

Post-Christmas Wrap Up



Dinner table~Christmas Day

I am happy to report that we had an absolutely lovely Christmas. In spite of a late night Christmas Eve, this blessed day could not have been better. With just our clan of 5, we experienced the best of family time, food and traditions. Here is a look at our post-Christmas wrap up.

Gingerbread Houses



Gingerbread Chicken Coop

As you may recall, I just started making a gingerbread house two years ago. Utilizing a set of templates from Martha Stewart (that are so old you can't even find them referenced online), I select the chicken coop instead of the log cabin. To see my log cabin last year, click [here](#).



To be honest, Martha's chicken coop template is a rather boring structure. It looks a bit like a warehouse and doesn't really have any resemblance to our chicken coop. But I proceed anyway, in hopes that I can add elements to make it more attractive. The log cabin design is much more interesting. Gingerbread dough is quite tasty and you can find the recipe [here](#). I make 3 batches for all the pieces.



The pieces are assembled and "glued" together with Royal icing ~ 4 cups of confectioners sugar, 3 tablespoons meringue powder and 6 tablespoons of water.

Using shredded wheat cereal and mini-York peppermint patties,

texture is added to the roof. Frosting tinted to look like adobe is painted on the sides. Pretzels trim around the entries and melted butterscotch candies make up the glass in the windows.



Chocolate piece is the ramp to the coop

My attempt to make gingerbread chickens is a complete failure, so thankfully, I have these wooden chicken magnets as the coop's occupants. Chocolate blocks become shutters and fresh greens dress up the window sills.



Camper Gingerbread



A few years ago, I saw this cute gingerbread camper by [Sugar and Cloth](#). However, the instructions are vague and I would imagine their vintage camper was done by a professional baker.

My camper kept collapsing and the pieces didn't really fit together. Completely frustrated, it was going in the trash. So my husband ate the wheels and a few pieces and as I'm ready to discard it, my youngest daughter insisted we not give up.



Our vintage party camper

And I am so glad she did! So I baked a few more wheels and created new pieces that would fit. Candied windows and colorful lights make it look like a party camper. Though far from perfect, this became a great mother/daughter project. It is SO cute!



Coconut leftover from the chicken coop is the "yard"

Raisins and chia seeds make up the walk. A paper cocktail umbrella provides shade to the lounge chair. A leftover Christmas tree cookie is placed on the roof. By the time we are finished decorating, we are belly laughing and having so much fun! A worthwhile rescue!

Unexpected Christmas Joy



A Christmas tea with a dear friend

On the 24th, I dropped off a present to my friend, Janie. We met at her outside back terrace and she surprised me with a cup of Christmas tea and shortbread cookies. What I thought was going to be a few minute gift exchange, turned into a lovely hour of conversation. Using her beautiful Spode tea cups and this incredible needlepoint tea cozy, made the time even more special and festive.



I don't have a tea cozy, but I just purchased one on eBay that is identical to this! It is surprising how hot that cover kept the teapot, especially outside in the cool weather. Now I just need the cups!

Making Homemade Bacon



Smoking a pork belly

My daughter, Elisabeth (almost 20) is starting to learn to cook. She decided she wanted to make bacon for Christmas morning. Make bacon? So she went to the butcher and bought a 3 lb. pork belly, cured it (brown sugar, pepper, salt, distilled water and [Prague powder](#)) for several days and then smoked it for a few hours until it reached the ideal temperature.



On Christmas morning, she sliced it up and cooked it for the family and it was absolutely delicious! Who knew?

A Collaborative Cooking Day



Eggs a la Goldenrod

In addition to homemade bacon, my husband and other daughter, Julianna made Eggs a la Goldenrod (see recipe [here](#)), my son picked oranges from the orchard and made fresh squeezed mimosa and I made cinnamon rolls from sourdough starter discard (delicious!). Recipe from Amy at Little Spoon Farm is [here](#).



Homemade cinnamon rolls from Little Spoon Farm



Traditional Christmas suit and fresh squeezed orange juice

Disguising Gifts



After breakfast, we moved to the living room to open gifts. A

rather tired looking Santa is sitting in one of the wing chairs. The children laugh about it and we go on to unwrap all the presents under the tree.

Finally, my daughter asks if she can “unwrap” Santa, which happens to be a cello for her. Though it was a bit comical trying to dress the cello as Santa, it is a good way to disguise the gift.



Elisabeth and her new cello

After we opened presents, the rest of the day is spent cooking, both indoors and out.



Chicken on the rotisserie

My dear friend, Connie let us borrow her smoker while she is out of town and we have certainly put it to good use. A rather non-traditional holiday dinner consists of smoked baby back ribs, a chicken on the rotisserie, stuffing, gravy, pear and apple chutney, spiced red cabbage with apples and oranges, twice baked potatoes, roasted vegetables, persimmon bread and mincemeat pie.



Twice baked potatoes



Homemade smoked ribs

Dinner was consumed in the pink themed dining room, which just felt magical. If you missed that post, you can see it [here](#). Needless to say, it's time to exercise and eat greens again!

The day ended with our fabulous neighbors coming by to sing Christmas carols and deliver an amazing gift. In spite of this challenging year, I could not have asked for a more perfect day~filled with laughter, love and some of the best food I've ever eaten.



Cooper on patrol

The time between Christmas and New Year's is one of my favorites~enjoying the slower pace of it all and wearing elastic waist pants! With the new year, I will get back on track exercising and eating better, but for now I am giving myself permission to enjoy my family being all together and our good health.

Sending warm, relaxing wishes for the balance of 2020.

Mary

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