

dear susanne..

Dear Susanne:
My husband owns his own business and over the years he has built up a staff that can run the place. Every so often my husband decides he wants to get away for two weeks or even two months and he wants me to go with him. The problem is that I work and I enjoy my job very much. I just can't pick up and leave every time my husband gets an impulse to go. We live in an apartment and I get bored staying at home. I would like to please my husband but I don't see why I should have to jump every time he decides to go away, and he can decide that at the last minute just by telling his manager while I have to give notice. We have had a number of arguments over this and I hate these fights. I stayed home for years while I was raising our children and I feel that I am entitled to do what I want, which is to work. My husband says we don't need the money I earn, but that isn't the point. Shouldn't I have the right to decide how I want to live?

Liberated Nell

Dear Nell:
Ideally marriage is a partnership where both people work toward a common goal. You and your husband are fighting that goal and your lines of communication are all tangled up. Many women would be thrilled at the prospect of going off for a two week or two month holiday with their husbands. If holding down your job is that important to you, you will have to face up to the fact that your husband will go off by himself. You may not like the results of a carefree bachelor's holiday. Try to get your husband to arrange time off in a less impetuous fashion so that you may be able to arrange to go with him. You may have to decide which is more important to you — your marriage or your job.

Dear Susanne:
I am only 10 years old but I want to ask you what you think about parents fighting in front of their kids. My Mom and Dad get along fine but some times they start yelling at each other while we are eating dinner and I think I am going to get sick to my stomach. They are good to us and I love them but I wish they would stop this. Should I tell them how I feel?

Their Son

Dear Son:
Cut this out and show it to them. They probably don't realize what they are doing or how it hurts you. Parents don't always agree on everything and it is natural for them to have differences but they should discuss their problems when they are alone unless these problems concern you. At 10 you are probably more aware than your parents realize. Tell them you want to love and respect them and you can't when they fight in this manner in front of you.

If you have a problem or want to share an experience, write to Susanne Sommers at the Mississauga Times, 2300 South Sheridan Way, Mississauga.

For variety, try some Lebanese sweets

Traditions are to be respected, but variety is the spice of life.

That's why, along with your regular Christmas shortbread and fruitcake, you are looking for some different sweets to serve this year. Nana McDadi has several tasty Lebanese suggestions.

Nana and her husband Al, with their children Hassan, now 11, and the twins Hassana and Hatem, 9, came to Canada from Beirut, Lebanon in 1966. "We came to see a new country," Mrs. McDadi explains. They decided to stay.

Al opened his own store selling household appliances, the family moved to Mississauga and they all learned to adjust to the Canadian climate and customs.

The children love hot dogs. Mrs. McDadi serves both Canadian and Lebanese meals.

"I do a lot of cooking and baking," she says. "My husband works hard and when he comes home he enjoys a good meal. One of the things we appreciate in life is good food to eat."

Mrs. McDadi always keeps a selection of Lebanese sweets for the children. Here are some of her favourite recipes and also a recipe for spinach pie to be served as a side dish or a tasty appetizer.

DATE COOKIES

2 cups sifted flour
1 cup shortening or unsalted butter
2 lbs. dates, cut into pieces
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. nutmeg

What's cooking

1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 pkg. yeast
Mix flour with cinnamon and nutmeg. Melt the shortening and add to flour. Add the yeast. Add a little bit of water until the dough is the proper consistency to be rolled. Prepare the filling.

Filling:
Mix dates with a little bit of cinnamon and nutmeg. Roll the dough out into a long piece. Put the date mixture on top. Fold the dough over. Cut across into pieces about 1 1/2 inches long. You can press a fork down on each piece for decoration. Bake on greased cookie sheet at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes until brown.

PETIT FOURS

1/2 cups shortening
3/4 cup icing sugar
2 cups flour, sifted
2 eggs
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla
Beat shortening with sugar until a creamy consistency. Beat eggs. Add eggs, alternating with flour, to the sugar and shortening mixture, a little at a time. Don't beat too hard. Add baking powder with the last addition of flour.

Drop on an ungreased cookie sheet. Top each cookie with half a maraschino cherry. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes.

