



MEMORIES MUSINGS

By Cheri Sims

Cheri lives, writes and gardens in Charleston.

I was told by a friend that this has not been a good year for growing pumpkins and I have found that to be the case. Three of my pumpkins have already started to mold and decay but for some reason the white ones I bought are still firm and beautiful. I don't know if it was all the rain in the spring or if they were all picked too early but I went back to a couple stores, which had huge displays of pumpkins, and they have all been thrown away. I asked a couple clerks and they agreed they all the pumpkin stock had been disposed of and the stores would not be receiving any more before Halloween. Luckily, a couple years ago I purchased a plastic carved pumpkin with a light in it and a big ceramic pumpkin so I guess if the last of the real ones decay I will still have two for my display.

A few years ago, after Thanksgiving, I took all the pumpkins and threw them into the burn pile at the back of the property. My reason was so the deer and raccoons could eat them, which they did enjoy, but there were a lot of seeds left and they germinated in the spring and we had the most wonderful patch of pumpkins we have ever had. In the spring, Hubby

was not happy with me when he went out to burn the leftover refuse from the fall before but he made another burn pile and allowed the vines to grow. We ended up with thirty huge beautiful orange pumpkins, which I distributed throughout the neighborhood and it was such a thrill to see them all up and down the street that year.

The rotting pumpkin situation reminded me of the last couple years that my Christmas tree has been so dry by Christmas that I was unable to use the lights the week of Christmas. I don't know why the tree growers cut the trees so early but I wish they would wait a little longer. This is especially true of the Fraser Fir trees which do not grow in our area and have to be shipped in from Canada and the Carolinas. Fraser Firs are so beautiful and have a wonderful fragrance but I am beginning to think about going back to purchasing a fresh cut tree from my favorite local tree farm. I might have to sacrifice height, oh dear can I do that? I have had a nine foot tree for the last few years and I was able to buy a ten foot one this past year. I love the ceiling high trees, they are so beautiful.

On another note:
"There's something

happening here. What it is ain't exactly clear": to quote the 1966 song, "For what it is" by the Buffalo Springfield.

When I moved last year, somehow the charger to my leaf blower was separated from the blower and I have searched for it reputedly all this time. At first I thought I had brought it into the house and placed it on my work bench on the back porch but over the year I have cleaned off the bench many times and the charger was nowhere to be found. One day last week I went out on the porch and there on the work bench was the charger. I thought I was losing my mind and I called my daughter-in-law to tell her the story and she agreed that the charger was never on the work bench because she had cleaned the bench a couple times herself, in order to use it.

I have asked every person that I know who had been in the house this past year and no one remembers ever seeing it and no one borrowed it. So, where has the charger been for the last year or who brought it back to my house and put it on the bench? Chargers do not have feet, they can not walk. I am flummoxed!

Back to pumpkins, My Dad tried to fix a mean prank or trick played on me and a couple other kids on the block when I was a kid, which started a pumpkin tradition in our family. One of the bigger mean boys went from house to house smashing the carved pumpkins we kids had made. I was pretty upset but my Dad fixed it by telling me he and Mom had

taken my hurt pumpkin and made pumpkin pie out of it. I was so happy that my pumpkin was not thrown away that we decided to make pumpkin pies at Halloween every year.

After marriage I continued the tradition of making the first pumpkin dessert of the season for Halloween. My favorite is Betty Crocker pumpkin cheesecake but many years I would make a pumpkin cake and frost it with orange frosting for my son. When he was little he loved seeing a big pumpkin cake on the table and it really made Halloween dinner fun. Then, when I found out he didn't like cake I started making pumpkin pancakes for breakfast. He tricked me and ate the cake to make me happy.

Happy Halloween!

