



# MEMORIES MUSINGS

By Cheri Sims

Cheri lives, writes and gardens in Charleston.

I had a bit of a scare last week and I would like to encourage you to trust your instincts or as the TV commercial said, "the nose knows"! When I bought this old house everything passed inspection so I was confident to live here. The first thing I had removed was the gas cooking stove, I am afraid of open flame and gas leaks so all was well. At Christmas I set up a wrapping station on the enclosed back porch, Mittens and Pitou agreed to share their playroom with me. One night while wrapping I thought I smelled gas but was assured that I was probably smelling the old basement; something I was not used to smelling in the past few years. The smell disappeared until last Sunday; while I was working on my brick patio in the alcove between the back porch and my office. The furnace kicked on and the smell about knocked me off my feet. Noting that the furnace exhaust pipe is on the same side of the house as the gas meter and having been told that the meter has a release valve on it, I assumed the two together made the smell worse; during the course of the night the smell lingered until the next morning.

The next day the smell was gone but during the day the cats alerted me to the fact

that the humane mouse traps in the attic needed attention. To my surprise the two little mice were deceased, for no reason. I had filled the traps with cheddar cheese, not poison. The following day the traps were full again and these two mice were alive so I took them outside and released them. That night the smell returned and the next morning the mice in the traps were deceased. I then recalled a history lesson from school about canaries being taken into the coal mines and if they died there was a gas alert. That night the gas smell returned and the cats would not go out onto the back porch so the next morning I called Ameren.

Adam, the Ameren service man was here within about fifteen minutes and after a brief explanation he began his inspection of this old house. He found nothing suspicious with the meter or anywhere outside or on the main floor and he proceeded to the basement. I accompanied him, I am pretty nose-y, and watched as he used the really interesting gas detection tool, he checked every joint, nook and cranny of the furnace and pipes. Finally, the tool emitted its screeching noise and my worst fears were confirmed, there was a tiny gas leak in one of the old

pipes going to the furnace. Adam did not stop there he proceeded to my gas water heater whereupon he ascertained it was not vented properly. The direction of the vent pipes were going the wrong way and it was vented into an old chimney which was causing carbon monoxide to leak out into the attic. I then told him about the mice in the attic and he immediately shut the water heater off and shut the gas to the house off. Not only was there a gas leak, the improperly vented water heater was causing carbon monoxide to come back into the house but not enough to set off the detectors; just enough to give me my months' long head ache and watery eyes. Adam also suggested I might want to investigate an electric water heater, which I did.

I can not thank Ameren enough for their prompt actions and especially Adam for his diligence in continuing to pursue the matter when at first it looked like everything was in order. I commend him for his calm and cool demeanor; he knew I was upset and effectively controlled the situation in a professional and caring manner. I would also like to thank Atteberry-Marshall Heating and Air for responding to my emergency situation; they removed all the old pipes and fixed the situation. Atteberry's office ladies are great to work with as well. I try to remain calm in emergencies but they were quick to note my fears and were extremely patient and helpful. You will probably think this is silly but I think the mice were a Godsend and while I do not plan to allow

them to make my attic their home I will continue to trap them humanely and set them free. By the way, there have been no more dead mice in the attic since the furnace and water heater were fixed. I also decided to invest in an electric water heater, which will not have to be vented in the old chimney thus making my and the cats attic playroom and the whole house more safe. Thankfully Shepard and Shepard, from Mattoon, also responded to my emergency and was able to install a new electric water heater the next day. So what's the moral of this story? Yep, the nose knows; and don't ever doubt your cats instincts!

Here is a quick story about a conversation I had at the grocery store. A grandmother and two children were in the soup aisle discussing what to have for dinner that day and one of the kids yelled, "can we have fake pizza"? I wondered what they called fake pizza and watched as Grandma laughed and reached for four cans of tomato soup. The little boy asked what kind of cheese they used for the cheese toasties and I smiled as I realized that she must have convinced them that cheese toasties dunked in tomato soup was fake pizza. I would say this was a pretty smart Grandma!

Another Easter food find happened to cross my computer screen and I thought it would be fun to share. To our family pecan pie is a staple for Easter dessert and this mixed nut pie just might add a bit of zing to the meal.

