

Historical Clippings

Three Lakes Museum

December 2024

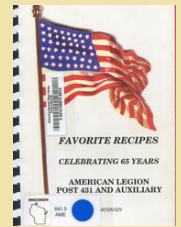
Someone once said something like ...

Eating is a Necessity. Food is Our Common Ground

... and Some Other Things You Can Learn From a Cookbook Besides Cooking

A lot of the past can be discovered in the cookbooks that a community writes, preserving the recipes, values, and food traditions of a specific time and place. These shared recipes, gathered from local meals that connected people together with food, fun and conversation and created a sense of belonging, reflect the character of the area.

In 2008, American Legion Post 431 and Auxiliary of Three Lakes published a cookbook celebrating 65 years. It's a big one - 440 pages of "some new, not all original, and some family keepsakes" but "all from the kitchens of dedicated cooks, reflecting the love of good food." As great as this collection is, what's more amazing is it includes the story of George Kveck (1923-2019) and *Post 431 Dinners by George*, bringing the community together with food once a month for 26 years. For Three Lakes, this was common ground.



This book can be found in the Local History Room of the Demmer Library

The following excerpts are taken directly from the introductory pages of the cookbook -

The charter for The Three Lakes American Legion Post 431 was issued in January 1945.

... Throughout its sixty-five years (to 2008), the Post has been active in local and national civic and Legion affairs. Post 431's much-in-demand Firing Squad and Color guard appear regularly in parades, at funerals, and at patriotic ceremonies throughout the region. The Post's belief in our young people is evident, as demonstrated by the educational scholarships it bestows on Three Lakes High School students each spring.

April 23, 1945 was a red-letter day for The American Legion Post 431 in Three Lakes, for it was that day the Post's Auxiliary was formed.

Service to veterans is at the core of their efforts ... which also includes working with the Post to conduct a twice-annual blood drive in town, supporting the Youth and Children program both with dollars, and Spinosa Bears, sending "We Care" packages to our local servicemen stationed in the world's "hot spots", and contributing money to the needs of Veteran Groups' homes and hospitals and, for twenty-six years, the Auxiliary prepared and served the desserts at each monthly Post 431 dinner.



POST 431 DINNERS BY GEORGE

Ask him why he volunteers so much, and he'll likely reply, "Maybe I just can't say no." Meet the man who's become a fixture in Three Lakes: George Kveck.

George was born in Berwyn, IL, and arrived in Three Lakes in 1978. His wife of 65 years, Vi, followed him in 1979, and the two of them have been integral to happenings in this little town since then. His service to the American Legion predates his coming to northern Wisconsin, for he's been active in the Legion for forty years, serving in various capacities. He has been the manager for Post 431 for more than 26 years, and was Commander of the post for several years, as well as holding other officer positions.

As an active member of the Three Lakes Lions Club since 1978, he was recently honored by that group for having served as their treasurer for twenty-five years.

For the last fifteen years George has coordinated with the Post 431 Auxiliary to effect a twice-yearly blood drive, a community based activity.

He was an active supporter of the American Legion Post 431's annual formal Harvest Balls, which netted a total of \$40,000.00 for the post's scholarship fund for graduating seniors of Three Lakes High School.

For 26 years George was the chief chef and driving force behind the monthly Post 431 dinners, which often served upwards of 200 people in a couple of hours.

In 2007 he announced he was retiring from chefing. (The dinners continued through 2008, but were catered.) During those 26 years and yet today, his food is acclaimed: we offer this section of our Celebration Cookbook with his recipes, never before shared with anyone. Vi, too, has contributed her best recipes to this celebration cookbook.

Every month George would rotate through his main dish recipes and sides, and the Auxiliary would compliment the meal with plates of desserts.

GEORGE'S SWISS STEAK WITH TOMATO SAUCE

65 pounds beef arm steak, cut 1 ½ inches thick
Flour
Cooking oil
3 pounds onions, thinly sliced
3 (#10 size) cans tomato sauce

Garlic cloves, minced
Salt
Pepper
Bay leaves (discard before serving)
4 green peppers, diced

Cut bone and excess fat from arm steak. On a cutting board, coat meat on one side with flour. With a meat mallet or edge of a plate, pound meat well. Turn meat and repeat on the other side.

