

## ***Making Memories***

### ***By Deb Landry***

### ***Raising Cain***

One of my fondest memories of cooking at Christmas is from 1961 when I was seven years old. I remember sitting on the counter as my grandmother would gently smooth out her signature molasses cookies with the rolling pin. It was always a highlight of my visit to bake cookies and slip a bite of the sweet, sugary batter.

Since I can remember, I would visit my grandparents several times a year for numerous days at a time. They lived in the farmhouse where they raised their family for close to fifty years. She was a wife at eighteen, mother of nine and grandmother of twenty-eight with far too many great grandchildren to count. Of all the grandchildren and children, I was the one blessed as her namesake. We shared Delia as our middle name and much more. She was that one person in my childhood that allowed me to just be me. Whether we were cooking, playing a game, sewing or hanging out, she was comfort.

Her kindness and unconditional love drew me to pack my bags every time there was a school vacation. Nothing else compared to my visits. Not playing with my friends and neighbors, reading a book or even listening to a Beatle's record compared to the solace of my visits.

I remember one visit when I was four or five. My grandfather was sitting in his rocking chair napping while my grandmother prepared lunch. I stood behind him for what seemed hours combing his thick gray hair, something I did often. On this particular day, I decided to extend my salon services by giving him a hair treatment with Vic's Vapor Rub. He sat pretending to be asleep as I massaged his scalp with the tingling ointment. I remember it well because it was the first and only time Nana raised her voice to me. "Deborah, what are you doing"?

Saved by my grandfather's voice, "Delia, it's okay, I knew what she was doing. I didn't stop her because she was having so much fun." With that said, she returned to the kitchen while my grandfather began a long process to wash the rub from his head. I'm sure if my mother had done something like this when she was young, the consequences wouldn't have been so favorable.

My grandfather died in the late 60's and the farm was sold. Nana moved into a mobile home next to one of my aunts, but the visits didn't change. As my grandmother grew older, she would move in with us for my mom to care for her. She passed away in the 70's with congestive heart failure, after a weeklong stay in the hospital. My mother and I stayed with her every minute from the time she was admitted until her passing.

I lost my remaining three grandparents in that year, but nothing compared to the pain of losing my Nana. Many memories and traditions live on especially during the holidays. As I unpack my Christmas decorations each year, the first to go on the tree is an old handmade Santa. Plastic face, hands and feet tied together with red yard to a cotton, filled crocheted body was Nana's makeshift heirloom. He is the first to be placed on the top of one of the branches and the last to be removed. A white muslin apron with jingle bells and the name "Delia" embossed across the bottom, once worn by my grandmother is now my cherished

possession to wear. Moreover, to top off the menu of memories are her molasses Christmas cookies.

Here is the recipe that has been in my family for over one hundred years. Make a memory with your child. Happy Holidays

### **Nana's Molasses Cookies**

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

1 cup molasses

1 cup sugar

½ cup sour milk (add 1 teas. Of vinegar to the milk)

¾ cup Crisco

1 teaspoon salt

1 egg

1 teaspoon cinnamon,

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 teaspoon nutmeg

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

Enough flour to roll or handle

Roll out dough to 1/8 inch thick and cut with cookie cutters of choice. Bake for 12 minutes. Cool on cookie rack and decorate with frosting or sugar.