

Vickie Hutchins & Jo Ann Martin Gooseberry Patch

As next-door neighbors in the little town of Delaware, Ohio, Vickie Hutchins and Jo Ann Martin never imagined that their catalog business started at their kitchen tables would someday evolve into a best-selling publisher of community-style cookbooks. Now, with nearly 9 million Gooseberry Patch books sold, Vickie and Jo Ann reminisce about 27 years of sharing food and fun with family and friends, and give us a sneak peek at some new goodies they're cooking up.



Gooseberry Patch started with our passion for creating cozy homes and a desire to make our own way without giving up time with our families. Back then, we were both moms with young kids, and we wanted to be home with them, but we wanted to do something creative as well.

So, how do two moms who are not chefs become cookbook publishers? It's a fun story ... let's start at the very beginning.

Vickie grew up in Ohio's heartland as part of a family full of traditional home cooks. Her mom was famous for her potato salad, her Aunt Nora's sugar cookies were a treasured treat, and her grandma often hosted big Sunday dinners at her farmhouse. So many traditions from Vickie's childhood in the country have become part of the heart of Gooseberry Patch.

Jo Ann's mom was a fantastic cook as well ... way ahead of her time in the kitchen. She loved throwing dinner parties and trying out new recipes. Jo Ann grew up in New Jersey and remembers many of these parties and big family get-togethers. This love of trying new dishes and gathering family and friends around the table was passed

down to Jo Ann, and still influences so much of what they celebrate today.

Fast-forward a few years and our families are living next door to each other in Delaware, Ohio. A lot of our Gooseberry Patch friends already know the story about how we met over the backyard fence. It wasn't long until we discovered that we enjoyed many of the same things — strolling through flea markets, crafting, decorating, cooking, and baking. While our kids played together, we'd sit and dream about turning our shared passions into something more.

At first, we thought it might be fun to open a little store, but we soon realized that it would take up too much family time. We thought, "Why not reach busy moms like us through the mail instead?" We'd fill our catalog with our favorite things and fill orders after the kids went to bed. It wasn't long before our catalog was born ... we called it "A Country Store in Your Mailbox!"

Over the years, folks have asked us if we were nervous starting out, and, oddly enough, we weren't, but mostly because we didn't know all the risks. It's a good thing,



because we may never have taken the plunge! We put together our first catalog at our kitchen tables, enlisting the help of our loved ones whenever we could. Our inventory was stored in our basements, and Vickie's mom and dad helped out with shipping. It was truly a family business from the very start.

We wanted our catalog to feel like a place you'd like to visit, so in each issue we invited readers in with a personal letter and offered "free samples" like recipes and tips. Our very first catalog in 1984 featured a recipe for hot mulled cider, so the Gooseberry Patch recipe-sharing tradition goes way back.

Soon, our customers were sending us their own tried-and-true recipes along with their memories, photos, and family traditions. We got so many that we decided to publish a few in the catalog. It wasn't long before our customers were requesting a Gooseberry Patch cookbook, and we thought, "Well, why not?" Our first cookbook, *Old-Fashioned Country Christmas*, debuted in 1992, and was filled with our customers' recipes



Golden Hashbrown Casserole

Shared by Renae Scheiderer, Beallsville, Ohio
Makes 10-12 servings

A wonderful recipe for company ... just pop it in the oven and let it bake while you visit!

- 6 eggs, beaten
- 1 (12-oz.) can evaporated milk
- 1 tsp. salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. pepper
- 1 (30-oz.) pkg. frozen shredded hashbrown potatoes
- 1 (8-oz.) pkg. shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup diced cooked ham

1. Whisk eggs, milk, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
2. Add remaining ingredients; mix well.
3. Pour mixture into a greased 13" x 9" baking pan.
4. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 60-65 minutes, or until eggs are set.

Robert's Corn Dip

Makes about 6 cups

This yummy dip is a staple at workplace potlucks and celebrations.

