



Happy Holidays



"For the first few years of our relationship, my partner and I found that the holidays were a time that necessitated separation. Both families eagerly clamored to have their respective offspring at home for a week of standard holiday fare. While neither family was particularly unwelcoming of "the gay partner," the idea of being dragged around in front of elderly relatives who just didn't understand who we were or why we were there, and regularly asked if we were college room-mates or had boyfriends, was enough to send us off as singles to holiday fests in different states. With Jenn spending most of her time at various churches around Atlanta and I forever smoking cigarettes on my parents' deck in arctic Pennsylvania, arguing with my father about whether or not Christmas was pagan, we found our holidays just lacked a certain something.

"After a couple of seasons of this, we decided it just wasn't for us. We wanted to be together during the holidays. And regular family holiday trappings, anything that emphasized the holidays were best celebrated as mom, dad, brother and sister around the fire, were just not for us.

"So the first year we stayed home, we had about \$5 for Christmas presents, so we wrapped everything to make it more festive—used book and bookmark received their own festive holiday wrappings. We had a lovely fake tree we bought at Target with about five ornaments on it. We were in Dallas, so a fake tree was definitely the norm; buying a real one would have required a second job. But ornaments were hard to come by, and costly. So we decorated just the portion we could see from the sofa.

"But in years since, things have improved tremendously. I think the Christmas we ran off to Germany finally broke the ties and incessant requests for us to "come home" for the holidays. In our minds, we are home."

—Carrie Rampp and Jenn Ponder



Kasespatzen

One tradition that has stayed with us is feasting on a German dish as part of our Christmas Eve celebration. My father, a Bavarian who was the only member of his family to leave Germany, came to the U.S. at the age of 18. If you are looking for a stick-to-your ribs German dish with lots of cheese, this is for you.

2 lb shredded Swiss
1 pk or jar Limburger
1 lb shredded muenster
salt
6 onions
1 lb butter
3 lb flour (approx)
2 eggs

Spaetzle maker needed to make noodles.

This recipe makes a gigantic platter full. The amounts really hinge on how much flour you start with, so if you want less, start with much less flour.

Grate Muenster and Swiss, and mix together. Chop onions add 1/2 lb butter and cook on low heat until thoroughly caramelized.

Take 3lbs of flour, add a few pinches of salt and 2 eggs. Mix with wooden spoon, adding water. You want to form a very stiff dough. You'll know its stiff when you see no more dry flour as you turn it. Don't over wet it, meaning you actually see water in the bowl. If you get it too wet, add a few pinches of flour.

Using a large pot, fill 1/3 with water and bring to boil. Place spaetzle maker on top. Fill hopper with spoonfuls of dough, and run through spaetzle maker. After 3 hoppers full, allow to come to full boil, then ladle out with strainer and place on large dish preferably with sides. If dough seems too stiff to run through spaetzle maker, add a little more water. After a number of batches, the water may get too starchy. Just pour it out and start with a fresh pot.

After each batch is added to pan, cover with cheese. Chop a few small squares of the limburger and drop that around on top as well. Keep pan in oven on low heat and just add to it as you go. This will keep all parts warm.

Once finished, top with onions and pepper, let it get good and warm in oven and then serve. Green salad, crusty bread, dill pickles make great sides, along with some dark beer.

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."

-Virginia Woolf

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