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DECEMBER 2012

Santa's Helper

Jim Watterman reports
to Christmas' famed
man in red

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ON THE COVER



Santa's helper, Jim Watterman, tells Red Oak kids how to stay on the "Nice" list.

Photo by Opaque Visuals.

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Editor's Note

Here we go a-car-caroling!

Months ago, I yearned to watch the movie *Elf*, but all things Christmas are strictly forbidden by my Halloween-loving husband until after October 31. For this reason, the young son and I must get our fix by secretly listening to seasonal CDs while traveling in the car — sometimes as early as July.

Truth be told, we could listen to them at home if we wanted, but “car caroling” is an activity we’ve come to enjoy — a silly little something we share with each other alone. Right up there with holiday baking, gift wrapping and trimming the tree, car carols are as special to us as any of our traditions.

Whether your traditions are unique or, well, traditional, I wish you and yours all the joy that only singing your heart out in the car can bring!

Angel

Angel Morris
Red OakNOW Editor
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Santa's

— By Angel Morris

Since he cannot be everywhere at once, the real Santa Claus employs many helpers to assist him as he prepares his Naughty and Nice list. In Red Oak, the No. 1 assistant to Christmas' famed man in red is Jim Watterman, who first began reporting to the North Pole four years ago. "In 2008, I grew a beard for an Easter production at our church. I kept the beard, and as December grew closer, people started asking me if I was going to be Santa," Jim recalled. "Then while visiting my grandchildren in Newport News, Virginia, I met a local mall Santa. He told me where he got his hair done, so I had my hair done there as well. My grandkids' status shot up when the neighborhood kids learned Santa was their grandpa!"

"My grandkids' status shot up when the neighborhood kids learned Santa was their grandpa!"

Long before earning his status as Santa's helper, however, Jim and his family moved to Red Oak in 1984. According to Jim, The Beauty Box Hair Salon was the only business and the Highland Meadows Assembly of God Church was the only church on Ovilla Road between I-35 and Hwy. 342. "Red Oak was a small, rural community, and we bought a four-bedroom house for our growing family," Jim said. At that time, Jim was a route salesman for Frito-Lay. From 1986-2000, his route was in the Red Oak/Waxahachie area and many people knew him as the "Frito-Man." Jim retired from Frito-Lay after 31-and-a-half years of service. Now he works on the maintenance crew for The Salvation Army's Camp Hoblitzelle outside of Midlothian.

Hoblitzelle Camp and Conference Center is part of The Salvation Army's worldwide Christian evangelical ministry.

According to its Web site, which outlines the facility's summer camps, retreats and divisional weekends, the organization's goal is to "share God's love with others by encouraging them to explore, discover and appreciate nature; providing quality service and clean facilities in a peaceful setting; and furnishing opportunities for fun, adventure and fellowship through social and recreational activities."

"I happened to go to church with the man in charge of maintenance at Camp Hoblitzelle. One day I asked him if he needed anyone's help, and he said, 'Yes,'" Jim explained. "I told him that I knew a little about plumbing, carpentry and nothing about electricity, but I did show up for work every day. He said if I

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showed up every day, he could teach me what I needed to know!"

Outside of his day job, Jim finds great joy playing Santa. He is a member of the Brotherhood of the Direct Descendants of Santa, a group out of Atlanta, Georgia, where he received his Santa training. The training covered many do's and don'ts such as, refraining from smoking and drinking while in costume. Another important rule is to make sure both hands can be seen while holding a child. "Don't make promises to a child," Jim noted. "Also, in preparing to go to a party, I go over any stories I'm going to recite and songs I'm going to sing. Santas are asked to light community Christmas trees, be in parades and help open businesses. I always want to be prepared to live up to the Santa name!"

Whether working community or corporate events, Jim's favorite part of portraying Santa is interacting with children. "My favorite thing is the little girl at my church who gives me a big hug every time she sees me," Jim said. "Most children's faces light up when they see me. They cover their mouths, and some will run to me and jump in my arms!"

In his few years working as Santa, Jim said the role is pretty consistent. The gift requests, however, are ever changing. "Being Santa doesn't change that much, but the gifts children ask for have changed from toys to iPads, iPods and Game Boys," Jim reported. There are always the expected questions about the "realness" of Santa as well. "I would not encourage parents to lie about Santa,"



Jim suggested. "When my youngest daughter asked me if Santa was real, I replied he was as real as she wanted him to be, and she was happy with that."

