

## Food, Fellowship, and Faith

The relationship between food, family and the fellowship of believers possesses a rich Old and New Testament history. In the Old Testament, there were many festivals which included specific kinds of foods (like the Seder meal), and encouraged fellowship as well as faith development. One such Old Testament festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, took place outside under the stars. Families gathered in fields, pitched tents, cooked over open fires, and shared in a time of food and fellowship with their faith community. Some scholars suggest that these feasts might be the first references to family camping trips!

In the New Testament, there are also many references to shared meals. Jesus shared meals with his disciples, with the religious authorities, and even with an assortment of rather suspect characters who Matthew simply refers to as “sinners.” We know from the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and from early church history that believers often shared meals with one another in their homes to build up one another’s faith and deepen their sense of community. From personal experience, I know that it is often in those contexts of shared food and fellowship that I too have grown to know my brothers and sisters more completely and intimately.

During the COVID19 pandemic it is not possible for us to come together for shared meals. However, we can share stories that were inspired by food and fellowship. Perhaps during this pandemic, one way we can “gather” around the table is by sharing fond memories that were born through the sharing of food. So many memories are created at the intersection of food and fellowship that it makes me wonder what memories you can share. What memories do you have of great food and even better fellowship with either your immediate family or God’s family? Perhaps what we need more than anything else right now, as we deal with the challenges of physical distancing, are stories of food, faith, and fellowship. Such stories have always helped God’s people navigate challenging times. Here is what I am asking:

Please send recipes and short stories of the memories they evoke. In terms of format, recipe first, then story. As I receive these stories, I will send them out periodically in the evenings. Perhaps, when this is all over, we can make a “COVID19 Pandemic Cookbook” (Susan’s brilliant idea!) to celebrate how God

and our shared stories of faith helped us get through these times.  
Here is Susan's recipe for Peanut Butter Pie and her personal story associated with this family favorite:

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## Peanut Butter Cream Pie

### CHOCOLATE CRUST

6 ounces semisweet chocolate chips (about 1 cup)

5 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 ½ cups crisp rice cereal

¼ cup mini semisweet chocolate chips

### FILLING

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

One 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk

¾ cup creamy peanut butter

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 cup heavy cream

### TOPPING

3 ounces milk chocolate, finely chopped

2 tablespoons heavy cream

Milk chocolate curls, for garnish

YIELD: One 9-inch pie

**MAKE THE CRUST:** In a double boiler, melt the 6 ounces of chocolate chips and butter over low heat. Remove from the heat and stir until smooth. Gently stir in the rice cereal until completely coated. Set aside to cool to lukewarm, then stir in the mini chips. Press into the bottom and up the sides of a buttered 9-inch pie plate. Chill for 30 minutes to set the chocolate.

**PREPARE THE FILLING:** In a large bowl with an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese until fluffy. Beat in the condensed milk, peanut butter, and vanilla.

In a medium bowl, beat the heavy cream until soft peaks form. Fold the whipped cream into the peanut butter mixture. Pour the filling into the crust.

**MAKE THE TOPPING:** In a double boiler, melt the milk chocolate over hot, not simmering, water. Add the heavy cream and stir constantly until blended. Set aside to cool slightly, then drizzle the chocolate over the top of the pie. Refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours. Garnish with milk chocolate curls.

**MY MEMORY:** I have always enjoyed baking, especially pies, and over the years, my family has enjoyed eating them. Early on, my family narrowed their favorites to 3 cream pies: Peanut Butter, Chocolate Silk and Strawberry Cream. Peanut butter has always been the most requested, by far. Imagine my surprise when one day after asking my son what dessert he wanted for his birthday I heard, "Kathryn Baer's apple pie, but you can make peanut butter." Of course, I agreed her pie was very good, but had to ask why he didn't want me to make him apple pie. Again, the answer surprised me. "Do you know how to make apple pie?" Well, I guess I've been in a little bit of a rut, partially of my own family's making. They now know I can make other pies, but peanut butter still gets the most requests. I am still a little jealous about Kathryn's pie making skills, but I am mostly grateful for all the times she has delivered those pies to help us celebrate or to cheer us up. It's no wonder they have become the pie standard. Here is hoping this peanut butter pie might one day bring as much joy and comfort as a Kathryn Baer pie. Please share!

RECIPE AND MEMORY SHARED BY SUSAN DEY