In a 12 inch skillet over medium heat, in hot oil, cook meat until well browned on both sides. Remove meat from skillet. Set aside.

To the meat drippings in the skillet, add onions and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce, garlic, salt, pepper, bay leaves and meat; heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer about 3 ½ hours or until meat is fork tender, turning meat once. During the last 45 minutes of cooking time, add the green pepper. Recipe fills three Nescos and feeds 125 people.

HARVEST BALLS' SWEETS TABLES

From the onset of the annual formal Harvest Ball, the Sweets Tables were a sought-after hit. Every year a few died-in-the-wool chocoholics asked ahead of time what chocolates were going to be served on the Sweets Tables that year. So, while a variety of sweet finger-choices were presented, it was certain that every Harvest Ball ensured there were plenty of chocolate dishes, along with a varied selection of non-chocolate treats, for those devotees.

As a fundraiser for the Post's scholarship fund, the Harvest Ball recipe collection found in the last section of the cookbook covers a wonderful variety of baked goods and candies. It is worth searching out a copy of the book to put a sweet from the past on your holiday table for family, friends and neighbors, to try and find that common ground.



We can be proud of these three American Legion members and military veterans. Matt Graczyk, 98, served in England, North Africa, and Italy from 1942-1945. He was an x-ray technician assigned to the 26th General Hospital. George Kveck, 94, served in Saipan from 1942-1944, where he worked on gun turrets and loading bombs to B29 aircraft. Gene Step, 98, signed up to serve in 1942 after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He served in several different locations, playing saxophone and clarinet in several military bands.

TOFFEE COOKIE BARS

½ cup butter

1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs

1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

1 ¼ cups almond toffee bits

1 ¼ cups English toffee bits

1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

1 cup chopped pecans

½ cup sliced natural almonds

Place butter in a 13 x 9 inch baking dish; bake at 325 degrees for 4 minutes or until butter melts. Layer graham cracker crumbs and remaining 6 ingredients in a baking dish with melted butter. Firmly press mixture in dish. Bake at 325 degrees or until edges are lightly browned. Cool completely in the dish on a wire rack. Cut into bars. Yield: 2 dozen.

Cut first into 2 1/2 inch squares, then cut each square

in half from corner to opposite corner, making a triangular cookie. Temper chocolate, then drizzle it onto the top of each cookie in a "fancy 'S'" type of pattern. These freeze well.

CHOCOLATE COVERED MIXED SALTED NUTS

Chocolate covered nuts are usually of the unsalted variety. Harvest Balls' version used mixed salted ones, with an entirely different taste from the traditional.

3 pounds milk chocolate, melted

2 pounds semisweet chocolate, melted

2 pounds dark chocolate, melted

9 pounds salted mixed nuts, no peanuts

Combine all chocolates; melt slowly. Place several long sheets of Reynolds Release Aluminum foil on a table or counter. When chocolate is melted, stir in nuts, coating all well. Pour nuts out onto foil, spreading smoothly, and, if preferred, leaving a few swirls in the mixture. Allow to cool and harden to room temperature. When completely cool, break into small pieces and package air tight. We served them in "piles", and also in bonbon cups.

WHITE CHOCOLATE, CHERRIES AND PISTACHIO BARK

5 pounds white chocolate

3 pounds shelled pistachios, toasted, chopped

*2 pounds dried cherries, chopped ***

Cut several feet of Reynolds Release Aluminum Foil

and spread it on a counter top. Slowly melt chocolate in a large, heavy kettle over low heat, stirring frequently. When melted, add toasted pistachios and the dried cherries; stir until well covered. Pour mixture onto prepared foil and swirl with the back of a wooden spoon until the desired texture and depth of the bark is reached. Allow to cool at room temperature, then break apart enough to insert in ZipLoc gallon bags for storage. Bark may be frozen.

***maybe substitute raisins for dried cherries*