- 3 (11-oz.) cans sweet corn & diced peppers, drained
- 1 (7-oz.) can chopped green chiles
- 1 (6-oz.) can chopped jalapeños, drained & liquid added to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped green onion
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 tsp. pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 (16-oz.) pkg. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- Scoop-style corn chips

Mix all ingredients except corn chips together and refrigerate. Serve with corn chips.



and memories, plus charming illustrations drawn in our soon-to-be-signature style and a watercolor cover illustration.

After that first book, recipes started coming in the mail every day. People love to tell the stories behind their favorite recipes, and we always included these personal touches with the recipes, including the contributor's name and hometown. Although we've shared plenty of our own favorite recipes over the years, these folks are the reason we're still publishing almost 20 years later ... we truly couldn't do it without them!

While lots of things have changed since we started — the cookbooks are now our



primary focus — the most important things have remained the same: We try to stay rooted in how people really live and cook. We keep in mind that mom who's short on time but still wants to create a homestyle meal her family will love. We take care to select recipes that just about anyone can make ... it's one of the reasons we think our cookbooks are so well loved.

Cooking is all about love and sharing, and it's our hope that each of our cookbooks captures the heart of all those who have shared with us. We're honored to turn family-favorite recipes into collectible cookbooks, and we love to help preserve and pass on traditions from family to family.

Over the years, we feel like we've come to know our readers and contributors and have created a community that stretches across the country and beyond ... our very own "circle of friends." Some of them have been featured in dozens of books and have been sending their recipes to us from the very beginning. Before the Internet, we would receive lots of handwritten letters and cards (we still get some!), but these days our contributors and fans mostly like to share with us through our website and our page on Facebook. We're delighted to have helped so many friends make connections. Sharing recipes is something people just love to do!

So here we are ... what started out as something to put our passions to work while allowing us to stay home with the kids has turned into more than we ever expected. These days, our company is still small. We work with 25 talented people who all love to cook and create as much as we do. As you might expect, company potlucks are a regular happening — we enjoy sampling new recipes from our cookbooks and sharing old favorites with each other. So many of these delectable dishes have become traditions in our



Vickie's Tomato Pie



Makes 6 servings

This pie smells incredible baking in the oven and tastes just like summertime.

1 (9-inch) pie crust
4 tomatoes, chopped
1 onion, chopped
10–12 leaves fresh basil, chopped
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 cup mayonnaise
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated parmesan cheese

1. Place crust in a 9-inch pie plate and set on a baking sheet.
2. Bake at 400 degrees for about 12 minutes, until lightly golden; cool.
3. Place tomatoes between paper towels to absorb as much moisture as possible. Layer half of each of tomato, onion, and basil in the pie crust; repeat layers.
4. Mix mozzarella and cheddar cheeses with mayonnaise; spread mixture over pie. Top with parmesan cheese.
5. Return pie plate to baking sheet; cover edge of crust with aluminum foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 50–60 minutes. Let stand 15 minutes before slicing.

Favorite Quote:

"No matter where I serve my guests, they seem to like the kitchen best."

—Unknown

own homes as well. It was a real challenge to choose just a few of these yummy treats to share with the many readers of **WHERE WOMEN COOK!**