Betty Crocker Pumpkin Cheesecake

Ingredients

Crust

- * 1 3/4 cups graham cracker crumbs (about 24 squares)
- * 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- * 1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted

Filling

- * 1/4 cup Gold Medal all-purpose flour
- * 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- * 2 tablespoons brandy, if desired
- * 1 can (15 oz) pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix)
- * 4 packages (8 oz each) cream cheese, softened
- * 1 cup packed brown sugar
- * 2/3 cup granulated sugar

* 5 eggs

Directions

1. Heat oven to 325°F. Grease 9-inch springform pan with shortening. Wrap foil around the pan to catch drips. In a small bowl, mix cracker crumbs, 2 tablespoons granulated sugar and the melted butter. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom of the pan. Wrap foil around the outside of the pan to prevent drips. Bake crust 8 to 10 minutes or until set. Cool for 5 minutes at room temperature. Refrigerate for about 5 minutes or until completely cooled.

2. Meanwhile, in another small bowl, whisk flour, pumpkin pie spice, brandy and pumpkin together until well blended; set aside. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth and creamy. Gradually beat in brown sugar and 2/3 cup granulated sugar until smooth. On low speed, beat in 1 egg at a time just until blended. Gradually beat in pumpkin mixture until smooth.

3. Pour filling over the crust. Bake 1 hour 15 minutes or until set but the center of the cheesecake still jiggles slightly when moved. Turn the oven off; open the oven door at least 4 inches. Let cheesecake remain for 30 minutes.

4. Run the knife around the edge of the pan to loosen the cheesecake. Cool in pan on a wire rack for 30 minutes. Refrigerate at least 6 hours or overnight before serving.

5. To serve, run knife around edge of pan to loos-

en cheesecake. Carefully remove side of pan before cutting cheesecake. Store covered in refrigerator. <https://www.bettycrocker.com>

Readers have asked for the Hash Brown potato soup sent by friend Larry. He added his comments below.

Ingredients

- * Frozen Hash Browns - Shredded and use the 28 to 30 oz bags.
- * Chopped Onion - one to one and half
- * Chicken Stock - Typically a box is a little over three cups
- * Whole Milk
- * Cream Cheese - 8 oz
- * Sour Cream - 16 oz
- * Shredded Cheddar Cheese
- * Bag of Potato Soup

Instructions

I usually make a double batch so I have some to give to friends so I cut back on the ingredients for a normal single patch.

1. Chop the onion as fine as you wish and put in large, deep stock pan and sauté.

2. Then add the chicken stock or if you prefer use vegetable stock.

3. Add the bag of frozen shredded hash browns and let simmer for a few minutes to cook the potatoes.

4. Reduce heat to keep from sticking, then add in the cream cheese, sour cream and cheddar cheese. For one bag of hash browns I would use one block of cream cheese, not low fat. A regular size container of sour cream. And a cup or two of cheddar

Douglas County Sheriff's Office offers safety tips for Halloween fun

Halloween is approaching, and we expect large groups of children to be out and about that evening, enjoying the festivities. Our primary concern on Halloween, and any other time, is the safety of children. With that in mind, we would like to offer the following safety tips. Please review these with your children before they begin their trick-or-treat adventure.

- * Fake swords, knives, guns, and other costume accessories can potentially cause injury. Make sure they aren't too long for the costume and review with your child that they are part of the costume and not a weapon. Make sure they are made out of cardboard or flexible materials.

- * Keep costumes short to prevent trips and falls.
- * Only purchase costumes and accessories that are marked flame-resistant.
- * Try using makeup instead of a mask. Masks can obstruct a child's vision, which can be dangerous when they are crossing streets and going up and down stairs.
- * Costumes with light colors and/or reflective tape are best. Someone in the group should carry a flashlight. Consider putting reflective tape on the candy bags too.
- * Children should always trick-or-treat in groups, never alone, and preferably with adult supervision. Children should carry a cell phone for quick communication.



* Parents should select the safest route for children

to take. Children should stay on sidewalks (where available) or on the shoulder of the roadway facing traffic. Children should avoid walking in the roadway, in alleys or poorly lit areas, and be cautious not to dart from behind parked vehicles or shrubs.

* Drivers should slow down and use extreme caution, especially in neighborhoods where children will be trick-or-treating.

