

# ***JUST DESSERTS***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

My mother, a short chubby woman, was always busy trying to stretch one provision into another. She always wore a bib apron with four or five safety pins tacked to the bib half, and a hanky in each of the two pockets. One never knew when one or the other might be needed.

More often than not desserts appeared only on Sunday. Fruits ripened in the summer and the fall ended up in quart and half gallon jars to provide us with most of our desserts for the winter. Several of the older children, including myself, spent a lot of time peeling apples and peaches.

All of the fruit didn't get put in jars. Some was sliced very thin, put on big baking pans and put in a slow oven until they were dry. The fruit was then put in cloth bags and hung in back of the big pantry with the jars.

Black walnuts, butternuts and hickory nuts gathered from the timbers in the fall had to be laid out on large boards to dry. Before they dried completely, the younger children enjoyed the chore of walking on them to get the hulls off. These tasted mighty good in cookies and candy for the Christmas holidays.

Canned fruit served over plain yellow cake made for a tasty dish. Baked into pies or cobblers, or sweet dumplings dropped into the sweet fruit tasted just as good.

Lunch bags with cheese or peanut butter sandwiches weren't so bad when there were oatmeal, peanut butter, sugar, or raisin cookies to go with them.

A lot of these goodies my mother made without recipes. I don't remember that she had any measuring cups or spoons. Her measuring devices were her hands and her fingers, a handful of this and a pinch of that. She did have recipes, however. One of these is for a burnt sugar cake handed down from my grandmother. The recipe that is, not the cake.