

* before & after farmhouse: from botched to beautiful

Country Home

November 2003



easy gatherings

simplify your home
and your holidays

62 pages
of stress-less
decorating

L.A.chic:
Rachel Ashwell
at home

in this issue

november 2003 - volume 25, issue 9



on the cover

EASY GATHERINGS:

"LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER"

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL SKOTT

49

"THANKSGIVING AT MARBLE FALLS"

126

"ONCE UPON A PICNIC"

148

BEFORE & AFTER FARMHOUSE:

"DIGGING IN"

140

"L.A. CHIC: AT HOME WITH
RACHEL ASHWELL"

110

SPECIAL BONUS: FLIP TO PAGE 48
AND YOU'LL FIND A WEEKEND'S
WORTH OF COOL COUNTRY IDEA CARDS

feature stories

> 110 L.A. CHIC

Shabby Chic founder Rachel Ashwell goes Hollywood, but she stays true to her romantic country roots.

> 120 FALL FLOURISHES

Make the most of autumn's waning days by harvesting nature's bounty for your decorating projects.

> 126 THANKSGIVING AT ...

Marble Falls brings together the far-flung Tucker family for a Texas-size feast you'll want to sample.

> 134 IT'S SHOW TIME

Take design cues from Country Home magazine's newest farmhouse, which blends elegance with earthiness.

> 140 DIGGING IN

An archaeologist-turned-landscape designer restores an 1850s farmstead in Wisconsin.

> 148 ONCE UPON A PICNIC

A heartwarming tale of good food and friendship in California's Alexander Valley.

> 49 SPECIAL SECTION: LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

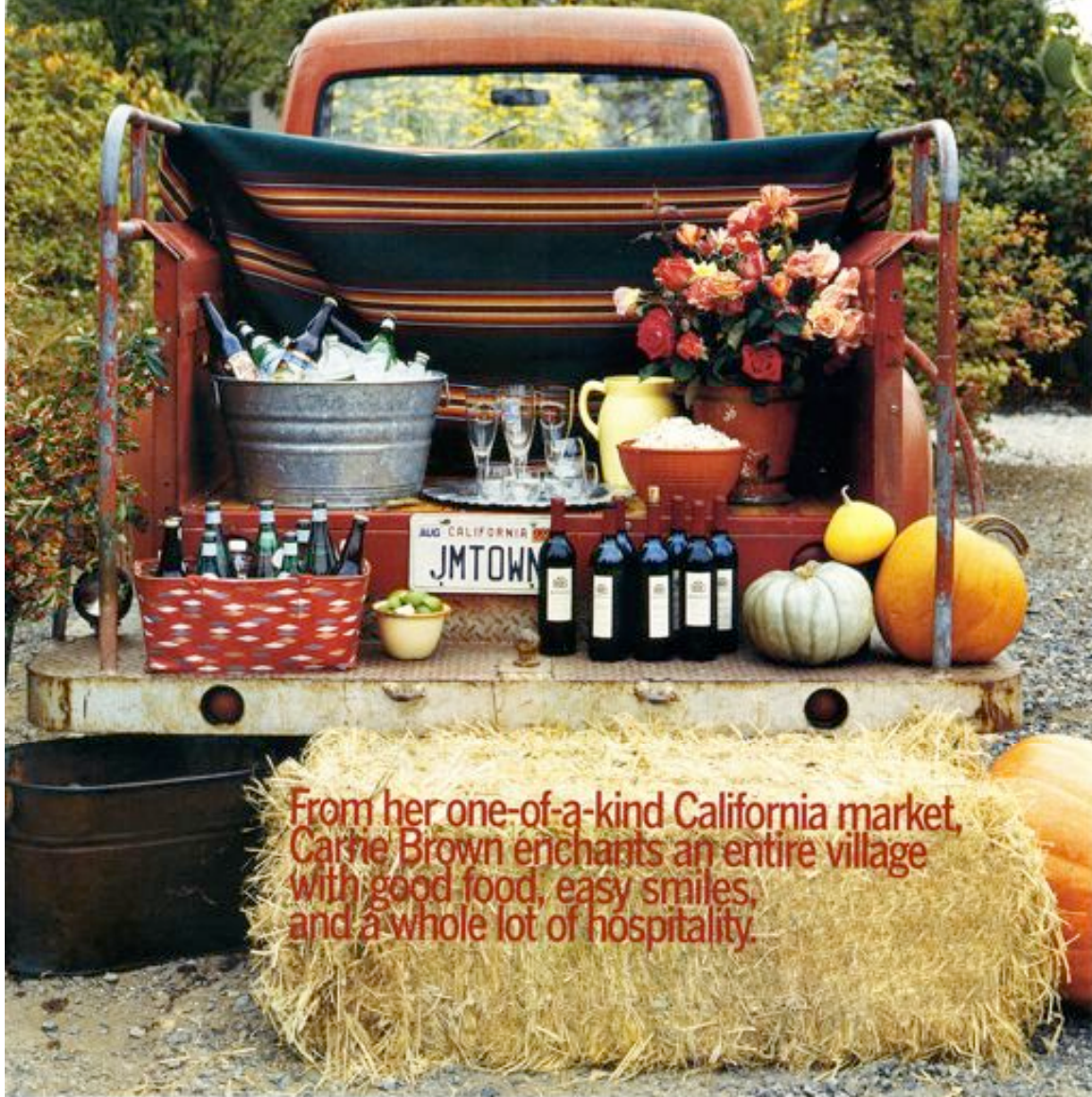
Style makers Joe Ruggiero and daughter Beth LeManach share their tips for artful entertaining.

