stone, but he answered them that the tomb was open. When they looked inside, they saw an angel sitting where Jesus' body was supposed to be.



Then the women realized that the gardener was actually Jesus in disguise. They stood there in awe and asked: "Was that our friend Jesus, who was crucified, died and was buried?" Then they ran back to their friends and told them what had happened.

Also in that garden were many flowers blooming. They were snowbells. They were all over the garden like a thick carpet. And hidden beneath those snowbells were Easter bunnies rolling stones over the ground. But as the women talked those stones turned into those brightly coloured eggs. So it is that every Easter Sunday those brightly coloured eggs become the symbol of rebirth for everyone.

And so it is that on Easter Sunday here in Toronto many years later, I survived war planes to tell my Sunday School class this fabulous Easter story, which I always complete by saying: "And His kingdom shall have no end."

For those who still believe in the power of tradition to illuminate and enchant us, listen to my stories as you would to a companion cook, as you make the recipes I learned from my Oma and mother, and now pass on as a mother and Oma.



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In Canada my family begins the Easter season with Shrove Tuesday, which is six weeks before Easter. Some people in Canada call this day "Pancake Tuesday". On that day we go to our church and some other churches in our neighbourhood. Join us for a feast of pancakes and sausages [which is very German] with maple syrup [which is very Canadian].

Pfannkuchen (Pan Cakes)

12 eggs
2 cups buttermilk, or as much
as the dough will absorb
3 cups flour
4 Tbsp. ground flax seed
3 Tbsp. olive oil

Using a wooden spoon, beat eggs. Add buttermilk. Mix in flour. Heat up a frying pan and put in oil.

Once oil is very hot, drop in one soup ladle-full of batter and fry until golden brown on one side, flip and do the second side. Transfer onto plate. Spread one teaspoon of cottage cheese, then one teaspoon of jam, over top. Roll and put in a casserole dish to stay warm until meal is served. Do another soup ladle-full of batter and continue until batter gone.
Makes about twelve.

My husband Karl and I use this recipe four times over, to make about fifty Pfannkuchen. We celebrate the fullness of life with our friends at these churches in the way we have learned: to accept – to belong – to contribute!



The next day is Ash Wednesday, and we again go to our church, where our minister puts the ash cross on our forehead. And herewith we entered the Lenten season, during which we don't eat meat for six weeks. I have written out a few of my meatless recipes below for you to try out

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Griessnockerl Suppe [Dumpling Soup]

3 Tbsp. sweet butter
2 eggs
nutmeg to taste
salt to taste
200 gr. cream of wheat
2 tsp. cottage cheese
14 cups of water
5 tsp. chicken or vegetable bouillon powder
chopped chives or parsley

Soften [without melting!] butter in microwave our out of fridge overnight. Add eggs, nutmeg, cottage cheese and salt. Mix well with a fork. Now slowly add cream of wheat while mixing with a fork to a soft workable consistency.

This soup can be a meal in itself. Children love it and so does everyone else!

Vegetable Casserole

[or as my friend Michael calls it, "Vegetable Soufflé"]

1 cup pearl barley
1 package frozen California vegetable mix
Olive oil
3 tsp. chicken or vegetable bouillon powder
1 1/2 cups of water
6 Eggs
1/2 cup of milk
350 gr. cheese
3 Tbsp. breadcrumbs
250 gr. sour cream
Cook barley in water flavoured with bouillon powder until all water is evaporated and ab-

[You may need a little more cream of wheat.]
Let mixture rest.

Now measure the water into a large soup pot. Add the bouillon and bring to a boil. Using a teaspoon, scoop out a small amount of the mixture and form a "nockerl" around your finger into a curling shape, then carefully drop into the boiling water. Do this until you use up the mixture. Cook for about half an hour, keeping the water at a gentle boil with the lid on but slightly askew so you have a gap where steam can escape. The nockerls are done when fluffy and light throughout. To have successful dumplings you must stick to this rhythm. When dumplings are finished, garnish soup with parsley or chives.

sorbed. Heat oil in wok. Put in vegetables and stir fry quickly until done to your taste. Now mix barley and vegetables in a bowl. Butter casserole and sprinkle breadcrumbs on the bottom. Put vegetable mix in casserole.

Beat eggs with milk and pour over vegetable mix. Grate cheese, mix with breadcrumbs, then sprinkle on top. Plop on sour cream. Bake in oven at 350 F for an hour.

Mix everything [except cheese and breadcrumbs] with wooden spoon in a large bowl. Scrape into a casserole dish and sprinkle with breadcrumbs and cheese. Bake at 325° F for one hour.

