

Neta Jackson

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Reading Group Guide

- 1. The Yada Yada Prayer Group wants to celebrate and get "decked out"—nothing wrong with that! When was the last time you really got "decked out"? What do you consider the joys and pitfalls of getting "decked out"?
- 2. Besides weddings, anniversaries, graduations, and birthdays, what are some *other* events or milestones (often overlooked) that deserve celebration?
- 3. The Manna House women's shelter provides a backdrop for much of this story. Have you ever volunteered at a shelter or food pantry for those without basic necessities? Share your experience. In what ways did volunteering change *you*?
- 4. Jodi found "Mr. Tallahassee" (Amanda's schoolmate) extremely annoying, but God told her to sow seeds of friendship anyway. Are your children's friends welcome at your house—whether they are five, fifteen, or twenty-five? How could you make your home more hospitable toward guests of all ages?
- 5. When Jodi realized she knew one of the youths who snatched her purse, do you think she did the right thing by *not* reporting it to the police? Why or why not?

- 6. How do you feel about Edesa's decision to keep Carmelita's orphaned child, even though she and Josh weren't married yet? What risks was she taking?
- 7. Josh told his parents God used the story of Joseph to speak to him about marrying Edesa *now* and accepting the child too. Has a story from the Bible ever spoken to your specific circumstances? In what way?
- 8. Why do you think Josh and Edesa chose Colossians 3:12–14 for their wedding scripture? In what way might these verses rearrange our priorities as women?
- 9. Jodi decides the unpolished Christmas play at the Manna House shelter and its cast of Katrina evacuees and down-on-their-luck residents is actually very appropriate. Today's version of the Christmas story (complete with music and candlelight and glittering decorations) shields us from its poverty-stricken setting and common characters: an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, a hurry-up wedding, a travel-weary couple without room reservations, a destitute baby born in a barn. If the Son of God were born *today*, what might be the equivalent for the town of Bethlehem? . . . the stable? . . . the shepherds who got the first announcement? (Who would believe and come running?)
- 10. In a way, the story of Hakim and Jodi provides "bookends" to the Yada Yada series. Why do you think Hakim responded

- to the invitation to make this truly "Freedom's Eve"? What did this mean for Jodi? For Hakim's mother?
- 11. How do you usually celebrate New Year's Eve? How might you add meaning to this holiday with ideas from this novel?
- 12. In your journey with the Yada Yada Prayer Group, what has meant the most to you? What have you learned about prayer? . . . about worship? . . . about the "other" members of the body of Christ who are different from yourself?

Celebrate!

If you're like Jodi Baxter (it's a little scary how many other "Jodies" are out there!), it probably feels as if you've barely recovered from the last holiday season—paid the bills . . . put away the decorations . . . discovered the forgotten wrapping paper still under the bed—when the holidays loom large on the calendar again.

Hopefully it won't take a sprained ankle to slow you down long enough to think about how you want to celebrate the holiday season this year.

Of course, if you want fancy decorating tips, last-minute gift ideas, or tantalizing menus for a seven-course meal, feel free to pick up one of the slick women's magazines at the grocery store checkout, take a few guilt trips that you're not doing enough . . . then go back to "doing the holidays" the same old way.

But if you'd like a few tips on celebrating the holiday season "the Yada Yada Way," sit tight and take a bite!

Celebrate Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving! *Giving thanks* . . . that's what this holiday is about. Families getting together. And food, of course. Lots and lots of food. Most every family has their favorite foods and recipes, from the traditional turkey (*and* ham *and* macaroni and cheese, staples

at most African-American Thanksgiving tables) to pumpkin pie (or sweet potato pie). But before you dive in, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on the historical aspects of this day.

Reflect

The following account of the "First Thanksgiving" in the New World provides a meaningful context. However, the Native American corn mentioned here was not popcorn, nor would it have been very suitable for eating on the cob. It was primarily ground for meal.

Our [wheat] did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men [out] fowling, . . . so we might . . . rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors.

They . . . in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, . . . many of the Indians [came] amongst us, [including] their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted. And they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others.

And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

It's also worth noting that a "thanksgiving day" is not a uniquely American holiday. Here are some other countries that have also set aside days to give thanks.