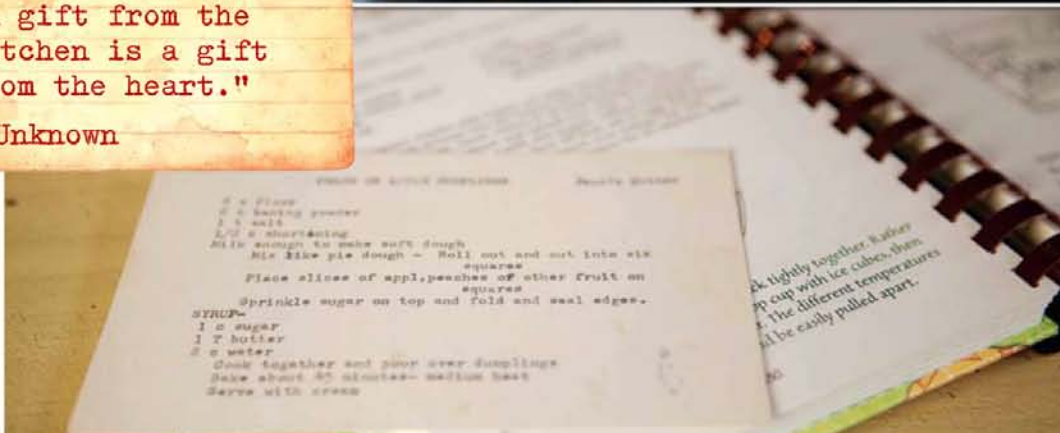
So many wonderful things are happening for Gooseberry Patch right now, and we're very excited about the future. Last year, we started filming a cooking segment with a local television channel, where we feature some of our favorite recipes from our books. We're also working hard to make sure that everyone can find us in their favorite neighborhood gift or bookstore, and online in more places than ever before. We've recently started turning our cookbooks into eBooks, and we're working on developing a brand-new series of cooking videos. It seems like every day brings a new opportunity, and we can't wait to see what else the future holds. Thanks so much for allowing us to share our story ... send us a recipe and you might just find yourself featured in one of our cookbooks soon!



Favorite Quote:

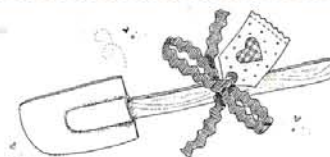
"A gift from the kitchen is a gift from the heart."

—Unknown



Coffee Cream Brownies

Shared by Jennifer Crisp, Abingdon, Illinois
Makes one dozen



Go ahead and serve with a scoop of ice cream ... so good!

3 (1-oz.) sqs. unsweetened baking chocolate, chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 TB. butter, softened & divided
 2 eggs, beaten
 1 cup sugar
 1 tsp. vanilla extract
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking soda
 1 tsp. instant coffee granules
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 1 TB. whipping cream, divided
 1 cup powdered sugar
 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

1. Melt baking chocolate and 1/2 cup butter in a saucepan over low heat. Let cool. In a bowl, beat eggs, sugar, and vanilla.
2. Stir in chocolate mixture. Combine flour and baking soda, and add to the chocolate mixture. Spread in a greased 8" x 8" baking pan.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. Let cool. In a bowl, stir coffee granules into 1 TB. cream until dissolved.
4. Beat in remaining butter and powdered sugar until creamy; spread over brownies. In a saucepan over low heat, stir and melt chocolate chips and remaining cream until thickened.
5. Spread over cream layer. Let set, and cut into squares.



WHERE WOMEN COOK would like to thank Vickie Hutchins and Jo Ann Martin for their involvement in our Winter Issue. To learn more about Jo Ann and Vickie, visit gooseberrypatch.com.

Crustless Pumpkin Pie

Shared by Linda Webb, Delaware, Ohio
Makes 8-10 servings

Too good to save for Thanksgiving ... we enjoy this treat year round!

4 eggs, beaten
1 (15-oz.) can pumpkin
1 (12-oz.) can evaporated milk
1½ cup sugar
2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp. salt
1 (18½-oz.) pkg. yellow cake mix
1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
1 cup butter, melted
Optional: whipped topping, chopped nuts, cinnamon

1. Combine eggs, pumpkin, evaporated milk, sugar, spice, and salt. Mix well; pour into an ungreased 13" x 9" baking pan.
2. Sprinkle dry cake mix and nuts over top. Drizzle with butter; do not stir.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes, testing for doneness with a toothpick.
4. Serve with whipped topping, sprinkled with nuts and cinnamon.