Working as one of Kris Kringle's right-hand men, Jim knows the tricks to help kids stay in Santa's good graces. "Children can remain on the Nice List by being respectful to their parents, doing their chores without complaining and being nice to others," he said. "Actually, it's very hard for a child to fall off the Nice List!"

When he's not busy helping Santa at Christmastime, Jim is a member at Ovilla Road Baptist Church. He also enjoys community theater in which he has been involved since 1986. "I love to sing and will usually sing to myself while working," Jim also sings to his wife of 41 years, Jeannine. "We have raised four children who still love each other!" Jim said.

Besides making sure Santa knows all about Red Oak's good children, Jim has a few goals: to sing the national anthem at a public event and to spend time with U.S. troops in Afghanistan. "And I have just recently met with a group called Lone Star Santas. I hope to get more involved with them and their charity work," he said.

Jim believes whether you're working with a charity or serving as an assistant to Father Christmas, the most important thing is having something in which to believe. "Why not believe in Santa?" Jim asked. "He is a good and wholesome person who believes in giving of himself and his wealth." **NOW**

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KISS THAT ONE GOODBYE

— By Dianne Reaux



When Austin Klierer was a toddler, Kip and his wife, Krystal, knew there was something pretty special about their son. “At a very early age, we saw that Austin was extremely well-coordinated,” Kip said. “We would toss him a baseball and expect him to chase it and fumble around with it on the ground.” After all, that’s what most 2- and 3-year-olds typically do. But Austin could catch a baseball. Actually, he could catch a baseball with one hand and throw it back to you.

A family friend saw that Austin was keen on America's favorite pastime and brought him a plastic T-ball set for his second birthday. Kip laughed and said, "We set it up in the living room, and when Austin hit the ball, it ricocheted off three walls! Krystal and I saw that T-ball in the living room wasn't going to work." The T-ball set was immediately moved to the backyard.

Today, Austin is a stout 9-year-old fourth-grader who attends Wooden Elementary School. His favorite subject is math, and he enjoys fishing and playing video games. But his first love is anything related to baseball — and he has more than 47 trophies, nine medals, six championship rings, two World Series MVP awards, an All Tournament Team Award and a Home Run Derby Award to prove it.

When Kip and Austin talk about baseball, they become quite animated. In fact, they often talk over each other in typical testosterone overload mode. They laugh, joke and reminisce about Austin's success. But they also recall a time when things didn't go so smoothly for the pint-sized prodigy.

"While playing for the T-ball recreational league, Austin's teammates would throw the ball to him at first base. He would catch the ball and immediately throw it to home plate," Kip explained. "He was trying to throw a double play. But the team's catcher would be kicking dirt over home plate and not paying attention, and Austin would get so angry!"

Austin added quietly, "I didn't want to play anymore," emphasizing his father's point.

What frustrated Austin at such a young age is what his father called a "high baseball IQ." At that time, Austin had been too young for someone to explain the fundamentals of baseball strategy to him. For Austin it was innate. So Kip set out to find a team that could accommodate his 5-year-old son and found Irving's Canes T-ball select team.

When Austin stepped out onto the field for tryouts, the other coaches saw the same potential Kip did. He played with the Canes for a year-and-a-half, and in 2010, the Canes made it to the T-ball World Series in Edmund, Oklahoma. "During that series, kids were turning



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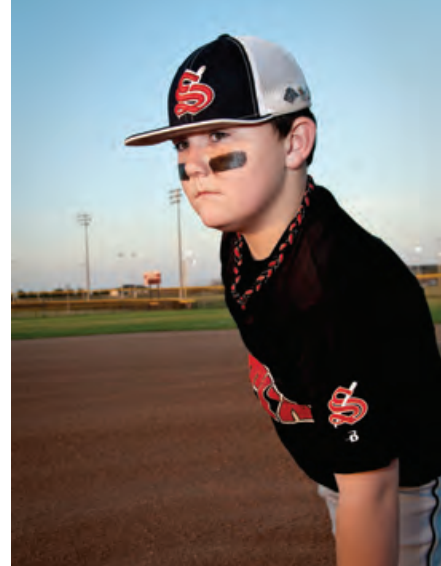
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double plays like pro baseball players. Austin hit four home runs in six of the games, and he had the most home runs during the tournament,” Kip stated. “Most people don’t realize what exceptional levels of talent are out on the field at such a young age. It’s amazing!” The team won that T-ball World Series, and Austin won the Home Run Derby.