Other Countries' Days of Thanksgiving Celebrations

- Brazil, Dia Nacional de Acao de Gracas, fourth Thursday of November.
- British Isles, Lammas Day, a harvest festival.
- Canada, Thanksgiving Day or *Fete de Grace*, or Harvest Home Festival, second Monday in October.
- Germany, Erntedankfest, first Sunday in October.
- Israel, *Sukkot*, Feast of Booths, the fifth day after Yom Kippur.
- Japan, Labor Thanksgiving Day, November 23.
- Korea, *Chusok*, fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month of the traditional Korean calendar.
- Liberia, Thanksgiving Day, first Thursday in November.
- Mexico, Independence Day, September 16.
- Switzerland, The Federal Day of Thanks, Penance, and Prayer, third Sunday in September.

Give Thanks!

However you celebrate this day, *don't forget to give thanks*. God's blessings are so freely given and so abundant. But it's not "what we have" so much as "how we have it" that give us reason to celebrate with joy and thanksgiving.

• Consider this proverb: "Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil. Better a meal of

- vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred" (Proverbs 15:16–17 NIV).
- Discuss with your family members: "What do you think this proverb means for *our* family? Are we focusing too much on our problems and not enough on our blessings? Are there family quarrels that need to be mended so we can truly give thanks?"

Expand Your Table

- The whole family is coming for Thanksgiving? Great! But consider adding a few international students from the local college, a few singles from church, or the older couple down the street whose children live in distant states.
- At the first Thanksgiving in 1621, Native Americans and European immigrants sat down at the same table and broke bread together. Why not invite a family from a culture or ethnic group different from your own to share Thanksgiving Day with your family? Let each family bring traditional dishes from their own culture. Listen to one another's stories. It will be a Thanksgiving Day you will never forget.
- The family can't come this year? Quit moping! Volunteer to serve Thanksgiving dinner at a local homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or other ministry that serves the elderly, the lonely, or the poor. Don't just dish out food. Sit and talk with the guests. Play checkers or cards. You will not only be a blessing, but you will be blessed!

A Thanksgiving Mural

• Tack a long piece of newsprint or a large poster board somewhere near the Thanksgiving table with colorful markers nearby. Encourage family and guests to write their thanksgivings on the mural during the day—no limit! Little ones can draw pictures. Date the mural and save it until the following year . . . then bring it out for everyone to enjoy before starting a new one.

Popcorn Praise

- Before serving the food at your Thanksgiving dinner, place three kernels of popcorn on each dinner plate, then pass around a bowl, inviting each person to tell three things he or she is thankful for as they place their kernels in the bowl. You might assist younger children by suggesting categories: family, God, something fun.
- Or ... pass the bowl at three different times during the meal—before it begins, during the meal, when it's time for dessert. Pick a theme for the thanksgivings each time: "Something that happened this past year" . . . "Why you are thankful for the person sitting next to you" . . . "Something you are looking forward to" . . . etc.

A Family Advent Celebration

Like Jodi Baxter, you may sometimes feel pushed into Christmas by the frenzy and commercialism of the season without a moment to consider the magnitude of God being born on earth to live among us. For centuries, many Christians have slowed their hectic lives during the four weeks before Christmas to focus on the reason for the season by celebrating Advent—a word that means

"coming" or "arriving"—a time of reflecting on Israel's long wait for a Messiah in order to prepare ourselves to celebrate His coming. Because of its ancient origin, there are many variations in the tradition, but "Ready My Heart," a simple carol by Lois Shuford, captures the essence well.

Ready my heart for the birth of Emmanuel
Ready my soul for the Prince of Peace.
Heap the straw of my life for His body to lie on,
Light the candle of hope. Let the Child come in.
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Christ the Savior is born!

The Advent Wreath

- In the center of your table, construct a wreath of evergreens or holly. (Artificial greens or a wreath of ceramic or wood is less flammable.) Evenly space four purple or red candles in holders around the perimeter. In the center of the wreath, place a large white candle that is one and a half to three inches in diameter.
- Traditionally, *purple* has been a color that reminds us of sorrow and repentance, but it is also the color of royalty. The *evergreens* remind us of the eternal life Jesus Christ brings as His gift to us. The glow from all the *candles* reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World.
- The first candle is often called the *Prophets' Candle* and is meant to signify the hope of Messiah. The second is the *Bethlehem Candle*, reminding us that God came in a humble manner. The third candle (sometimes pink to express joy) is

the *Shepherds' Candle*. The fourth candle is the *Angels' Candle*, symbolizing the good news of peace they brought. The white candle is the *Christ Candle* to be lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Celebrating Advent

- Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas (usually the first Sunday after Thanksgiving).
- On the first Sunday, do the full celebration (see "A Family Advent Celebration") for that week together as a family. Repeat the Call and Response, read the first week's scripture, light the first candle while saying its meaning and allowing it to burn during your meal, and sing the first verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." During the week, do an abbreviated version: Light the first candle each night while repeating its meaning, and sing the first verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- On the *second*, *third*, *and fourth Sundays of Advent*, do that week's full celebration, adding the second, third, and fourth candle lightings as appropriate. On the weekdays of those weeks, do the shortened version of lighting all candles to date while saying their meanings, but sing only that week's verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- Each Scripture passage is read only on its respective Sunday.
 The lighting of the candles, however, is added accumulatively until all the candles are burning together the fourth week and on Christmas.

A Family Advent Celebration

First Week

Call and Response

LEADER: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

ALL: Those who dwelled in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

LEADER: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.

ALL: And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Read the first scripture: Isaiah 40:1–5.
- Light the first candle, and say:

I light this candle in memory of God's promise to send a Savior who will forgive our sin and deliver us from injustice.

• Sing the first verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Second Week

- Call and Response—repeat from the first week.
- Light the first candle, repeat its meaning, and sing the first verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- Read the second scripture: John 8:12.
- Light the second candle, and say:

I light this candle in memory of Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World.

• Sing the second verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Third Week

- Call and Response—repeat from the first week.
- Light the first and second candles, repeat their meanings, and sing the respective verses of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- Read the third scripture: Luke 1:32–33.
- Light the third candle, and say:
 - I light this candle in memory of Jesus, born of the house of David, in the town of Bethlehem.
- Sing the third verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Fourth Week

- Call and Response—repeat from the first week.
- Light the first three candles, repeat their meanings, and sing the respective verses of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- Read the fourth scripture: Revelation 5:9–10
- Light the fourth candle, and say:
 - I light this candle for Jesus Christ, who was born to be Lord of the nations.
- Sing the fourth verse and refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Christmas Day

- Call and Response—repeat from the first week.
- Light the first four candles, repeating their meanings, and sing the respective verses of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
- Read the Christmas scripture: Luke 2:1–20.
- Light the Christmas candle. Say:

I light this candle for Jesus Christ, who was born in a manger on Christmas Day.

• Sing "Away in a Manger."

Suggestions:

- Doing the celebration each day will undoubtedly use up your candles, but the daily meditation can be meaningful, so just replace the candles with new ones.
- Let each child and/or parent be responsible for lighting one particular candle and saying what it means (e.g., oldest child lights first candle, second child second candle, a parent lights third candle, etc.).
- If the full Advent celebration is too long for your family, just read the new scripture and light the new candle each week.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appears.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel!

2. O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer Our spirits by Thine advent here; Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadows put to flight.

- 3. O come, Thou Key of David, come And open wide our heavenly home. Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery.
- 4. O come, Desire of nations, bind All peoples in one heart and mind. Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease. Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Celebrate a New Year's Eve "Watch Night"

New Year's Eve! The beginning of a New Year is celebrated all over our globe—though not all countries celebrate on December 31. China and Israel, for example, have calendars based on a lunar month, so the date of their New Year celebrations, while consistent on a lunar calendar, change on the "standard" solar calendar most of us use.

Many of us remember the New Year's Eve not too long ago when the calendar flipped from 1999 to 2000—the second millennium was here! Wahoo! What an historical event! (Though, to be honest, the next day pretty much resembled the one just before it. The sun rose, the sun set, in that wonderful rhythm of God's awesome creation.)

Reflect

Undoubtedly, people have commemorated New Year's Eve ever since primitive calendars were able to identify the date. But Christian "Watch Night" services seem to have begun with the Moravians, a small community of believers in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) in the eighteenth century. These Christians, persecuted because of their protests against a state church and its many excesses, fled to Bohemia and eventually to the New World in search of freedom to worship God according to the New Testament model. In 1733, they held their first Watch Night service, a time to give thanks to God for His blessing and protection in the year past, and to rededicate themselves to God's service in the coming year.

