



FEATURE

Crank Up Some Real TOGETHERNESS

Rekindle your family reunion with food, fun, and faith.

by KAREN EHMAN

MY THREE YOUNG CHILDREN — along with a half-dozen or so cousins — took turns sitting on my in-laws' old-fashioned, crank-style ice cream maker. Parked in the cool shade of the big honey locust tree in the backyard, they were performing a crucial summertime task: holding the rickety galvanized metal contraption still while another Ehman grandchild twisted the squeaky crank, helping to craft a thick, creamy confection for our annual extended family get-together.

After nearly an hour, the sweet treat was done and ready to be devoured. But this wasn't just your ordinary vanilla variety. This delectable dish has become an heirloom recipe. It is my mother-in-law's famous "Six-Twos." A banana and citrusy combination, its ingredient list calls for six items, two (or two cups) of each. Eating it is like tasting

summer by the spoonful. Although it takes some time to create, it disappears in a flash.

Observing the grandchildren enjoying themselves as they combined their cranking efforts was only part of the joy of our annual get-together. Hearing the stories and memories shared by the adults gathered around watching was even more sweet to savor. Just as the recipe has been passed down through generations, so have fun family traditions and deep, compelling faith.

The warmer weather and ample outdoor locations for gathering combine to provide an ideal opportunity for planning and hosting an old-fashioned family reunion. But don't just stop at assigning covered dishes and gathering various lawn games. With a little creativity, your get-together can be a time to spark spiritual interest as you pass on a legacy of faith.

GETTY IMAGES

Here are some ideas to try and a few new traditions to implement:

1. Start a fire — both a physical and a spiritual one. Gather some firewood as well as roasting sticks and all the components necessary to make s'mores. While the marshmallows are toasting, invite family members to volunteer to share the story of how they first responded to the gospel and came to faith in Jesus. If your family does not include a lot of believers, make the topic more general. Ask for people to share any inspiring stories of love, kindness, hope, or faith they can remember from the past, specifically mentioning any relatives who might have played a part in that story.

2. Create a gratitude tablecloth. To create a new tradition going forward, purchase a tablecloth made of cotton muslin. Place fine-tip, permanent, colored markers around the table during the family picnic. Have each person present write on the tablecloth his name, age, and the current year along with one thing he is grateful for. Each year add to the signatures. How fun it will be in the future to look back and see all who graced the family reunion each summer.

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3. Celebrate the highs; lift the lows. While waiting for the meat to grill, have everyone take turns sharing one high point and one low point of the past year. End the time by inviting a few people to pray about any concerns that arose as family members explained what their low points were.

4. Honor your ancestors, both living and those who have passed. Showcase many of the recipes earlier generations were known for cooking. Serve Great-Grandma Lucille's potato salad or Uncle Kevin's barbecue baked beans. Have recipe cards of each dish to give to

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SIX-TWOS

As a bonus, enjoy our family's special recipe for this fun and fruity frozen delight!

- 2 juice oranges, peeled, seeded, and finely chopped
- 2 lemons, peeled, seeded, and finely chopped
- 2 ripe bananas (not overly-ripe)
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 2 cups whipping cream
- 2 cups sugar

Optional: dash of pure vanilla

NOTE: You'll also need a bag of ice and rock salt for melting the ice.

Combine ingredients in an electric or hand-cranked ice cream maker, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Serve immediately.



those in attendance. If you can find one in the cook's original handwriting, it will be even more treasured! Also print off some vintage photos of the highlighted family chefs to display in picture frames as part of the buffet table decorations.

One thing we have learned from times of being separated from our loved ones is how much we long to be together. Dreaming now what it will be like to be together will make being together even more special. The next time your family gathers for a reunion, may it be a time filled not only with scrumptious food but with sweet fellowship as well. ☺

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