

Excerpt from the book, 'Old Farm Country Cookbook'

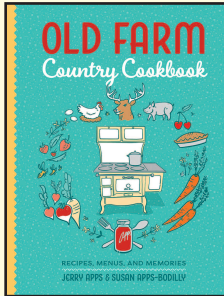
Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from "Old Farm Country Cookbook: Recipes, Menus, and Memories," by the father and daughter team of Jerry Apps and Susan Apps-Bodilly, published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press. The excerpt is reprinted here with permission from the publisher.

Chapter 17: "Ma's Strawberry Patch"

When [I] was growing up on a Wisconsin farm in the 1930s and 1940s, times were tough. Yet most folks living on farms had plenty to eat. Preparing food from scratch was just the way things were done, and people knew what was in their food and where it came from. Delicious meals were at the center of every family social affair—whether it be a threshing-day dinner or end-of-school-year picnic—and because of that food, for me, food will always be associated with times of good eating, storytelling, laughter, and good-hearted fun. One such sweet memory involves the strawberries we grew, and ate.

The first strawberry patch that I remember at our farm was located west of the red pine windbreak, just before you arrived at the night pasture. It was about a half-acre and was fenced so the cows couldn't trample the berries. Ma was in charge of the strawberry patch, and she took the responsibility very seriously. During the strawberry season—from early spring, when the plants needed hoeing, through the picking season, which ended in mid-July or so, depending on the weather—we were in Ma's employ. Even Pa had to put off other pressing farm duties when the strawberries were ripe; it was all hands on deck. Along with her chicken flock, Ma's strawberries represented her own income, money that she used for groceries, Christmas and birthday presents, and occasionally clothes and shoes for my brothers and me.

She grew two varieties: Sparkle, a June berry that took up the majority of the patch, and a few rows of ever-bearing strawberries that ripened in June and offered a smaller crop in fall as well. Ma's strawberry patch was a "pick your own" project, meaning that folks from Wild Rose, Wautoma, and other nearby villages would come out to the farm and pick berries, under Ma's watchful eye. She organized the picking to a T. She constructed markers for each row, and when someone arrived to pick (no children allowed in the patch), she assigned them to a row. And they had to stay on their row until it was picked clean, no matter if the row next to it appeared to have better, more lus-



As a youngster, the cookbook's co-author, Susan Apps-Bodilly, helps make whipped cream in her mom's kitchen. Licking the beaters was her reward. (Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society Press)

cious berries. She sold the berries by the quart, and most people picked into the wooden quart berry boxes that Ma supplied for pickers who did not have their own.

Ma was considerably peeved when pickers heaped up their quart boxes, filling them a quart and a half full or more. She reminded them that a quart meant a quart, and that meant level at the top, or perhaps with a tiny bit of heap. Those who did not abide by her rules—stay on your row, no heaping—were not invited back.

My brothers, Pa, and I picked many quarts of strawberries as well, for our own use and for trading at the Mercantile in Wild Rose. Ma traded crates of strawberries (a crate held sixteen quarts) for groceries. During strawberry season, we'd bring several crates of strawberries to the Mercantile at least twice a week—on free movie night, which was Tuesday, and on our regular Saturday evening trip to town.

Sometimes when the strawberry crop was especially good, Pa and we boys loaded several quarts of strawberries in the back of our 1936 Plymouth and

headed toward one of the nearby towns—Plainfield, Wautoma, Pine River, or Waupaca. We stayed away from Wild Rose, because Ma didn't want us to compete with the Mercantile, one of her best customers.

Peddling strawberries worked like this. Pa would send my "cute" twin brothers to knock on a prospective customer's door, each carrying a nicely filled quart of freshly picked strawberries. (To make sure the berries looked especially fresh, Pa always dumped them into a fresh box after the ride in the Plymouth.) I stood a couple steps in back of my brothers. As the eldest, I was expected to have answers at the ready for the customers' questions: "Where are you from? How much are your berries? Are these two cute little guys twins?" It was that last question that usually got my goat, but I smiled and answered, always hoping to sell at least two quarts, maybe even three or four. And we usually did.

Ma saved some strawberries for our family to eat, of course, and eat them we did. We loved them in fresh strawberry pie (see recipe) and sauce, in Ma's homemade jam, and even the deceptively simple sounding strawberry sandwich.

Apps Family Strawberry Pie Recipe

Recipe drawn from Eleanor Apps's well-worn recipe box, and reprinted with permission from "Old Farm Country Cookbook," 2018

Ingredients

1 Prepared crust for a 1-crust pie (can substitute graham cracker crust)
4 cups fresh strawberries
1½ cups water
½ cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 package (3 ounces) strawberry-flavored gelatin
Whipped cream, for serving

Directions

Bake the pie shell until golden brown. Set aside to cool. Wash and hull the strawberries; drain well. Slice the strawberries and place in the cooled pie shell. Set aside.

Combine the water, sugar, and cornstarch in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Continue to cook over low heat until mixture is thick and clear, about 2 minutes. Add gelatin. Stir until the gelatin is dissolved. Pour hot mixture over the strawberries. Chill until set. Best when served hours later. Top with whipped cream. Note: this recipe can also be made by substituting fresh raspberries and raspberry-flavored gelatin.

