

"Snappin' Rattle & Butter Balls"

by Lydia Lovell

You've heard of oldies but goodies. (Everyone has; the latest catch phrase becomes a cliché as fast as the speed of sound.) Perhaps Aunt Olivia was fortunate; she never knew the expression. Were she to have heard me use it in referring to one of her recipes, her glance would have fallen upon me in a most reproving fashion. Such a look was all that was necessary for her to let me know she was disappointed in me.

Her countenance never registered disappointment when I botched a baking chore. If a cake fell, a pie bubbled over, or my cookies burned, it was I, not she, who was disappointed. She always encouraged me to try again until I got it right. When I misused the King's English, however, Aunt Olivia showed her disappointment.

Despite that, when I discovered a yellowed and tattered newspaper clipping tucked between two pages of a cookbook in Aunt Olivia's library, the first thought zipping through my mind was, "Oh, wonderful! I remember this... an oldie, but a goodie!"

And then, mentally, I turned to make certain Aunt Olivia had not noticed. (Parents discouraged by repeating themselves interminably in attempts to impress upon their children important lessons, take consolation. Difficult though it may be to believe, your efforts are not all in vain.)

The clipping, so fragile with age it threatened to disintegrate in my fingers, brought back flooding memories. Aunt Olivia used the recipe so often she knew each step by heart; instructions were no longer needed. I'd thought them lost. Nor could I recall exactly how Aunt Olivia had prepared **Snappin' Rattle**.

1/4 C. seedless raisins, chopped coarsely	3 T. brown sugar
3/4 C. diced, mixed candied fruits and peels	1/2 t. cinnamon
	1/4 t. nutmeg
	Pie crust pastry

(Aunt Olivia made her own pie crust, of course, and she used lard. Attempting to persuade her to substitute vegetable shortening for lard in pastry was akin to controlling the rise and fall of tides. She tried just once and didn't like the result. Aunt Olivia used lard in pie crust for the rest of her life. Unlike her, I've adjusted to using vegetable shortening; I even recommend prepared pie crust mix for this recipe.)

Preheat oven to 425°. Mix pie crust as directed on package. Roll out a rectangle of pastry 1/8" thick on a floured board. Combine fruits and sprinkle them over one-half the crust. In a cup, stir sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg together. Scatter over the fruits. Fold the unadorned half of the crust over the fruited half, and roll gently with a floured rolling pin until fruit shows through the top. Seal edges by pressing together. Transfer to an ungreased baking sheet. With a floured spatula, score deeply but do not cut entirely through the bottom crust, making diamond-shaped sections about two inches long. Bake 15 minutes until golden. Snap apart along scoring lines while still hot. Cool thoroughly on wire rack and store in air-tight tin. These keep well for a couple of weeks and are nice to have on hand when someone drops in for tea.

Another treat Aunt Olivia made on those special occasions when she expected company on Sunday afternoon was a rich and mouthwatering confection known to the Lovells as **Butter Balls**. Chopping the nuts seemed to take forever, but we were well-rewarded with the final outcome.

1/4 C. sugar	2 T. vanilla
2 C. sifted flour	3 C. finely chopped pecans, walnuts or almonds
1/2 t. salt	
1 C. butter	

Sift sugar, flour, and salt together into a medium bowl. Work butter and vanilla into the flour mixture using your hands. Then work in two cups of the chopped nuts. Shape into 1" balls and roll them in the remaining nuts. Place on greased cookie sheets. Bake at 325° about 25 minutes. Makes about 60 small nut balls.

Whenever children in the Lovell family visited Uncle Henry and Aunt Olivia, they shared in whatever treats were offered

accompanying adults. Occasionally, of course, children called on Aunt Olivia independently... that is, without their parents. This may require explanation, for the world today is a far cry from that I knew as a child.

Fifty or 60 years ago, residents of small Cape Cod villages numbered fewer than 500 souls. Everybody knew everybody else. If a family moved in from another place, the newcomers became part of the social fabric within a remarkable short time. If reputations had not already preceded them, investigations were quickly conducted. Whenever a new baby arrived, everyone learned and remembered its name. By the time the child was a toddler, its features were recognized by all. No strangers came through town with the possible exception of transient peddlars; most of those had been bringing their wares to housewives' doors long enough to be almost as welcome as out-of-town relatives.

Little thought needed to be given to safety of children playing outside even should they wander away from home for a few hours. When a community is isolated and insular, its people can and do depend on one another to care for local youngsters, to look out for them if danger threatens, to discipline them when a situation calls for it, and to entertain or kindly shoo them home, whichever is appropriate.

Children accorded all adults the same respect they gave their parents. Unthinkable was responding negatively to any older person's criticism and, as long as you had behaved properly and no one was angry, being told to run along home was not at all insulting. Every child knew with certainty that his deportment would be made known to his father or mother if his behavior were unacceptable. He also knew his parents would stand for no rebellion against adult supervision. Children obeyed grown people.

Our Cape villages are no longer insular and isolated. We no longer teach our children to trust all adults, to respect all grown people, or to look upon all neighbors as surrogate parents.

While the ways of the world may have changed, our love for sweets has not. Today's visitor savors **Candied Grapefruit Peel** as much as we did when paying calls on Aunt Olivia at an age too young to attend school.

4 grapefruit	1/4 C. light corn syrup
3 C. sugar	1-1/2 C. water
Sugar for dredging	

Squeeze juice from grapefruit and serve it for breakfast. Clean away all pulp and membrane from peel, leaving the white inner skin intact. Slice the peel into strips 1/2" wide. In a large pot, cover strips with water; bring to a boil; cook 10 minutes. Drain. Repeat twice more, using fresh water both times. Meanwhile, combine sugar, corn syrup, and water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil and cook, uncovered, 25 to 30 minutes until syrup is medium thick. Drain and spoon peel carefully into syrup. Simmer until very thick, about 30 minutes. Reduce heat to lowest setting and, stirring constantly, cook until peel absorbs most of syrup. Do not allow to caramelize. When done, spread sugar on large sheet of wax paper. Lift peels with tongs, separating and coating each piece with sugar. Allow to dry for 24 hours. Store in airtight container in refrigerator. Makes 3 pints.

Candied peel is bittersweet and tangy. Everyone likes it!