once upon a picnic

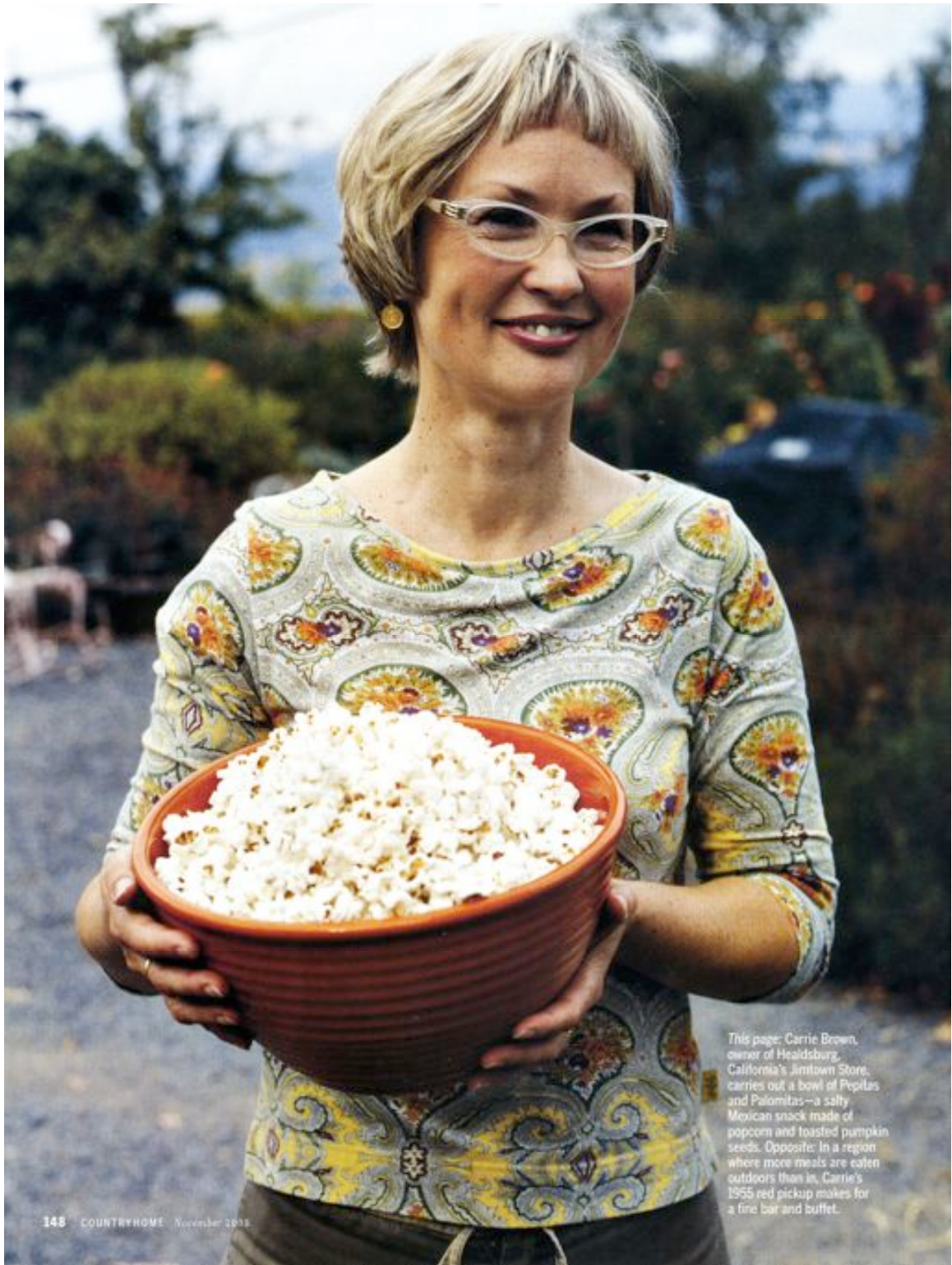
written by SHARLA WILLIAMS

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produced by LISA HOLDEENESS



From her one-of-a-kind California market, Carrie Brown enchants an entire village with good food, easy smiles, and a whole lot of hospitality.



This page: Carrie Brown, owner of Healdsburg, California's Jintown Store, carries out a bowl of Pepitas and Palomitas—a salty Mexican snack made of popcorn and toasted pumpkin seeds. Opposite: In a region where more meals are eaten outdoors than in, Carrie's 1955 red pickup makes for a fine bar and buffet.



picnic menu

Pepitas and Palomitas

1 - Local Pears, Grapes,

Apples, Cheeses, and Honey

3 - Creamy Mushroom Soup

with Sweet and Hot Paprikas

2 - Salad of Peppery Greens

and Beets with

Grainy Mustard Vinaigrette

2 - Maple-Glazed Meat Loaf

Sandwiches

4 - Hazelnut-Pumpkin

Cheesecake



local cheeses

Bellwether Farms' San Andreas

888/527-8606

www.bellwethercheese.com

Cypress Grove's Bermuda Triangle

707/839-3168

www.cypressgrovechevre.com

Point Reyes' Blue Cheese

800/593-6878

www.pointreyescheese.com

Vella's Dry Monterey Jack

800/648-0505

www.vellacheese.com



Once upon a time (modern times, to be exact), there lived

a pleasant and charming woman in the vineyard-laden hills of California's Alexander Valley.

The woman's name was Carrie Brown. Her land—fortressed on all sides by infinite rows of grapes—included a modest cottage, bountiful garden, and bustling country market called Jimtown Store.

People of the valley cherished Carrie Brown. After 13 years of calling her their neighbor, they had grown to depend on her nurturing ways—and on her market's home cooking. Folks lingered long and often at Jimtown's communal counter, where cold meat loaf sandwiches and warm conversation served as a sort of antidote to the worldly troubles outside.

For the villagers, with every homespun remedy that Carrie dished out came a mounting desire to return the favor. On one particularly dreary day, they surprised her with a salutatory parade. Costumed as cloned "Carries" with cat's-eye glasses and metal-strainer hats, the merry troop marched to kazoos and sang songs in her honor. "I was so happy, I cried," Carrie said.