In 2011, a few of the team members’ parents got together and decided to join the Texas Stix, a kid pitch select team that was already formed. Things really started to get interesting for the young players. Last July, the team was in Grapevine to compete in the Triple Crown World Series, and evidently, the Stix’s reputation preceded them.

“There was a team from Van Nuys, California, called the Braves, who’d heard of the team,” Kip shared. “Their head coach told the director of the tournament they wanted to compete, but they weren’t coming unless we were going to be on the schedule. But there’s an old saying, ‘Be careful what you wish for.’”

When the championship weekend began and spectators began filling up the stands, one of the mothers of a Braves player asked about the Texas Stix. “A local spectator familiar with the Stix told her our team was probably one of the best kid pitch teams in Texas, and the Braves mom responded smugly saying, ‘Yeah, well not today ’cause we’re here!’” Kip recalled.

“We ended up playing them in three games. The first game, they beat us. The second game, we barely beat them with a score of 8 to 6. Then we ended up facing them again in the championship game — the game that Austin pitched,” Kip said.



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"DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS"
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The Texas Stix's coach threw the Braves a curve ball, figuratively speaking, and the Braves never saw it coming. Austin had not been on the mound all weekend, so they didn't know he was a stand-out pitcher, in addition to playing first and third base.

Austin helped to settle the question of whose team was best, with a three hit, complete game shut-out. The Texas Stix won that World Series championship game 10-0. Apparently, no one bothered to inform the Braves that "Don't Mess With Texas" was more than just a motto.

In his spare time, Austin often hears his dad urging him to sit still and play video games. Yes, you read that right. In an age when most parents are trying to pry the video controllers from their kids' fingers, Kip encourages Austin to chill. "Austin's schedule is so busy. He's always on the go, so I'm probably the only parent in the world who tells his son to go sit on the couch and play video games!"

Playing baseball keeps Austin and his entire family on the go. Most weekends, Austin, his mom, dad and 8-month-old brother, Ace, load up the car to compete in local, regional and national tournaments. Austin's off-season schedule had him grinning from ear to ear. "We don't have one," Austin laughed. "Even if we did, my dad would find another tournament to sign me up for!"

"Yeah, you're probably right," Kip admitted, "but we'd all go crazy sitting around all weekend looking at four walls." The Kliever household is a hectic one, and this close-knit, baseball-loving family wouldn't have it any other way. When there's a game to be played, Austin and his family are "outta there." **NOW**

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Festival of Light

AT HOME WITH
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Amy Tucker**

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

This Christmas, one house may stand out among the rest near the Red Oak and Ovilla border. For several years, Chris Tucker has taken on the task of decorating his family's home for the holidays. With loads of illumination and a few custom touches, Chris makes the Tucker family home a seasonal extravaganza.

B.J. and Amy Tucker, Chris' parents, met in Jacksonville, Texas, almost three decades ago. Soon after, they wound up in Cedar Hill, with B.J. working in IT sales and Amy taking care of the family.

Ten years ago, they started looking for a home with a certain ambience. "We wanted to find an area with a country feel but



not too far out,” Amy explained. “We had looked in this area but had never seen this house. We actually were both looking separately, and each fell in love with this place. He was looking online, and I had seen it on the cover of a real estate magazine. We knew this was the one.”

For the last decade, the Tuckers have lived in the area between Ovilla and Red Oak, and have loved every minute of it. Over the course of their 25 years



of marital bliss, B.J. and Amy have had five kids. Chris, the light expert, is studying business at Navarro Tarleton, in Midlothian. Amber is a freshman at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. Brandon is a soccer-playing junior at Red Oak High School. Alyssa is an eighth-grade, drill team co-captain, and Kyle is in sixth grade, where he plays competitive soccer. Amy is sure to include the last member of their family as well, saying,

“The kids would want me to make sure to include Allie, our Beagle.”

Though Chris now



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generally lights up the house on his own, he has been a part of family decorating since he was very young. "I have always loved lights," he admitted. "My first words were lights on and lights off." Chris even has memories of being as young as 2 or 3 and helping his dad put up Christmas lights. "I wasn't up on the roof or anything, but I can remember helping him unroll the lights and stuff like that."

Several years ago, Chris went from helping his dad, to taking over the exterior lighting altogether. He has, in

fact, been in charge of the project ever since the Tuckers moved to Red Oak from Cedar Hill, though father and son tell slightly different versions of the rationale. Chris joked, "I have been doing the lights myself for around 10 years. Once my dad got too old to do it himself, I had to take over!"

