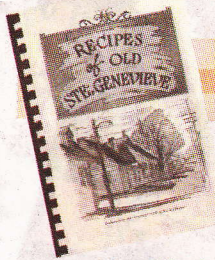


Woman's Club Cookbook Has Recipes For Remembering The Past

BY JEAN FELD RISSOVER
THE STE. GENEVIEVE HERALD



The 19th Century French author Charles Pierre Monselet put it this way: "Ponder well on this point: the pleasant hours of our life are all connected by a more or less tangible link, with some memory of the table."

In other words, if we are what we eat, we're also the sum total of the remembrances that are stirred in us by the foods we consume.

"That's one of the wonderful things about finding these cookbooks," says Judy Gustafson, president of the Woman's Club of Ste. Genevieve, the local chapter of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. "There are some great recipes, of course, but this cookbook also is a very wonderful look back at what life was like in this community some 60 years ago."

Gustafson is talking about the club's 1959 publication *Recipes of Old Ste. Genevieve*. The book was created by the club as a fund-raiser. It was an instant hit, crammed with "tried and tested recipes by the members and friends of the Woman's Club of Ste. Genevieve."

The book also contained wonderful illustrations created by the late Roscoe Misselhorn and imaginative graphics by artist Charles Rhinehart.

The cookbook was so popular it went through nine reprints between the first edition and a reprint in 2004.

"Even with the reprint six years ago, I think everyone thought the books were somewhat scarce," Gustafson said. "Then we found a real treasure. There were hundreds of copies that had been stored and forgotten. We are so pleased to have found them so we can make them available."

The book is subtitled "The Gateway to Shared Delicacies from Our Kitchens," an apt description of the recipes it contains. It's also, however, a walk down memory lane, both in terms of the kinds of foods that were popular when the book was created, and the personalities who



contributed them.

The names of the recipes are evocative: Crabmeat Queens (an elegant canape—despite the fact that canned cream of mushroom soup is a key ingredient); or Thousand Dollar Fudge (at today's currency value, make that \$8,330 Fudge).

While many of the culinary concoctions are simple, others are challenging and complex. Mrs. E. Lawrence's angel food cake recipe takes up a full page in the book, although it has just seven ingredients. Busy Day Sauce, contributed by Mrs. A.E. Sexauer has three ingredients which only need mixing.

To some degree, the differences reflect how times were changing in America and this community. A "Can I do it quicker and easier?" emphasis was creeping into cookery during the late 1950s as more women moved into the workforce (34 percent of women worked in 1950; by 1960 it was almost 46 percent).

And new technology was making its way into the kitchen. The year 1955 saw the introduction of instant oatmeal by Quaker. (That year also saw the first home microwave ovens manufactured by Tappan...but there

likely were few here, because of the \$1,300 price tag.) Two years later, 5,000 new "convenience" products hit the supermarket shelves, including frozen pizza.

All the same, the cookbook contains many traditional—and extremely tasty—favorites, including recipes for liver dumplings and knaeflies (contributed by Mrs. Gilbert Flieg and Mrs. Alice L. Rehm, respectively), Southern Oven Fried Chicken (as created by Teresa Karl), and Chess Pie (from Harriet Operle).

Some of the most memorable entries are from residents and club mem-

bers who are no longer living: Fran Ballinger, Bernetta Bader, Margaret Barley, Lucille Eydmann, Lillian Lanning and Vion Schram. The late Joe Vorst, one of the luminaries of the art colony and summer art school that was active in Ste. Genevieve in the 1930s, contributed a recipe.

What's most important to some people about any cookbook is whether the recipes are good to eat. They are. There's an avocado caesar salad recipe from Mrs. Jim Carroll that could take any Top Chef cook-off, and a Pan-Barbecued Steak with Special Sauce from Mrs. Katie Otte that will melt the heart of even an Iron Chef.

"I think people will find lots of great recipes," Gustafson said. "But even if you're someone who just buys cookbooks to read, this is one you'll want to have. It really would make a terrific holiday gift, too."

The cookbooks are on sale at the Show-Me Shop and Stella & Me in downtown Ste. Genevieve, and they are available through members of the Woman's Club. The cost is \$8; the proceeds from the sales help support club activities, such as annual scholarship awards.

At twice the price it would be a bargain. *Recipes of Old Ste. Genevieve* is a wonderful demonstration of Monselet's view. Truly, these memories of the dining table provide a glimpse of some of the most pleasant hours in the life of this community.