Oftentimes, Carrie's inherent hospitality flowed over the walls of the store and through the gates of her home's one-acre plot. There, she plied her friends, family, and fellow townspeople with even more love and more food. Platters of cheese and bowls of honey streamed from her tiny kitchen. Steamy mushroom soup was ladled from a seemingly bottomless pot.

In the garden, fresh-picked figs and blood-red beets were within arm's reach. People gathered, shared, and ate until their bodies and hearts were full.

From the eyes of a passerby, such a scene might have appeared as an ordinary picnic. But the people of the valley knew better. These were the kind of meals on which one could be sustained forevermore.

The end.



At Carrie's house, friends and family are as plentiful as the wine and food. Above: Friend Stephanie Chiacos delivers a spread of cheeses, fruits, and honey to the outdoor table. Each of the cheeses on this platter represents a different artisanal cheesemaker in surrounding Sonoma County (see "Local Cheeses," opposite). Left: Carrie sits a spell with her sister Julie, mother Caroline, and Moses the dachshund.

seasonings



> WINE PICK
1998 Jimtown
Cabernet
Sauvignon (\$13).
Available through
Jimtown Store.



out to eat Whether you're in the market for warm cherry scones or wax lips, Jimtown Store, above, in Healdsburg, California, has got your fix (see full story, page 148). The 110-year-old former post office and general store was transformed into its current state 12 years ago by Carrie Brown, above, and her late husband, John Werner. Today it serves as a modern meeting hall, where locals get their breakfast and tourists pick up funny treasures. Carrie mans the kitchen, while her mother and father keep watch over the antiques. The store is also the prime vendor for Jimtown's famous Chopped Olive Spread and namesake wine. *Jimtown Store, 707/433-1212; www.jimtown.com.*

