

WHAT'S IN THE OVEN?

By Cindy Peters

For many people, cooking, baking, taking items out of the oven and eating is of the most romantic and sensual thing in the world. Not to me, as cooking, baking, and using the oven is just an end to a means. The oven brings back some of the fragrant memories of people and events throughout my entire life. My mom, her mother and my mother-in-law were great cooks and bakers. Those wonderful smells that poured out of their kitchens are still engrained in my brain. It was their passion and how they showed their love to their family. There is nothing better than an oven-baked meal on a cold day or to celebrate a special holiday.

Cooking and baking have never been my passion. However, there is something in my DNA that uses family and church book recipes. I admit that I will never be a Martha Stewart, however my meals and baked goods from the oven usually turn out pretty darn good. I know what is old becomes new again like gas stoves and ovens. I still like simple electric stoves and ovens. I have bad memories from my childhood of smelling gas from gas stoves or the tragic idea of someone putting their head in the oven to end their life.

Two years ago, we moved into our condo at Windsor Garden. The inspector turned on the oven but did not wait for it to go from pre-heat to bake. Thus, we ended up with a broken oven which would not turn on from pre-heat to bake so we had to buy a new one. I always dreamed of a double oven, however it did not fit in our new kitchen. So, I asked the clerk for a split rack in the oven. I had to go through three clerks before an elderly clerk knew what I meant by a split rack. Apparently, they rarely sell them.

My biggest thrill was the purchase of my new stove and oven which was my first convection oven. So far, I have better luck using the standard oven, but I keep practicing with the convection oven. My favorite things to bake in the oven are banana bread, chocolate chip cookies, ham, baked potatoes, goulash, meat loaf and turkey. Many people in our building do not cook or bake so I usually have leftovers to share with them.

I have learned many secrets since moving from the mid-west to high altitude baking. I have learned how and when to make the proper adjustments for various recipes. Oh, I need to go take the bread out of the oven. Why my bread is not as good as my grandmother's bread is a lifelong mystery. Oh well. Bon appetite!