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Front Page

Gilbert cook finds cookbook submission 'cool'

By: Laura Pieper

12/05/2007

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GILBERT - Jessica Heimbaugh has scrapbooked her acceptance letter from Gooseberry Patch. The one that said her recipe would be printed in one of their cookbooks.

The 12-year-old was "very excited - it was cool."

Now thousands of people can celebrate Christmas Eve just like Jessica's family: with a steaming bowl of Christmas Eve Soup.

The recipe was handed down by her grandmother and the family started making it for Christmas Eve gatherings about five years ago. They usually spend the holiday with Jessica's cousins.

"We used to have oyster stew, but all the cousins didn't like oysters," Jessica said.

Those "nasty things" were replaced with the cheesy soup, which is sometimes embellished with hot dog pieces rather than ham.

"The kids were a little more joyful on Christmas Eve" when the cheese soup became a tradition, said Jessica's mother, Laurelle Heimbaugh. "That's our way of bringing

something to their house."

Jessica got the idea to submit her family's recipe from reading a Gooseberry Patch cookbook at the library. The family often checked out Gooseberry Patch cookbooks to try out at home

"Jessica was the one who'd write down recipes and say, 'hey Mom, let's try this,'" Laurelle said.

They read on the inside back cover of the cookbook that Gooseberry Patch accepts submitted recipes and gives free cookbooks to those whose recipes are published.

"We thought it'd be fun to try," Jessica said.

So she sent the Christmas Eve Soup recipe to the publisher in May 2006. This past February, she got the letter that said her recipe would be published. She received a free copy of "Christmas in the Country" in July.

The introduction to her recipe reads like this: "I am 11 years old and my mom and I had so much fun making recipes from one of your cookbooks, I wanted to share one of our favorites with you."

Now it's big sister Kayla's turn. Laurelle said Kayla, 16, is the cookie and bread expert in the household.

"We thought it's worth a try," Laurelle said.

She and her daughters also are working on their own family cookbook that can be passed on to the girls when they are adults.

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Christmas Eve Soup

(as printed in "Christmas in the Country" by Gooseberry Patch)

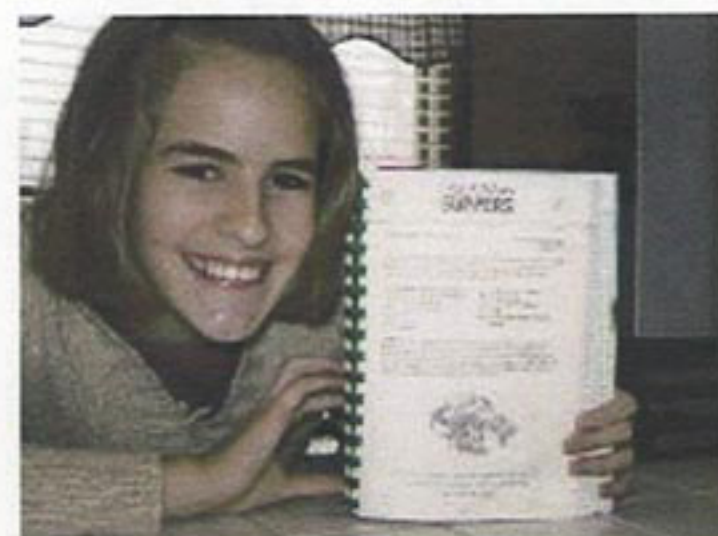
2 cups potatoes, peeled and diced
1/2 cup carrot, peeled and diced
1/2 cup celery, chopped
1/4 cup onion, chopped
2 cup water
1 1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 cup cooked ham, cubed
1/4 cup margarine
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups milk
8-ounce pkg. shredded

Cheddar cheese

Combine first 7 ingredients in a large soup pot; bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat; cover and simmer until vegetables are tender. Stir in ham; set aside. In a separate saucepan, melt margarine; stir in flour until smooth. Gradually add milk; bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes, until thickened. Stir in cheese until melted; add to vegetable mixture and heat through. Serves 8.

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By Laura Pieper/The Tribune

Jessica Heimbaugh, of Gilbert, displays her Christmas Eve Soup recipe in "Christmas in the Country" cookbook.