< from our table to yours

Set a stylish spread of condiments with these brand-new products. *left: 1. Olivers & Co.'s nacelle de table. 2. Round trays from Vintage Baskets. 3. Lemon Salt, Autumnberry Salt, and Peppered Salt from Coastal Goods. 4. Sur La Table's horn salt dish and spoon.*



1. Salad of Peppery Greens and Beets with Grainy Mustard Vinaigrette
2. Pepitas and Palomitas

once upon a picnic recipes

Pepitas and Palomitas

A quick squeeze of lime adds a refreshing note to this spicy-crunchy appetizer.

- 2 TBSP. RED CHILE POWDER
- 1 TBSP. CUMIN SEEDS, TOASTED AND GROUND
- 1½ TSP. KOSHER SALT
- 1½ TSP. CAYENNE PEPPER
- 1 TSP. GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 2 EGG WHITES
- 1 TSP. BOTTLED HOT PEPPER SAUCE
- 1½ CUPS RAW PUMPKIN SEEDS (8 OZ.)
- 1 CUP LIGHTLY SALTED ROASTED PEANUTS (5 OZ.)
- ½ CUP RAW SHELLED SUNFLOWER SEEDS
- 3 TBSP. PEANUT OR CORN OIL
- ½ CUP UNPOPPED POPCORN
- LIME WEDGES (OPTIONAL)

Lightly coat a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with cooking spray; set aside. In a small bowl combine the chile powder, cumin, salt, cayenne, and black pepper. In a large bowl whisk the egg whites until foamy. Whisk in the hot pepper sauce. Add the pumpkin seeds, peanuts, and sunflower seeds and stir to coat evenly. Transfer the chile powder mixture to a coarse sieve. Shake the spice mixture evenly over the pumpkin seed mixture, stirring to coat evenly. Spread the nut mixture

evenly in the prepared pan.

Bake for 10 minutes in a 375° oven. Stir the mixture with a spatula, breaking up any clumps. Bake for 15 minutes more, stirring once or twice, until mixture is crisp and brown. Transfer mixture to a clean bowl or piece of foil and cool. Store in an airtight container at room temperature up to 2 weeks. (If nut mixture loses its crispness, spread in a baking pan and bake in a 375° oven for 5 minutes.)

Just before serving, in a heavy large saucepan heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add a few popcorn kernels. When 1 or 2 kernels pop (about 4 minutes), add remaining popcorn. Cover the saucepan; shake occasionally until the popping dies down (about 3 minutes). Remove from heat. Season to taste with salt, if desired.

To serve, divide the popped popcorn among paper cones or bowls and sprinkle the pepita mixture generously over the top. (Or, transfer the popcorn to a large shallow bowl and sprinkle with half of the pepitas. Serve with remaining pepitas on the side and lime wedges, if desired.) Makes 12 to 14 servings.

To toast and grind cumin seed: Place the cumin seed in a heavy small skillet; heat over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until the seeds are fragrant,

lightly browned, and a few begin to pop, about 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl to cool. Grind the seeds with a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle.

Creamy Mushroom Soup with Sweet and Hot Paprikas

For a less spicy soup, decrease the amount of hot paprika to 1 tablespoon.

- 2 MEDIUM LEEKS, WHITE AND PALE GREEN PARTS ONLY
- 5 TBSP. UNSALTED BUTTER
- 1 CUP CHOPPED SMALLOTS
- ½ CUP CHOPPED CELERY
- 2 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
- ¼ CUP UNBLEACHED OR ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 2 TBSP. HOT PAPRIKA
- 2 TBSP. SWEET PAPRIKA
- 5 CUPS CHICKEN STOCK OR REDUCED-SODIUM CHICKEN BROTH
- 2 LB. BROWN (CRIMINI) OR WHITE BUTTON MUSHROOMS, TRIMMED AND THINLY SLICED
- 1 TSP. COARSE SALT
- ½ TSP. FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER
- 1½ CUPS DAIRY SOUR CREAM
- 2 TBSP. SNIPPED FRESH DILL
- DAIRY SOUR CREAM
- SNIPPED FRESH DILL

continued on page 160

once upon a picnic recipes

continued from page 158

Cut the leeks in half lengthwise; rinse well under cold running water. Chop (you should have about 1 cup).