**For the crust:**

- \* 4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- \* 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- \* 3/4 teaspoon salt
- \* 1/3 cup cold vegetable shortening
- \* 2 sticks plus 2 table spoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- \* 1 large egg yolk
- \* 1/2 to 3/4 cup ice water

**For the filling:**

- \* 4 cups salted roasted mixed nuts
- \* 2 cups semisweet chocolate chunks (about 10 ounces)
- \* 1 stick plus 2 table spoons unsalted butter, melted
- \* 4 large eggs
- \* 1 1/4 cups packed light brown sugar
- \* 1 cup light corn syrup
- \* 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- \* 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- \* Heavy cream, for brushing

**Directions**

1. Make the crust: Pulse the flour, granulated sugar and salt in a food processor to combine. Add the shortening and pulse until the mixture looks like coarse meal. Add the butter and pulse a few times until it is in pea-size pieces. Add the egg yolk and cup ice water and pulse a few times until the dough just begins to clump together; add up to cup more water, 1 tablespoon at a time, as needed. Lay out 2 sheets of plastic wrap; put about three-quarters of the dough on one sheet and the remaining dough on the

2. Roll out the larger piece of dough into a 13-by-19-inch rectangle (about 1/2 inch thick) on a lightly floured surface. Ease into an 11-by-17-inch jelly roll pan, leaving a 1-inch overhang.
3. Make the filling: Pulse the nuts in a food processor until roughly chopped. Combine with the chocolate chunks in a bowl, then evenly sprinkle the mixture over the crust. Whisk the melted butter, eggs, brown sugar, corn syrup, lemon juice and vanilla in a bowl; pour over the nut mixture.
4. Roll out the smaller piece of dough into a 10-by-12-inch rectangle on a lightly floured surface; cut out ten 1-inch-wide strips of dough. Lay 5 strips diagonally over the filling, about 2 inches apart, then lay the remaining strips perpendicular to them. Trim the strips at the edge of the baking sheet (use the trimmings to extend any strips that are too short). Fold in the overhang and crimp the edges with your fingers. Brush the edges and the strips of dough with heavy cream. Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Bake until the crust is golden and the filling is set, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely, at least 2 hours.

<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/chocolate-nut-slab-pie-3562665>

## REAL LIFE WELLNESS

By Dr. Bill Hemmer

Getting Ready for Your Vaccination

Everywhere you turn someone is talking about vaccinations. They have been touted as the only way we are going to get past the COVID-19 pandemic. So, if and when you make the decision to get vaccinated, there are some really important things you can do to decrease the chances of negative side-effects that have

occurred in some people. The big picture is to think about decreasing as much inflammation out of your body as possible before you get your shots. If you are not feeling well, having a lot of pain, have swollen joints or having allergy problems, you should wait until you are feeling better before you get your shots.

Remember, the whole idea in getting vaccinated is to increase your Immune response to COVID-19 spike proteins. When you do that you also increase inflammation in your body. So, if you are inflamed before getting the shot, you could possibly have a worse side-effect than you would have if you were less inflamed.

You should make sure your Vitamin D status is also high. If your Vitamin D is low, your Immune system is very sluggish. Immune system enhancing herbs, such as Echinacea can also help your Immune system get ready for a vaccination. Antioxidants and probiotics are also helpful to take before

and after getting your shots. They help support your Immune system in many ways. You can also use different types of teas to tame any type of fever or ill-feeling you might get from your shot. Stay away from non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs because these decrease your initial inflammatory response. You actually want your body to react to the shot. Not too much, but just enough to create strong antibody production.

Something else I have noticed since the mass vaccinations have been taking place is the majority of older people don't have as strong of a reaction or as many side-effects to the vaccine as

younger people do. On the other hand, many people under the age of about 60, have a strong reaction to the vaccines. This also becomes important to consider before getting your shots.

My belief is older people's Immune systems aren't as strong as younger people's Immune systems. So, they don't get near as strong response as younger people. In general, the younger you are, the greater your chances are of having side-effects. That's why it becomes even more important for younger people who are going to get vaccinated to make sure they are 100 percent healthy when they get their shots.

This means 100 percent

healthy for you. You need to be feeling as good as you get. When it's time for your shot, make sure you get a good night's sleep the night before, you're taking your Immune vitamins and herbs, eating well and staying hydrated. All of these things will decrease your chances of having side-effects.