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Lentil Stew

2 cups red lentils
2 cups green lentils
2 cups medium potatoes, grated
4 medium carrots, grated
4 medium celery sticks, sliced small
2 medium onions, sliced
1 cup yoghurt or sour cream
3 chicken bouillon cubes

Put lentils and vegetables into a large soup pot. Add enough water to cover. Cook on low for two hours. Stir occasionally with a spoon while stewing. Add the cubes and yoghurt, bring to a quick boil, and serve with spätzl or rye bread.



Griess-Nudeln [Semolina Noodles]

1 pack [500 gr.] egg noodles [cook according to package directions]
1 1/2 cups of water
1 cup cream of wheat
3 Tbsp. olive oil

While noodles are boiling, heat oil in a large saucepan and add cream of wheat. Stir fry until good and golden brown. When brown, add water and continue to cook for a while. Add cooked noodles and stir fry until well mixed.

This tastes good with any type of salad, but I prefer it with the red beet salad.



Red Beet Salad

1 pack [500 gr.] egg noodles [cook according to package directions]
1 1/2 cups of water
1 cup cream of wheat
3 Tbsp. olive oil

Peel beets and then grate. Steam for about ten minutes. Let cool, add raisins and a little salt. Stir. Add salad dressing [below]. Serves five people.



Salad Dressing

3 Tbsp. honey or sugar
1 cup hot water
vinegar/apple cider to taste
3 Tbsp. olive oil

Dissolve honey/sugar in water. Add vinegar according to your taste. Pour oil on salad, then add half of the vinegar solution. Save the rest in the fridge for another time.

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Holy Week goes from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, eight days in all. On the Thursday of that week we go to church, where we wash each other's feet. The altar is stripped of its decoration. A black altar cloth prepares us for the mourning of the next day, Good Friday, when we listen to a very quiet and somber sermon before returning home to ponder.

In Traunau, the climate is more favourable at Easter than here in Canada, so that greens are coming out in the garden. The Thursday before Good Friday is Grim Donnerstag and we always ate spinach from the garden, prepared as described below:

Creamed Spinach

10 oz. fresh spinach

2 eggs

1 1/2 cups of milk

4 Tbsp. flour

2 oz. olive oil or butter

salt

Wash spinach, then boil in water approximately

10-15 minutes. Drain. Chop with a large knife as fine as possible. In the same pot, heat olive oil/butter. Add flour, stir until golden brown. Stir in spinach. Add eggs. Add milk gradually as spinach boils so that mixture thickens. Let boil only a few minutes, adding salt to taste.

Serves five. Excellent for small children along with scrambled eggs or boiled potatoes.

During this fasting time, especially on Grim Donnerstag, we in Traunau ate a lot of creamed spinach while the sheep were lambing. I recall once when I was quite small that one of our ewes gave birth to twins, one black and one white. My father in his delight brought those two lambs into our bedroom early in the morning, for my sister and I to see and touch. What an exciting event it was!

We children would always get new dresses for the Easter parade, which we put on as we chatted about the Easter Bunny, wondering if he would again lay coloured eggs in our garden and leave us sweets, like chocolates and Lebkuchen dolls. But now that's enough about good, old, sad Europe and the sad days before Easter. Let us look at what we make in my family for the actual day of celebration.

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Fried Chicken

Chicken parts
Breadcrumbs
Flour, sifted into a large bowl
Eggs, beaten in a large bowl
Olive oil

Wash then dry chicken parts. Salt. Roll in flour bowl, then roll in egg bowl, then roll in bread-crumbs. Heat oil in large frying pan. Fry chicken until golden brown, turning often and carefully until cooked through

Mashed Potatoes

6 medium-sized potatoes
1 large sweet potato
200 gr. butter
Milk

Peel potatoes and cut up until each piece is one inch in diameter. Fill pot with water and cook until soft. Pour off water, put in butter, mash while pouring in milk until nice and smooth.

Green Salad

Any kind of green salad will go with this meal. Remember to use the special salad dressing recipe above!

Here is a blessing I often use before we eat:

*Let me be an inspiration to the would-be uninspired.
Let me soothe and comfort when a mind becomes too tired.
Let me have the insight to know when there's a need.
Let me be a blessing, Lord, and do a loving deed.*

*Let me lend a helping hand without the need to ask.
Let me ease the burden of another person's task.
Let me bring some happiness, and let there be a time
For me to be a blessing, Lord, to those whose lives touch mine.*

[Patricia N. Boyes]

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Sour Cream Coffee Cake

Cake Batter:

3/4 cup butter or olive oil
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
1 dash each of vanilla, lemon and rum flavouring
3 cups flour
1 cup sour cream
3 tsp. baking powder

In mixer blend butter/oil, eggs and flavours until creamy. Add sour cream and continue mixing for a few more minutes. Add flour and baking powder, and blend by hand with a wooden spoon

Filling:

1/2 cup sugar
1 cup finely ground walnuts
3 tsp. cinnamon

add filling to cake batter with a fork. Do not blend completely, but leave streaks.