CHOCOLATE COOKIES

Using recipe for petit fours, add 2 tbsp. or a little more of cocoa or instant chocolate to the recipe. Repeat all other ingredients. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 min. After removing from oven, while cookies are still hot, dust with icing sugar.

SPINACH PIE

4 cups flour
1 tsp. salt
1 pkg. yeast
1/4 cup corn oil
Prepare dough. Add salt to the flour, add

yeast, corn oil and a few drops of water until the dough is smooth. Cover dough with a towel for about 30 minutes. Roll dough out. Cut into small circles. Roll each circle into a ball. Let the dough stand for about 10 to 15 minutes. After it has risen a bit, roll each ball out

into a thin circle. Cover and let rise again for two to three hours depending on room temperature.

Preparing filling:
1 lb. spinach
1 onion, chopped fine
salt

white pepper
2 tsp. corn oil
2 tsp. lemon juice
Wash and drain the spinach and cut into small pieces. Add the chopped onion, the salt and pepper, corn oil and lemon juice.

When the dough has risen, take the spinach filling and place in the middle of each circle. Fold the dough over to make a triangle. Bake on a greased cookie sheet for 20 to 25 minutes until brown. Serve hot. Makes 20 to 24.



Nana McDadi offers a selection of tasty Lebanese pastries. Times photo by Ray Seitz.



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CONSUMER MATTERS

Caring for Christmas plants

Christmas plants can be a pleasure well into the new year or they can go all droopy and die on you before the Christmas tree even comes down. Their health requires your attention. Read on for the proper care and feeding of your average Christmas plant.

Favourable weather conditions in the fall have meant a bumper crop of poinsettias this season. To get the most out of your poinsettia, place the plant in a bright area protected from drafts. Test the soil in the pot frequently. When it feels dry, water thoroughly. Don't allow the pot to sit in a dish full of water or the soil will become too soggy.

To retain the bright red leaves for as long as possible, try to keep the humidity level in your house above 50 per cent. The ideal nighttime temperature for the plant is 65 degrees and during the daytime it can go up to about 72 degrees.

When the red leaves start falling, usually in February, gradually reduce the water. When the leaves turn yellow, stop watering the plant entirely. Store in a cool spot where the temperature is 50 to 60 degrees.

In early May, cut the top down six inches, repot in fresh soil, move to a sunny window and start watering. When the weather is warm,

move the pot outdoors to a sunny location.

Bring your plant indoors again in September and set in a cool sunny window. Water and fertilize it regularly and with any kind of luck your plant will bloom again for Christmas.

CYCLAMEN

If poinsettias aren't your preference, cyclamen might be more your style. The plant is sometimes difficult to grow but its unusual blooms, in shades ranging from white to salmon to pink to red, make it an attractive addition for your home.

Cyclamen prefer a cool location with good light, but protected from direct sunlight. Normally they do best in temperatures from 55 to 60 degrees. A light soil, containing a great deal of leafmold, is the best growing medium.

Water the plant early in the morning so that the stems become dry by evening. Make sure there is good air circulation around the plant.

The flowers last for about four to six weeks. After flowering, keep watering the plant and when the warm

weather comes, place the pot in sandy soil. Allow the soil around the pot to become quite dry.

Repeat in the fall, bring into the house and with cool temperatures and regular waterings, your cyclamen should come into a second bloom.

AZALEA

Perk up a dull winter day with a bright pink azalea. Or choose a plant with white, red or lavender blooms, sharp contrast against the dark green foliage.

Azaleas flower for several weeks under suitable conditions — an east window at a daytime temperature of 70 to 75 degrees and 60 to 65

degrees during the night. The plant should be watered daily and kept in a fairly humid atmosphere. But always remove excess water from the saucer under the pot. Once a week stand the pot in water for about 30 minutes.

When its blooms have gone, the plant may be carried over to the next growing season by repotting in a mixture containing mostly acid peat and a little soil but no alkaline sand. In the spring, when the danger of frost is past, but the plant, still potted, into an acid soil or peat outdoors. It requires care to get azaleas to bloom again. But it's worth the try.

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