Do a little work on yourself before you get your vaccination. If you work on your health before you go, chances are you won't have major side-effects and you will be getting healthier at the same time. How's that for a double bonus!

## EBRA taking applications for Skills Training

Embarras River Basin Agency, Inc. (ERBA) is accepting applications for our Skills Training Employment Program (STEP) to assist individuals with training for employment opportunities.

ERBA will be assisting income eligible individuals who want to obtain a CDL license, CNA or welding certificate. Please contact your local Illinois college for information on course specifics.

This assistance is made

possible through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

ERBA serves Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Jasper, Lawrence, and Richland counties. For more information, contact your local county ERBA Outreach Office at 217-253-4434 or call 800-252-1152.

## Douglas County Plat and Planning Committee talks building permits

By Jim Allen

The Plat and Planning Committee met on March 5, 2021 at 9:00 with Chair Tom Hettinger, Dick Hein, and Jim Mikeworth present. Cindy Baer, Supervisor of Assessments was also present.

Baer's report showed \$875.00 building permits issued for the month. Three violations were cited for buildings that had not been permitted. Baer will be continuing work to remedy the violations. It was noted that permits were required not only for taxation purposes, but to ascertain whether a building would be in a flood plain or if it would violate current zoning.

As an example, one building that had no permit was being built in a flood plain. A notice of violation was given, and an order to stop construction was given. The building will need to be moved or the floor raised so it is out of the flood plain. The builder had asked about the flood plain, however they built at the site even with this information. A permit will allow a builder to determine proper elevations and can prevent

## PLM committee discusses potential changes in retirement policy, credit card provider

By Jim Allen

The Douglas County PLM committee met on March 3, 2021 at 9:00 with Chair Jim Mikeworth, Don Munson, and Dick Hein present. Also present were Bobbie Rairden, County Treasurer, Judi Pollock, County Clerk, and Kaycie Sanders Dial A Ride Administrator.

Rairden presented possible changes in the present retirement policy that were due to the CURE Act. At this time, Nationwide Retirement offers county employees a voluntary self funded retirement package. It is similar to a standard 401K except that at this time funds may only be withdrawn without penalty when the owner reaches 70 1/2 years. The proposal is to allow the employees to withdraw \$5000.00 upon birth or adoption of a child and also allow funds to be withdrawn at age 59 1/2. There is no cost to the county if these changes are made, but due to the present language regarding the plan, it is considered wise to have the full board approve the change.

Kaycie Sanders was present to update the committee on funding for the Dial A Ride program. Funds will be basically the same as last year. Sanders also mentioned that there were openings for

delays. Discussion of building permits then moved to the disposal of waste from the dog kennels in the county. At present there are 25 kennels that are devoted to breeding puppies for sale. Of note among these there are 2 50'x100' kennels with multiple levels of cages. This would equate to 10,000 square feet of floor space. This is one of 25 registered kennels. The number of unregistered kennels, if any, is not known. One example of numbers of breeding females indicated that there were 40 in one kennel. As previously mentioned, the waste from the kennels was a matter of discussion since they fall under Department of Agriculture.

It was noted that the inspector for Douglas and Moultrie Counties is Dr. Boultrier who works for the Illinois Department of Agriculture. I hope to contact him in regard to the number of inspections performed in Douglas County, the last inspection of facilities, and the frequency as there seems to be concern regarding the kennels in the area.

the position for a Secretary Dispatcher is open. The Dispatcher position is full time (37.5 hours a week) with hours Monday through Friday from 10:30 am to 6:00 pm with an hour lunch paid. Applications can be found at the Dial-A-Ride garage located on East Dewitt Avenue behind the Sara Bush Campus 11021 E CR 800 N Charleston.

Judi Pollock propose a change in the present credit card provider currently serving the county.

The current provider, WEX, charges a monthly fee of up to \$25.00 per card. There have been problems with the provider not supplying information in a timely manner and at one time when asked for a correct balance of the account, said that it was not possible. Some departments do not use their cards often enough to justify the WEX charges and Pollock asked for direction on finding a new provider. Pollock has contacted First Neighbor Bank in regards to this matter. The committee directed Pollock to work with the States Attorney and the Treasurer to develop policy for the new cards. The change will save the county approximately \$600.00 in fees each year.

**Good Riddance, Rodents.**

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