Mix filling ingredients in a separate bowl, then

Butter an 11" chimney-spring form. Pour mix into the form. Bake at 325 °F for an hour. Let cake cool for a few minutes after removal from oven before overturning form and letting it drop out.

Teegebäck [Tea Cookies]

1/2 cup sugar
1 cup finely ground walnuts
3 tsp. cinnamon

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl by hand with a wooden spoon. When dough handles well and is smooth, roll out on flour-coated table to about half a centimeter thickness. Cut out with your favourite cookie cutters, put on un-greased cookie sheet, and then sprinkle as desired with coloured sugar. Bake at 350 °F for fifteen minutes.

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Rum Bombe

Bottom part:

8 eggs, separated
100 gr. sugar
100 gr. flour
8 Tbsp. warm water
Dash of vanilla flavour

Filling:

1 package Chocolate Pudding Powder [my favourite is Dr. Oetker]
2 cups of milk
150 gr. icing sugar
250 gr. sweet butter
2 - 4 ounces of rum [my favourite is Stroh Rum from Austria]

Cook pudding as directed on the package. Cool by placing hot pot into a larger one filled with cold water. Stir slowly and constantly while cooling so no skin is formed.

Glazing:

100 gr. icing sugar
5 tsp. chocolate powder

Mix egg yolks and sugar in a large bowl at medium speed, while adding water spoon by spoon. Add flavour. Beat until very fluffy.

In a smaller bowl beat the egg white until stiff, and then fold into the yolk mixture with a wooden spoon. Pour into a 10" greased and flour-dusted spring form. Bake at 325 F for forty-five minutes. Let cool.

Mix icing sugar and soft butter in large mixing bowl until fluffy and creamy. Add cooled pudding gradually until completely blended into a chocolate cream.

Slice cake in half. Cut the top portion into small pieces, about a half inch square. Put pieces into a bowl and sprinkle the rum over them. Then mix in chocolate cream by hand using a wooden spoon. Heap onto bottom portion of cake as if making an anthill.

Mix sugar and chocolate powder with a very little bit of warm water. [Careful! Glazing should not be too runny.] Spoon glazing onto "anthill" slowly until whole cake is covered.

Your Rum-Bombe is now finished and ready to explode in everyone's mouth.

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I like traditions very much, because I believe strongly that traditions give meaning to our lives. Without traditions there would be no civilization – we would still live in caves!

One of the times I was on CBC cooking show “Loving Spoonful”, I told the story of how we celebrated Easter so long ago in my first home, as I’ve shared with you. I told of how, at dawn on Easter Sunday in Germany, I was sent to the church with a basket of a baked Easter lambs [signifying bread], coloured eggs, salt, cottage cheese and ham. After the sermon we held them up high and the priest would bless them. Then we went back to our home where the tables were set very festively, and everyone in the family ate a small part of everything in the basket.

Now in Canada, when Easter dawn comes we attend the service at church and greet each other afterwards with “He is risen, He is risen indeed!” Then the whole congregation gathers for breakfast down in the basement hall. Karl and I always bring the centerpieces: a plate with green plastic grass [since we are, after all, in cold Canada] holding a baked Easter lamb and some coloured eggs. Everyone breaks off a piece of the lamb to symbolize the breaking of bread during the Last Supper.

To make the Lambs:

8 eggs, separated
100 gr. Sifted flour
1 tsp. baking powder
100 gr. sugar
5 tsp. lukewarm water
2 Tbsp. vanilla, lemon & rum flavours
Beat egg white until very stiff in mixing bowl then transfer to another bowl. In original mixing bowl, beat together sugar and egg yolks, adding the flavours and water. Beat to a nice creamy consistency. Add flour and egg white, mixing slowly with a wooden spoon.

Grease the lamb mould, dust with flour, fill with the mixture and bake at 325 °F for 45 minutes. This mixture is enough for three lambs.



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I am a strong believer in traditions because that's how our civilization has survived the many terrors that lurked in the dark years gone by, such as war planes zooming in on our homes. To make sure the light is spread, each year I design and mail about twenty Easter cards to European family and friends. Also, if I feel some tension between myself and my friends here, I write to them and ask them for forgiveness should I have hurt them. Easter is, after all, about resurrecting love.