In an 8-quart pot or Dutch oven, over medium heat, melt the butter. Add leeks, shallots, celery, and garlic. Cover and cook, stirring twice, over medium heat for 10 minutes. Sprinkle the flour and the hot and sweet paprikas over the vegetables. Cook over medium-low heat for 3 minutes, stirring often without browning the mixture. Gradually whisk in the stock. Stir in mushrooms, salt, and pepper. (Mixture may appear thick.) Bring to boiling.

Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes or until mushrooms are tender. Remove from heat and cool slightly.

In a food processor or blender, puree half the soup, a portion at a time. (For a smoother soup, puree all of the soup, a portion at a time.) Return the soup to the pan. If desired, cover and chill the soup for up to 3 days.

Set the pan of soup over low heat. Gradually whisk 2 cups of the soup into the 1½ cups sour cream; return all to pan. Stir in 2 tablespoons dill. Heat, stirring often, until steaming; do not boil or the sour cream will curdle. Adjust the seasonings.

Ladle the soup into bowls; top each portion with a small dollop of sour cream and a sprinkle of dill. Serve hot. Makes 10 to 12 appetizer servings.

Salad of Peppery Greens and Beets with Grainy Mustard Vinaigrette

6 MEDIUM (ABOUT 2 LB.) GOLDEN BEETS OR RED BEETS, TOPS AND ROOTS REMOVED
GRAINY MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE
(SEE RECIPE)

½ TSP. KOSHER OR SEA SALT
¼ TSP. FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
9 CUPS LOOSELY PACKED TENDER ARUGULA OR MIXED BABY SALAD GREENS (MESCLUN)
¼ TSP. KOSHER OR SEA SALT
¼ TSP. FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
SNIPPED FRESH CHIVES OR CHIVE BLOSSOMS (OPTIONAL)

Wrap 2 beets tightly together in each of 3 packets of heavy-duty foil. Set on the oven rack and bake in a 400° oven until beets are very tender, about 1 hour. Cool beets to room temperature in their foil packets on a wire rack. Peel beets (the skins will rub off easily). Beets can be prepared up to 1 day ahead, wrapped well, and refrigerated. Return to room temperature before proceeding.

Cut beets into ½-inch chunks, or ¼-inch slices if you are using small beets. In a medium bowl combine beets with a few tablespoons of the vinaigrette, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Let stand for 30 minutes.

In a large bowl, toss greens with desired amount of vinaigrette to lightly coat them. Add ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper to greens and toss well.

Divide greens among six salad plates. Top greens evenly with beets. Sprinkle salads with chives or chive blossoms, if desired. Makes 6 servings.

Grainy Mustard Vinaigrette: In a small bowl combine ¼ cup red wine or Zinfandel vinegar, 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard, and 1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot. Let stand for 30 minutes. Add ½ teaspoon kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Gradually whisk in ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil until

well combined. Makes about 1½ cups. Store any remaining dressing tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Maple-Glazed Meat Loaf Sandwiches

Dress this classic leftover sandwich with a mix of your favorite condiments. Because, as Carrie puts it, "All meat loaf sandwiches are divine, but god is in the details."

¼ LB. SMOKED BACON, THINLY SLICED
1 CUP FINELY CHOPPED ONION
3 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
¼ CUP MILK
¼ CUP DAIRY SOUR CREAM OR PLAIN YOGURT
2 EGGS
1 TBSP. DRY MUSTARD
2 TSP. SALT
¼ TSP. DRIED THYME, CRUSHED
¼ TSP. WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE
½ TSP. FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
¼ TSP. BOTTLED HOT PEPPER SAUCE
1 LB. GROUND BEEF
1 LB. GROUND PORK
1 LB. GROUND VEAL
½ CUP CRUSHED SALTINE CRACKERS
½ CUP CHOPPED FRESH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY
¼ CUP PURE MAPLE SYRUP
2 TBSP. DIJON-STYLE MUSTARD

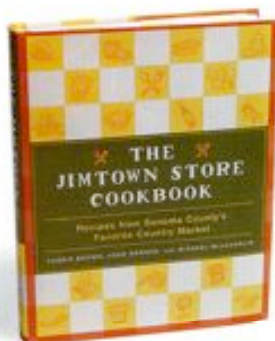
Cut ¼ pound of the bacon in ¼-inch pieces; set remaining bacon aside. Heat a medium skillet over medium heat and cook diced bacon until lightly browned, but not crisp, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove bacon from skillet with a slotted spoon; set aside. Add onions and garlic to skillet; cover and cook, stirring once or twice, 10 minutes, or until tender and lightly browned. Remove from skillet; set aside. Add cooked bacon.

continued on page 162

once upon a picnic recipes

continued from page 160

In a medium mixing bowl stir together milk, sour cream, eggs, dry mustard, salt, thyme, Worcestershire sauce, ground black pepper, and hot pepper sauce.



