

## Blame It on My 'Iffy' Oven

*By Marilyn Reeves*

When I moved into my condo at Windsor Gardens I inherited my stove from the previous owner. It looked relatively new – white with black trim and a black glass oven door, which matches the built-in microwave that hovers over the stove top. The only problem, as I was soon to discover, is that the oven temperature setting is out of whack. If a recipe says to heat the oven to 350 degrees and bake for 45 minutes, I have learned to set the oven at least 50 degrees lower and bake for about a half hour. Things usually turn out just about right with those adjustments, although baking cakes, cookies and other goodies require a bit more fine tuning.

I don't bake as many desserts as I used to. Living alone, I can't really justify baking a whole batch of brownies, for instance. And with Covid restrictions strictly enforced in our building, I'm no longer able to share goodies with my neighbors.

Another reason I don't do as much baking is that sweet things tend to taste *too* sweet to my ageing palate. I used to love homemade Tollhouse cookies – made with real butter, brown & white sugar, and those delicious little semi-sweet chocolate morsels that would melt in my mouth with each bite. But nowadays, if I eat a chocolate-chip cookie, the only taste that lingers in my mouth is sugar. I might as well skip all the fuss and bother and just eat a spoonful of sugar right out of the bowl!

There is one thing I still dearly love to bake, however. Once or twice a year I get an irresistible craving for Mom's mocha-chocolate cake. After much trial and error over the years I have managed to come up with a half recipe that comes out nearly perfect every time. (If it doesn't, I can always blame it on my 'iffy' oven.) But as delicious as my half-cake recipe is, I like my 5-minute fudge frosting even better. So as the days go by and the cake begins to dry out, I end up eating more of that delectable fudge frosting than cake. Finally, about the fifth day, it's time to say goodbye to my chocolate indulgence. I toss the remainder of the cake (minus most of the icing) into the trash, and look forward to the next time I get an uncontrollable craving to do it all again.