

What in the world do you do in the wintertime?

by Lydia Lovell

Certain summer visitors to Cape Cod, when they discover you live on the "right" side of the canal year-round, will look to you as though they had suddenly encountered a creature from outer space and inquire, "What in the world do you do in the wintertime?" They are thinking it must be unbearably quiet and dull in our small villages during the months of January, February, and March.

Coming from the city, as they do almost every weekend throughout spring, summer, and fall, they probably realize we're not exactly isolated from tourists between Labor Day and Thanksgiving or between Easter and Memorial Day, as the Cape once was. They probably even feel happy for us, and think we rejoice in the longer tourist season, too. If they didn't have that misconception, would they look so pityingly at us when they ask that question, "What in the world do you do in the wintertime?"

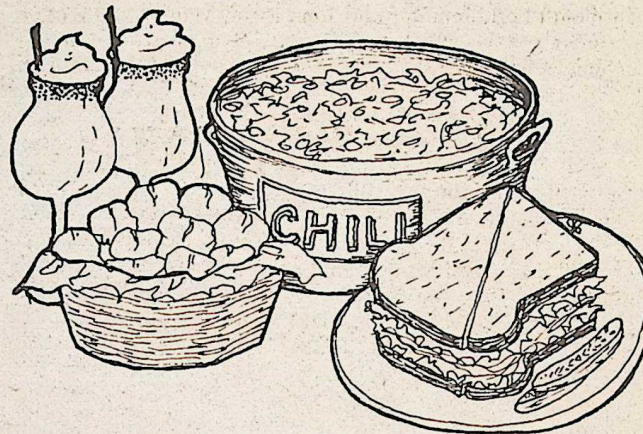
They can't know, of course, how complex our lives become as soon as summer is over. They can't know how quickly we become embroiled in local politics, in town meeting affairs, in plans for holiday celebrations at schools and churches. Nor can they imagine we have delayed turning our full attention to some family affairs until a slower pace allows us to devote to these important issues the time necessary.

They can't know these things because it seems to them our lives must be similar to those of hibernating bears as soon as the tourist trade slows to a trickle. It doesn't occur to them that wintertime is when we most enjoy ourselves and the place we've chosen to live, and that this is the season we have time for one another.

Now there's time for visiting, time for listening, time for sitting in front of the fire and feeling companionable. We even have time for partying with all those people we wish we could see more often, those we want to keep track of, not only as far as big events in their lives are concerned, but the little happenings, as well.

In Aunt Olivia's day, the tourist season was short; it began 4th of July weekend and ended Labor Day weekend. And all the rest of the year could be devoted to family, friends, and activities centered in the community. As a result, Aunt Olivia's collection of recipes for party dishes is large and varied. Month after month she cooked something special to carry to a covered-dish supper, or something unusual to serve to a gathering of friends and neighbors.

Today, our winter season, the season for entertaining, seems too short. The good times we could once spread comfortably over a ten month span are now crunched into the short weeks between New Year's and Easter. We may not need as many recipes for entertaining, but we do need a variety, and we like best those that are easy and quick to



prepare. Aunt Olivia chose party menus to combine good eating with fool-proof cooking, just as you and I do, and one of her standbys was baked chicken pieces. Adapted to modern packaging, **Chicken Nuggets** provides good finger food for any gathering.

Purchase enough chicken wings, drumsticks, and thighs to allow four pieces per person. Dip each piece in slightly beaten egg, then shake in a plastic bag in which you have mixed a cup of flour, a t. salt, ½ t. pepper, and 1 t. garlic powder. Arrange each type of chicken part in a single layer on baking pans and cook 20 to 40 minutes in a preheated 400° oven. Remove wings after 20 minutes, drumsticks after 30 minutes, and thighs after 40 minutes to be sure all are thoroughly cooked. Chicken nuggets may be baked ahead of time, and reheated in a hot (400°) oven just before serving, or they can be served cold.

Chicken is compatible with almost any other flavor; in addition to the usual mayonnaise or sour cream dips, you may want to try one or both of these vegetable purees. **Eggplant Dip** is delicious and unusual, served either hot or cold.

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| 1 lg. eggplant (at least a pound) | ¼ t. garlic salt |
| 3 T. cooking oil | 3 grindings black pepper |
| ¼ C. olive oil | 2 peeled tomatoes, chopped |
| 1 lg. onion, chopped fine | 2 T. dry sherry |
| 1 green pepper, chopped fine | |

Place eggplant directly on oven rack and bake at 400° for an hour. When eggplant is soft, remove from oven; let cool until you can handle it. Slice off stem end and peel away the skin. Chop and mash the pulp. Have salad oil and olive oil heating in large saucepan. Saute onion and green pepper until golden. Add spices, tomatoes, eggplant pulp, and sherry. Simmer, uncovered, until thickened (about 15 minutes), stirring occasionally. Chill. Yield: about 4 cups.

Serve with toasted pita bread, bulky dinner rolls, or unsalted crackers. In warm weather heap small spoonful on raw zucchini rounds or cucumber slices. Eggplant Dip served with meat is an excellent relish, too.

An even more unusual dip, **Texas Dunk**, is adapted to preparation in a blender or food processor; a food mill may be used.

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| 1 16-oz. can pork and beans | 1 t. chili powder |
| 2 T. chopped green chilies (mild) | 1 t. cider vinegar |
| ½ C. shredded Cheddar cheese | 1 t. Worcestershire sauce |
| ½ t. garlic salt | 4 slices crisp-cooked bacon, crumbled |

Whirl beans in blender or food processor to puree; pour into top of double boiler, add other ingredients, and heat over boiling water until cheese is melted. Stir well to blend. Serve warm (in a chafing dish if you have one) with choice of corn chips, bread sticks, or bulky rolls.

If you wish to offer a dip for the chicken nuggets, and you'd like one that's different in taste, but familiar-looking to your less-than-adventuresome guests, mix together the following for **Curry Dip** with unexpected flavors that compliment the chicken.

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| 1 C. pineapple yogurt | 1 T. orange-flavored gelatin (dry) |
| ½ C. mayonnaise | ¾ t. curry powder |

Blend thoroughly, cover, and refrigerate for at least an hour (overnight is better) before serving.

What in the world do we do in the wintertime? We please ourselves, we share good fellowship with dear people we enjoy most. And we take the time to prepare special treats for everyone's pleasure. That's part of what we do in the wintertime. . . .