John Wesley borrowed the idea for his followers, who were later known as Methodists. Since then, many modern Christians have observed some sort of New Year's Eve service reflecting on God's goodness during the past year and recommitting themselves to Him for the New Year. Two biblical themes are often emphasized: Jesus' words before His betrayal, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matthew 26:41 NIV; emphasis added), and His warning to be ready for His return at the end of the age, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (Matthew 25:13 NIV; emphasis added).

However, African-American Christians experienced special significance in this observance on the night of December 31, 1862, which for them was also "Freedom's Eve"—the night before the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect and all the slaves in the Confederate states were declared free. As they came together in churches and private homes all across the nation, hope, fear, and prayers gave way to shouts of joy, songs, and thanksgiving to God when word spread after midnight that the Proclamation had not been retracted. It's an event that all Christians can incorporate into their Watch Night services, praising God for bringing us through another year and thanking Him for both physical and spiritual freedom.

A Watch Night Celebration

If your usual New Year's Eve consists of sacking out in front of the TV and watching "the ball" fall in Times Square . . . or leaving the kids with a babysitter while you hold a glass of bubbly and sing "Auld Lang Syne" at the office party . . . consider celebrating a family-friendly Watch Night. The following Watch Night celebration can be adapted for use in a church setting, or at home with family and friends.

Invite!

- "Make new friends, but keep the old . . . " the old camp song goes. A New Year's Eve celebration is an excellent time to celebrate "old friends" and "new." A youth group from one church could invite a youth group from another church. A family could invite another family—or two! One "old friends" and one "new."
- It's important to keep our children's hearts—and our own—open to those Jesus loves but who are often overlooked. "Birds of a feather flock together" is *not* in the Bible!

Eat!

- Begin the evening with a potluck meal. If your church or neighborhood involves many nationalities, this could be an "international night" with foods from different countries.
- If done at home with family and friends, plan a festive meal for which various participants help prepare different dishes.

Play!

• After the meal, play games that adults and youth can play together—relays, guessing games, icebreakers.

• Play charades . . . but instead of using the traditional categories of book title, movie title, song, etc., pantomime events with which everyone is familiar from the preceding year. Agree on categories such as *Happy Event* (demonstrated by pulling one's mouth into a grin with fingers), *Sad Event* (pull mouth down into a frown), *Crazy Event* (circling fingers around ears), *Scary Event* (holding eyes exceptionally wide with hands), *God's Provision* (fingers raked down over one's head like falling rain), etc. Other gestures may follow the game's typical sign language. (Google "charades" on the Internet for examples.) No words or sounds may be spoken. No letters may be "drawn" in the air to spell out a word. Rather than dividing into teams, each player can take a turn portraying an event while everyone else guesses. Little ones may need an adult's help.

Reflect!

 Before midnight arrives, explain some of the background of Watch Night services as mentioned earlier in the "Reflect" section. Read Mark 13:28–37, in which Jesus told how we can recognize when the time for His return is approaching and encouraged us to be ready by watching and praying. (You may want to use the King James Version, which uses that language.)

Sing!

• Sing songs about God's faithfulness, either from a hymnal or some of the contemporary praise and worship songs.

Commit!

- Invite individuals to renew their commitment to the Lord as they prepare to enter the New Year. This could be a spontaneously worded commitment with a particular focus, or, for the younger ones, it might reiterate these words from Joshua 24:15: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (NIV).
- As each person makes a commitment, let him or her light a candle and put it in a candleholder on a table or plant it in a bed of sand in a large pan. The more candles, the brighter the light.

Bless!

• An alternative (or an addition) might be to pray blessings on the children and teenagers as the parents light a candle for each one. For inspiration, read Mark 10:13–16, imagining what Jesus might have said as He took the children into His arms, placed His hands on their heads, and blessed them.

Ring in the New Year!

- At midnight, ring in the New Year by letting everyone ring a bell, jingle keys, shake a tambourine, or tap lightly on a glass with a spoon.
- Conclude the evening by singing "This Little Light of Mine." Sing all the usual verses and make up your own: "All around my neighborhood/ With all my friends/ Every day in school/ When I go to work, etc. . . . I'm going to let it shine! Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!"

Recipes

* metric conversion on page 29

Jodi's Hungarian Chicken and Dumplings

Jodi's not Hungarian, but who cares? It's all that paprika! When the weather gets cold, the Baxter clan starts clamoring for chicken and dumplings, the perfect cold-weather comfort food.