But B.J. does not fully agree with that account. "I don't know about being too old," B.J. said, "but Chris always has had a great eye for this, so I let him take over when he was a teenager."

B.J. is very proud of what Chris

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does every year, and the family uses the lights as a theme in its yearly Christmas newsletter. "I include comments I have heard, like 'the Griswold house,' or 'the landing strip.'" Since planes heading into DFW Airport often turn in nearby skies, B.J. frequently describes their home as "the Southern DFW airport marker."

Though they make jokes in good fun, Chris acknowledges that one of the secrets to what he does each year is the sheer number of lights he uses. "I have a few special things I do, but I wouldn't say I necessarily do custom lights. The biggest part of my finished product is just how many lights I use." Chris takes his home lighting very seriously. "I usually start in early October, and put them out a little at a time. I am a perfectionist, so I have to make sure every strand is just right. I don't turn them on until everything is perfect. The goal is Thanksgiving weekend, as long as it is complete."

Chris tries to give the home a special look, so he does a few things other than simply lay out an overabundance of lighting. "I use all LED lights, which is unique for a home with this many. It saves on energy, and gives it a distinct appearance," he said. In order to get ideas for improving the layout, Chris is quick to get help online. "I actually go to YouTube for ideas. I found something there that gave me one of my special pieces — a huge tree." Chris found a tutorial for the plans and has a friend who welds, so he commissioned a 25-foot light frame that makes one large tree on the front lawn of the home.

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Chris' tree helps tie what he does outside to what Amy does on the inside of the house. Included in the interior decorating are roughly 50-60 trees, which are complemented by manger scenes and figurines, all placed in a way to achieve the right atmosphere. "What Amy does is create a cozy, Christmassy feel inside," B.J. said. "I say that Chris does the lights, and we do the inside. Really, I just drag them down from the attic, which takes a while with all that we have, and Amy does the rest."

Inside the home, there's a great setup for both the large family, and guests who want to see the complete Christmas package. The house opens into a formal dining area where the family enjoys many of its family meals. There is also an open living room, perfect for small gatherings. The bedrooms are all upstairs, and Chris' handiwork stands out there, as well. "I am very neat, so my room is the only one that stays clean all of the time. Like I said, I am a perfectionist," he remarked.

That perfectionism is what has helped Chris become who he is when it comes to Christmas lights and holiday decorating. It has also given him a reputation that has landed him jobs doing lights for others. "My girlfriend's grandpa asked me to do his lights about five years ago, and he paid me. Since then, I have done more houses each year." Chris' younger brother, Brandon, recently began helping him. While he works toward his business degree, Chris anticipates every October, when he can pull out thousands of LED bulbs and turn his family home into a festival of lights. **NOW**

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— By Angel Morris

Attention brides-to-be and grooms-in-waiting: “The Wedding & Events Studio is the only place you need to go!” That motto sums up the mission of the group of vendors who have collaborated to provide one-stop shopping for those planning any type of special event. The Wedding & Events Studio was founded by Hector and Traci Solis. “We are a group of creative and highly skilled professionals here to help people create a dream-come-true celebration. Together we provide a suite of professional services to brides and grooms or anyone planning a special function,” Hector said.

Whether planning a wedding, anniversary party, birthday celebration or corporate event, customers can easily find the professional service they need. These services are able to turn people’s party wishes into reality. “We provide qualified businesses

to make your event a memorable one. We take each client’s desires and turn their event into a hassle-free and magical moment,” Hector explained.

Some of the group’s vendor services include: bridal gowns, formal attire, floral arrangements, cakes, disk jockeys, invitations, photographers and event planners. Hector and Traci partnered with handpicked businesses to ensure clients get what they expect. “There is just no need for people to run all over trying to find who they need when our team has a proven track record of success. And the customer can find them all in one stop!” Hector said.

The Wedding & Events Studio lineup begins with Distinct Elegance Bridal Boutique and Kevin Bowens Photography, both of which are located in downtown Cedar Hill. At Distinct Elegance Bridal, owner Frances Reed or one of the personal

style consultants assists each bride in a private staging area. According to Hector, a variety of gowns are offered “by selected designers around the world from ultraformal to informal — gowns with lots of bling or understated elegance.” He also said that the consultants help brides in creating a distinct style within a budget.