* Children should be instructed to stop only at familiar homes where the outside lights are on. They should also be advised to never go inside a home or car to collect treats. They should not stop at houses that are dark or do not have the porch lights turned on.

* Children (and adults) should only consume unopened candies and treats in original wrappers. Treats

with open packaging or torn wrappers should be discarded.

* Children should not eat any treats until they get home and a parent or adult can examine them.

* As an alternative of going door-to-door, parents can take their children to community-sponsored events such as those hosted by community centers, churches, schools, etc.

For more Halloween safety tips, please visit <https://www.safekids.org/halloween>.

With a little preparation, communication and diligence, Halloween can be a safe and enjoyable evening. Of course, we will be on patrol and available to you and your children should you need us. As always, dial 911 in case of an emergency.

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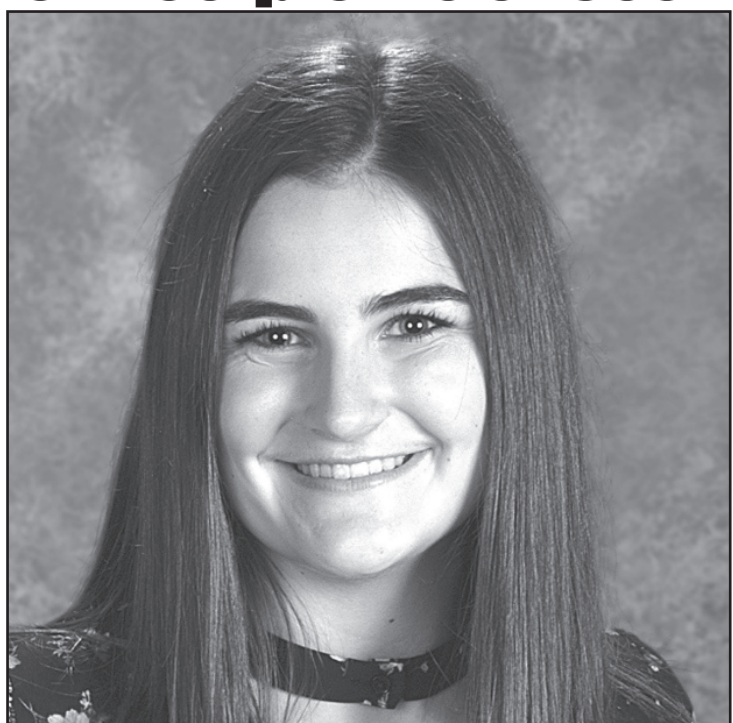
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DAR and SAR Good Citizen recipients chosen



Kyla Gough



Amelia Bosch

The Stephen A. Douglas Chapter of DAR/SAR (National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution/Sons of the American Revolution) have named Kyla Gough and Amelia Bosch as this year's recipients. The DAR and SAR award recognizes the outstanding citizens in the Senior Class. Gough was chosen as Tuscola's DAR Good Citizen winner. She is the daughter of Angie and Rick Gough. Gough currently participates in SADD, Student Council, scholastic bowl, National Honors Society, math team, cross country, and serves as class vice president. During her time at TCHS, she has also been involved in Key Club, basketball, science olympiad, and track. Amelia Bosch was named the SAR Good Citizen Winner. She is the daughter of Melinda and Michael Bosch. Bosch has a 4.0 GPA and currently participates in volleyball, SADD, Student Advisory Council, Math Team, and the Parkland ECCA Program. She also serves as Key Club president, class secretary, Student Council vice president, NHS president, on the SADD leadership team, and as the News Gazette High School Confidential reporter for the year. During her time at TCHS, Bosch has also been involved in club volleyball, PASS, Big Buddy, Breakfast Club, and served as a junior marshal. The Stephen A. Douglas Chapter, NSDAR and the Piankeshaw Chapter, NSSAR are the local sponsors of the SAR and DAR Good Citizen Program. The Good Citizen winners will be the guests of an Honors' Luncheon on Saturday, February 12, 2022 at the Arcola United Methodist Church.