1 chicken, cut up, or eight pieces

1 tbsp. paprika

¹/₂ tsp. salt

¹/₄ tsp. black pepper

¹/₂ tsp. dried thyme

1 tbsp. olive oil

2 stalks of celery, split and cut into 3 inch pieces

4 med. carrots, split and cut into 3 inch pieces

2 med. onions, quartered

4 cups of chicken stock (or dissolve 2 tbsp. bouillon in water)

Rinse the chicken, pat dry, and cover with the paprika, salt, pepper, and thyme, rubbing it in. Sauté the chicken in the oil until brown (about 15 minutes).

(Recipe continues on next page.)

Add the vegetables and chicken to the chicken stock and bring it to a boil in a large pot. Simmer for about 30 minutes.

Don't get sidetracked by the phone or the newspaper. You still have to . . .

Make the dumplings:

1 1/2 cups unbleached flour

1 ¹/₂ tsp. baking powder

¹/₄ tsp. salt

3 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley (or 3 tsp. dried)

2 tbsp. solid vegetable shortening

¹/₂ cup milk

Combine ingredients (reserving some parsley for a garnish) and form into golf-ball-sized dumplings. Drop the dumplings into the simmering broth, arranging them so they will expand to cover the surface. Put a lid on your pot and cook for another 15 minutes.

Garnish with reserved parsley and serve in bowls to accommodate the juice. Makes 4 to 6 servings—but don't count on any leftovers.

Consider coleslaw or cucumber salad as a side.

Estelle's Orange-Smothered Pork Chops

Don't tell anybody, but Estelle accidentally invented this when she had a dab of marmalade she didn't have the heart to throw out, so she threw it on the pork chop she was cooking instead. It was so good, she keeps a jar of marmalade now just for chops.

One pork chop per person (select chops about 1/2 inch thick) Corn oil

1 thsp. orange marmalade per chop

1/4 cup orange juice per chop
Pinch of ground, rubbed sage per chop
A couple dashes of seasoned salt per chop
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a skillet large enough to accommodate your chops flat on the bottom, put about 1 tbsp. of corn oil. (More may be required if your chops are particularly lean.)

Cover each chop with the seasoned salt, sage, and pepper.

Sear the chops in the skillet over high heat until brown on both sides. Pour off excess grease and allow the pan to cool slightly. Mix the marmalade into the orange juice and pour over chops. Increase heat and gently simmer for about 20 minutes or until the orange juice thickens to a syrup, turning the chops 2 or 3 times. Do not allow the syrup to scorch.

Serve on a bed of rice, pouring the juice over the top. Garnish with sprigs of fresh, curly parsley. (And it's okay to puff out your chest and whisper, "Secret recipe," when your family raves. Estelle won't mind.)

Estelle's Holiday Corn Puddin'

"Corn pudding?! Never heard of it!" Just smile smugly and tell them Estelle guarantees this will melt in their mouths. It looks pretty, too, with those bits of red and green peppers.

```
1 can (15 oz.) of creamed corn
3 tbsp. flour
1 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. sugar
2 dashes nutmeg
2 dashes black pepper
3 eggs, beaten well
3 tbsp. melted butter
1 cup milk (for richer flavor, try soy milk)
1/4 green bell pepper, finely diced
1/4 red bell pepper, finely diced
Paprika
```

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine creamed corn and all dry ingredients, mixing well. Stir in the eggs, butter, and milk. Add the peppers, and pour all ingredients into a greased 1¹/₂-quart baking dish. Sprinkle the top with paprika and bake for 1 hour or until the pudding is firm and a knife comes out clean. Serves 4 to 6.

Jodi's Flaky Piecrust

Jodi says, "Can't knit... can't skydive... can't dance the light fantastic. But I can make a good piecrust." Denny likes to make her prove it (he has a weakness for pie).

Jodi's hint: a piecrust that flakes like good pastry is as much technique as the right ingredients.

2 cups flour

1 tsp. salt

²/₃ cup vegetable shortening, divided

- cut ¹/₃ cup shortening into dry ingredients with a pastry blender until well blended
- cut in remaining 1/3 cup shortening

5 to 7 tbsp. ice water (fill a small bowl with ice cubes, then add water)

Sprinkle 1 tbsp. of ice water at a time onto the flour/shortening mixture while you toss it with a fork. Add from 5 to 7 spoonfuls . . . just until dough can be gathered into a ball.