Kevin Bowens is a renowned Texas photographer with more than 20 years’ experience. He has been featured in newspapers and trade magazines. His bridal and corporate work can be seen throughout the United States. “Kevin is available for location and studio work, and his staff can handle any size assignments,” Hector said.

Another of the vendors featured at The Wedding & Events Studio is The Occasional Slice, which offers custom cakes by baker Lindsey Eddlemon. Lindsey has trained with master cake artists and pastry chefs. The Occasional Slice prides itself on centerpiece cakes that make its clients’ events the talk of the town.

Other collaborators include: Floral Designs by Meta and My Invitation Lady. These businesses specialize in creating arrangements and invitations to customer specifications. Almeta Smith of Floral Designs by Meta uses the client’s individual taste to create unique wedding designs from floral arrangements to complete the event’s decor. My Invitation Lady is the brainchild of Geneise Waltmon, who creates custom or traditional style invitations. Geneise also designs decorations, favors, paper goods and thank you cards.

Hector Solis with Professional DJs or Gus Garza of Your DJ liven up any event. They offer a master of ceremonies, event lighting and musical entertainment for any affair. “We each utilize only professional sound and lighting equipment, and offer a large variety of quality musical selections,” Hector explained. “Both businesses provide experienced deejays to keep your event moving within whatever theme you desire, from wild and crazy to simple and elegant.”

So whether you’re a busy bride or host on the go, Hector and Traci remind you, “The Wedding & Events Studio is the only place you need to go!” **NOW**



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Mariah Rodriguez, Christina Davilla, Harley Hunter and Supralee Lekchaum help with crafts at a recent Parents Night Out event.



Rhonda Probst admires a platter at the Ovilla Road Church of the Nazarine garage sale.



Bob Brand conducts the annual model train Christmas tour at his Glenn Heights home.



Members of the United Methodist Church Boy Scout Troop 652 sell brisket sandwiches to raise money for summer camp.



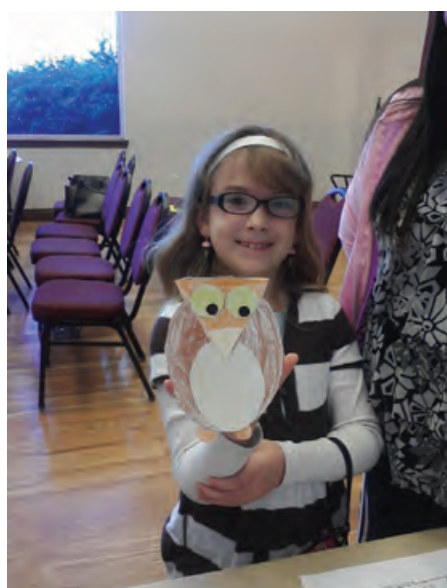
Dove's fly away from the ribbon cutting for Ed's Landscape Supply in Red Oak.



Logan Berumen, Kaylee Brown, Ryan Smith, teacher Pat Goodman, Katie French and Josh Mullins dress up for Storybook Character Day at Red Oak Elementary.



Theron Brown of Glenn Heights test drives a tractor during a Canterbury Episcopal School field trip.



A Red Oak library patron shows off her handmade owl from arts and crafts time.



Ian Pummell studies the rain cycle in Lisa Floyd's first grade science class.



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Young at Heart: 6:30-9:00 p.m., Ovilla Road Baptist Church, 3251 Ovilla Rd., Ovilla. Fellowship, dinner and fun for church members who are 55 and over. Call (972) 617-8544 or e-mail office@orbc.org for more details.

December 8

Red Oak Christmas Parade: 3:30-7:00 p.m., Old Town Park, 101 Live Oak St. Parade begins at 4:45 p.m. Route: South Main Street, right onto Waller Street, ends at Old Towne Park. No cost for entry. Park activities include hayride, bounce houses, crafts, pictures with Santa (bring your own camera), prizes and food vendors. E-mail lfindley@redoaktx.org for more information.

Prayer Shawl Ministry: 10:00 a.m., First United Methodist Church of Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. This group has begun meeting the second and fourth Saturdays of each month except in

December when it meets the second Saturday only. If you know someone that might need a shawl, contact Beth Norris at (214) 392-0732.

December 8-9

Model Train Christmas Tour: Come and go from 1:00-6:00 p.m. The home of Bob and Freda Brand, 2509 Lake Ridge Rd., Glenn Heights. The Brands host the annual model train tour. Free of charge and open to all ages. Call (972) 230-8101 or email twobrand@prodigy.net for more details.