› the cookbook

The California Wine Country food utopia known as Jimtown Store is a sweet mix of two key ingredients: warm hospitality and lots of fresh, seasonal locally produced food.

To get the hospitality, you must go to the store. To sample the food, however, you have two options: Go to Healdsburg, California, or pick up the store's namesake cookbook.

The Jimtown Store Cookbook (HarperCollins; \$32.50) offers a glimpse into the heart of Jimtown: its kitchen. In the practical and homey book, Carrie Brown, Carrie's late husband, John Werner, and late friend Michael McLaughlin share the very recipes that have been luring famished appetites for more than a decade.

Regulars delight in the knowledge that now their favorite Jimtown picks are accessible at home. Granted, a Brie and Chopped Olive Sandwich or a sliver of Buttermilk Pie may not taste quite as good as it does at the store's quaint counter, but certainly, it's the next best thing.

In a large bowl combine beef, pork, veal, cooked bacon mixture, milk mixture, crackers, and parsley. Mix until well combined. Transfer mixture to a shallow baking pan lined with foil or parchment paper. Form mixture into a domed 12x5-inch rectangle. Drape remaining bacon strips over the loaf, arranging them so they just touch each other and completely cover the loaf. In a small bowl combine maple syrup and mustard. Brush the syrup mixture over the bacon strips.

Bake the meat loaf, uncovered, in a 375° oven, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center reaches 160°, about 1½ to 1¾ hours. Cool the meat loaf in its pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

For sandwich: Serve a slice of meat loaf on 2 slices of rye bread brushed lightly with Dijon-style mustard. Top with thinly sliced red onion and lettuce.

Hazelnut-Pumpkin Cheesecake

This recipe, not in the cookbook, came from Jimtown friend Michael McLaughlin.

- 24 GINGERSNAPS
- 2 TBSP. SUGAR
- ¼ CUP (½ STICK) UNSALTED BUTTER, MELTED
- 2 8-OZ. PKG. CREAM CHEESE, SOFTENED
- 1 15-OZ. CAN SOLID-PACK PUMPKIN
- 5 EGGS
- ¼ CUP PACKED BROWN SUGAR
- ½ CUP HAZELNUT LIQUEUR
- 1 TSP. GROUND CINNAMON
- 1 TSP. VANILLA
- ½ TSP. GROUND GINGER
- ¼ TSP. FRESHLY GRATED NUTMEG
- ¼ TSP. GROUND CLOVES

- 1 16-OZ. CONTAINER DAIRY SOUR CREAM
- ¼ CUP GRANULATED SUGAR
- ¼ CUP HAZELNUT LIQUEUR
- ½ CUP HAZELNUTS, CHOPPED

For crust, in a food processor grind the gingersnaps with the 2 tablespoons sugar to fine crumbs. With processor running, slowly add the melted butter. Press the crumb mixture firmly into the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan and refrigerate until firm.

For filling, in a food processor or mixing bowl process or beat cream cheese until smooth. Add pumpkin, eggs, brown sugar, the ½ cup liqueur, the cinnamon, vanilla,

ginger, nutmeg, and cloves. Process or beat until smooth, stopping once to scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Pour the filling into the crust-lined pan and bake on the center rack of a 350° oven for 40 to 45 minutes or until the edges are set. The center of the cake will be set but not firm.

Meanwhile, for topping, in a medium bowl whisk together the sour cream, ¼ cup sugar, and ¼ cup liqueur. Transfer to a measuring cup with a lip. Without removing the cake from the oven, pour the topping evenly over it, starting with the edges. Spread the topping evenly. Bake the cake for 8 to 10 minutes more, or until the

edges of the topping just begin to bubble. Cool the cheesecake in the pan on a wire rack. Cover carefully to avoid marring the topping. Refrigerate for at least 12 hours or up to 2 days.

To assemble, remove the sides of the pan and place the cheesecake on a serving plate. Press the hazelnuts lightly around the top edge of the cake, letting some fall onto the plate. Cut the cake while it is still firm and chilled. Let the slices stand at room temperature for 20 minutes before serving. Makes 12 servings. **CH**

For more on Jintown Store, see Seasonings, page 154.