Divide dough, slightly more than half for the bottom crust. Roll out dough quickly and gently on a floured counter or board. (Too much handling is what makes it tough.) Pat any tears with a dab of water to stick the dough back together.

Turn over once. Dust with flour as needed to roll smoothly to a diameter about 1 inch larger than your pie pan. To transfer a rolled-out piecrust to the pan, roll it up around the rolling pin, then unroll the crust into the pan. Open it and cut off excess, leaving 1/2 inch extending beyond the edge.

(Recipe continues on next page.)

Fill with your favorite filling.

For a two-crust pie, repeat the above, and lay second crust over the filling, leaving 1 inch extending beyond the edge. Use a knife or pastry scissors to trim excess dough to 1-inch overlap. Tuck top overlap *under* the edge of the bottom crust.

Make a fluted edge by pinching the dough edge with thumb and forefinger of the left hand while pushing forefinger of the right hand between the pinch. Continue all around the pie. Cut slits in the top crust to release steam while baking. (Jodi cuts eyes and mouth to make a happy face. Of course, when the juice dribbles out the slits, it looks like the happy face is either crying or slobbering.)

Bake at required temperature for the filling (e.g., for apple pie, bake in an oven preheated to 450 degrees for 10 minutes, then turn down the temperature to 350 degrees for about 30 minutes or until the edges of the crust are golden brown).

Florida's Sweet Potato Pie

Florida says, "The recipe below is for one pie, but you better make two! Ya gotta have enough pie for all the drop-ins, know what I'm sayin'?"

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2 lbs. or 2 to 3 sweet potatoes 1 stick butter (1/4 lb.)
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2 eggs

1 cup brown sugar

1 ¹/₂ cups soy milk or 1 can evaporated milk

1 tsp. vanilla

1 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. nutmeg

¹/₂ tsp. ginger

¹/₄ tsp. cloves

¹/₄ tsp. salt

Piecrust (see Jodi's Flaky Piecrust recipe)

Boil the sweet potatoes with the skins on until tender. Cool under running water until you can remove skins. Place the yams in a mixer and whip on medium speed, stopping occasionally to remove "strings" clinging to the beaters.

Add butter until melted and mixed. Then add the remaining ingredients and continue mixing until smooth. If the batter is too thick to pour, add additional soy milk until smooth.

Pour your batter into an unbaked pie shell, sprinkle a dash of cinnamon on the top, and bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until

(Recipe continues on next page.)

brown specks appear on the surface of the pie and an inserted knife blade comes out clean.

Allow to cool at least 1 hour. It is also delicious chilled.

Serves 6 brothers or 8 "sistahs" on a diet.

Ruth's Potato Latkes

Simple to make, kids like them, and they're kosher! (Of course, if you have twins trying to "help" and the phone rings . . . even "simple" has its limits.)

4 medium potatoes

1 medium onion or three scallions, finely chopped

2 eggs, beaten

³/₄ cup matzo meal (bread crumbs or 3 tbsp. flour may be substituted)

1 tsp. salt

¹/₄ tsp. black pepper

¹/₄ cup fresh parsley, chopped (optional)

Vegetable oil for frying

Grate the potatoes into a large bowl. Discard any liquid. Stir in onions, salt, pepper, and parsley. Add the matzo, mixing well before stirring in the eggs.

Heat oil in a large frying pan. Use ¹/₄ to ¹/₃ cup of batter for each *latke*, spreading it with a fork into thin cakes about the size of your palm. Cook 4 to 5 minutes per side or until golden brown. Drain pan-fried latkes on paper towels. (Or heat a griddle to 350 degrees with just a spray of oil on it. Griddle latkes may not turn out so crispy, but they contain far less fat.)

Serve hot with a scoop of cold applesauce and a dollop of sour cream. Serves about 4.

If desired, accompany with sausages. (But don't tell Ruth if they're not kosher.)

U. S. TO METRIC CONVERSION TABLE

CAPACITY

 $^{1}/_{5}$ teaspoon = 1 ml

1 teaspoon = 5 ml

1 tablespoon = 15 ml

1 fluid oz. = 30 ml

 $^{1}/_{5}$ cup = 50 ml

1 cup = 240 ml

2 cups (1 pint) = 470 ml

4 cups (1 quart) = .95 liter

4 quarts (1 gal.) = 3.8 liters

WEIGHT

1 oz. = 28 grams

1 pound = 454 grams