Lake Mills Hot Spots & Happenings

Compiled by Jason Francis

Hot Spots

Aztalan State Park, 1213 S. Main St., offers day-use hiking trails and a replica Indian village stockade. Hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. year-round. The park is a National Historic Landmark and contains one of Wisconsin's most important archaeological sites, as it showcases an ancient Middle-Mississippian village that thrived between A.D. 1000 and 1300. The park is in the Town of Aztalan, on the east side of Jefferson County Highway Q, just south of County Highway B. The Aztalan Museum is located just north of the park. 920-648-8774, www.wiparks.net

The **Glacial Drumlin Trail**, a portion of which skirts the southern edge of Lake Mills, offers recreation for hikers and bikers. The 52-mile trail, which follows an old Chicago and Northwestern railway track path (save for a 1.5 mile section northeast of Jefferson), is open 365 days a year. Running between Wisconsin's two largest urban areas, this trail stretches through farmlands and glacial topography. The trail travels through 10 small towns from Cottage Grove to Waukesha. Along the trail near Lake Mills, you will find the **Zeloski Marsh**. This area is a result of a large wetland restoration effort and involves nearly 2,000 acres. When fully restored, the marsh is expected to attract more than 200 species of birds, which would make it a top birding location in southeast Wisconsin. www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/glacialdrumlin/

Happenings

Wednesdays, May 9-Oct. 17, Artisan/ Farmers' Market: Every Wednesday from 2-6:30 p.m. in Commons Park in downtown Lake Mills. Offers fresh and seasonal produce, crafts and art, all produced by farmers, crafters and artisans who grow or create their products. www.legendarylakemills.com/farmers-market

June 3-Lake Mills Triathlon: This sprint distance race includes a 400M swim, 16-mile bike ride and a 5K run. It is a wonderful introductory event for beginner racers and the flat, fast course provides a competitive atmosphere for experienced racers. Pre-race water and post-race refreshments will be served. 7 a.m., Sandy Beach Park. www.lakemillstri.com, www.witriseseries.com

June 6-Lake Mills City Band Concert and Franklin Else Memorial Bandstand Encore Celebration: Concert at Memorial Band Shelter, Commons Park, 7 p.m. Rain site is Lake Mills Community Center. www.facebook.com/LakeMillsCityBand

June 20-Lake Mills City Band: Concert at Memorial Band Shelter, Commons Park, 7 p.m. Rain site is Lake Mills Community Center. www.facebook.com/LakeMillsCityBand

June 21-Lake Mills Night Out Against Crime: Free public health and safety fair. Food, demonstrations for all ages. Sponsored by LM Police, EMS, Fire Department and area health providers. Lake Mills High School, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. www.lakemills.org

June 21-24-Town and Country Days: Carnival, parade, sidewalk sales, live entertainment, brat stand and lots of family fun all weekend long. Parade Saturday at 10 a.m. with more than 100 units that starts on Main Street by the Lake Mills High School and travels downtown to Prospect Street. Thursday and Friday 5-11 p.m., Saturday noon-midnight, Sunday noon-4 p.m. 920-648-3585, www.lakemills.org

July 4-4th Of July Fireworks and Lake Mills City Band concert: Concert at the Seljan Company grounds. Fireworks start at dusk in the Lake Mills Industrial Park. Viewing grounds are at location to be announced. Event is free to the public. www.facebook.com/LM4thofJuly

July 15-Aztalan Day: Celebrates the Native American and pioneer heritages of the township of Aztalan. Featuring outdoor exhibits, food and historical points of interest. The old school is opened for public viewing, and the Aztalan Museum is open for admission. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the museum grounds, N6284

County Hwy Q. 920-648-4632, www.lakemillsaztalanhistory.com

June 18-Lake Mills City Band: Concert at Memorial Band Shelter, Commons Park, 7 p.m. Rain site is Lake Mills Community Center. www.facebook.com/LakeMillsCityBand

July 21-Lake Mills Arts Festival: Annual lake community arts celebration in historic downtown Lake Mills features a juried show of Wisconsin fine artists. Enjoy food, live music, children's activities, and free parking and admission. More than 80 Wisconsin artists, representing multiple genres, will be set up in Commons Park from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 920-648-6721, www.legendarylakemills.com

Aug. 1-Lake Mills City Band: Concert at Memorial Band Shelter, Commons Park, 7 p.m. Rain site is Lake Mills Community Center. www.facebook.com/LakeMillsCityBand

Aug. 8-Lake Mills City Band: Concert at Memorial Band Shelter, Commons Park, 7 p.m. Rain site is Lake Mills Community Center. www.facebook.com/LakeMillsCityBand

Sept. 15-Tyrannena Oktoberfest Bike Ride: 25, 45 and 65-mile routes through Jefferson County countryside begin and end at the Tyrannena Brewery. Rest stops, SAG support, and free tours of the brewery in the afternoon. Enjoy beverages, live music (1-10 p.m.), and a complete dinner. Riders leave between 9:30-11 a.m. Tyrannena Brewing Co., 1025 Owen St. 920-648-8699, www.oktoberfestbikeride.com

Information compiled from internet sources, including local chamber of commerce websites, municipal websites, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's www.travelwisconsin.com, and other websites, unless noted.

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