December 9

Mrs. Claus Visits: 1:00-4:00 p.m., Kat's Red Door, 211 State Hwy 342. Are lines too long to visit with Santa himself? Sit in Mrs. Claus's lap and share your Christmas wishes instead ... because "Santa always listens to the Missus!"

December 17

Red Oak Book Club: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Museum Room across from Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Discussions include activities related to the book, but one does not have to have read it to participate. The book club is free and open to all adults in the Red Oak area. Refreshments served.

December 20

Mosaic Madness: 5:00-7:00 p.m., Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Join library staff in making Christmas ornaments with Mosaic Madness. Cost is \$7 per design, to be purchased at the door. Designs are first-come, first-served. One design per person to start, multiple designs may be purchased after all attendees have had a chance to participate. Open to all ages. Call (469) 218-1230 or e-mail rbetru@redoaktx.org for more information.

December 24-January 7

Red Oak ISD Winter Break. December 21 is an early release day for students. January 7 is a Teacher Workday. Classes resume January 8. Visit <http://www.redoakisd.org> to verify your campus holiday schedules.

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In the Kitchen With Jeannie Manasan

— By Angel Morris

For Jeannie Manasan, food is a family affair. “I grew up learning German and Spanish dishes from my parents and grandparents. While most kids were outside playing, I was in the kitchen. When I got married, Daddy told my husband, ‘You’re taking my cook!’” Jeannie also learned Filipino dishes from her husband. Now she has generations of stories behind her dishes.

Cake decorating sets inspired her children, as all three grew up to work with their mom, who uses creativity to share her stories at her bakery, ICING Edible Work of Art. “It’s all about being creative and putting a smile on someone’s face. We’ve always spent family time in the kitchen, and holidays are the most fun with everyone sharing good food and laughter!” **NOW**

Mama’s German Pancakes

4 eggs
1 Tbsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
2/3 cup flour
2/3 cup milk
2 Tbsp. soft butter

Your choice of powdered sugar, honey, jelly or syrup

1. Heat oven to 400 F. Use 1 9x13-inch or 2 9-inch pans. Butter pan(s) well.
2. Blend eggs in mixer until light yellow. Add remaining ingredients and blend until batter is smooth.
3. Pour into prepared pan(s). Bake 20 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 F, and continue baking for 10 minutes.
4. Serve with powdered sugar, honey, jelly or syrup.

Lumpia (Filipino egg rolls)

1 lb. lean pork or beef
1/2 cup spring onion, finely diced
2 crushed cloves garlic
1 egg
1/3 cup water chestnuts, diced
1 carrot, diced
1 stalk celery, diced
1/2 to 1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 pkg. Simex Lumpia wrappers
Lumpia Sauce:
1 cup sugar
3 cups water, divided use
3 Tbsp. soy sauce
3 heaping Tbsp. cornstarch
1 1/2 tsp. salt

1. For Lumpia: In a bowl, combine first 7 ingredients and mix thoroughly. Season with

salt and pepper.

2. At one end of Lumpia wrapper, spoon in approximately 2 Tbsp. of meat mixture and roll tightly.
3. Brush one end of wrapper with water to seal. For smaller rolls, cut in half. Tuck ends in on wrapper after the first fold over.
4. Deep fry until golden brown.
5. For Lumpia Sauce: Melt dry sugar in saucepan over a low heat.
6. In a bowl, mix a little water, soy sauce, cornstarch and salt into a smooth paste.
7. Add remaining water to paste and pour the mixture into melted sugar.
8. Stir over medium heat until thick. Serve with Lumpia.

Daddy’s Pinto Beans

2 lbs. pinto beans
1 lb. bacon
1/2 large onion, diced
1 large tomato, diced
1 jalapeño, diced
1/2 bunch cilantro leaves, chopped

1. Soak beans in hot water approximately 1 hour.
2. Boil beans in fresh salt water until soft.
3. Fry bacon; remove from grease and dice.
4. Sauté remaining ingredients in bacon grease; add to beans. Don’t allow the beans to go dry.

Pumpkin Bread

1 1/2 cups sugar
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup oil
1 can pumpkin
1 2/3 cups flour
1/4 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. cloves

1. Heat oven to 325 F.
2. Combine sugar, eggs, oil and pumpkin.
3. Blend in flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves.
4. Put batter in a loaf pan, and bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

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