



Just for Fun

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of someone else."

JUDY GARLAND

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

On the eve of Thanksgiving, the S&P 500 stock benchmark was up almost 25% year-to-date. If that advance can be sustained through the end of December, the index will have its best year since 2013.¹

BRAIN TEASER

Decades ago, a historical society leased a mansion to a museum for 99 years. The mansion has already been leased for a timespan equal to four-fifths the time remaining on the lease. How much time is left on the lease?

DID YOU KNOW?

Not all ants are created equal
Male ants die soon after mating and usually only live around a week. In contrast, female ants (worker ants) live about a year, and queen ants (females that establish colonies) can live for 20 to 30 years.²



Cranberry Christmas Pie³

Eight Gifts that Cost Nothing to Give

Every year at this time I find myself racking my brain for gift ideas. What would be meaningful, thoughtful, remembered, better than last year? And then I came across an article that listed the following gifts that cost nothing.

1. THE GIFT OF LISTENING...

But you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

2. THE GIFT OF AFFECTION...

Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and holds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

3. THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER...

Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

4. THE GIFT OF A WRITTEN NOTE...

It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.

5. THE GIFT OF A COMPLIMENT...

A simple and sincere, "You look great in red," "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

6. THE GIFT OF A FAVOR...

Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

7. THE GIFT OF SOLITUDE...

There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

8. THE GIFT OF A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION...

The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone, really it's not that hard to say, Hello or Thank You.

After reading this list, I was reminded of a Christmas gift I made for my great-grandmother, Nonnie, when I was a little boy. It wasn't exactly free but it was almost so. Somewhere, I saw a picture of a cross made from burnt matches and decided to make one. Back then, boxes of wooden matches were commonplace in our house, so I took a box, burned all the match tips and glued the pieces onto a cardboard cutout. It looked a little bit like this picture.



Ingredients

FILLING INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

TOPPING INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup butter softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour *
- * GLUTEN-FREE ALTERNATIVE
- 2/3 cup brown rice flour *
- 1/3 cup tapioca starch *

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Combine the filling ingredients and stir to combine. Pour into a generously buttered 10" pie plate.
- Combine the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until smooth. Add the eggs and almond extract and beat again until fluffy. Add the flour and beat once more.
- Spread the thick batter over the cranberry mixture in the pan. I used a small cookie scoop to quickly dollop spoonfuls across the top of the pie. It doesn't need to look perfect.
- Bake for 40-50 minutes, test doneness with a toothpick, just to make sure the topping is cooked through. Serve warm with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. Enjoy!

If you do not have a 10" pan, a 9" pan will work fine, it will simply need about 10 extra minutes of baking time.

Nonnie opened my gift and gushed about how beautiful it was. She hung it on the wall in her living room and told everyone who came to her house how beautiful it was. And it remained there for the rest of her life.

What I really didn't understand at that young age was that Nonnie was nearly blind. She couldn't make out her own fingers more than a foot from her eyes. She had no idea what I had made for her, but it gave her constant joy until the day she died.

Perhaps the people you love most will be happiest with the things that cost the least – just like my Nonnie.

May your holidays be blessed beyond measure!



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* TRIVIA ANSWER: Stumped? Contact me for the answer! 720-330-1013

¹ cnbc.com/2019/11/25/stock-market-wall-street-in-focus-amid-earnings-and-economic-data.html [11/25/19]

² theconversation.com/six-amazing-facts-you-need-to-know-about-ants-100478 [6/20/19]

³ www.barefeetinthekitchen.com