

## Saturday Night Ice Cream

When Don asked for funny stories, something popped into my mind that qualifies as a food story, a community values story, and one that makes us laugh as well.

My father, Lauren Yoder, loved telling this. Gentle soul that he was, he took what I considered an unseemly delight in practical jokes. I think that growing up in the Colony under strict church rules, he and his friends had to come up with lots of their own fun. A practical joke did not bring the deacons to pay an uncomfortable visit to his Papa the way playing football at Morrison High School did.

This very farmhouse where we live now was home to ten children growing up, as well as random hired help. They worked hard on the farm and looked forward to some special summer traditions, like Saturday night supper being all the homemade ice cream you could eat.

To feed the hearty appetites of three boys, seven girls, and random guests, Irene and J. Harvey used a great big ice cream freezer. They also prepared a second smaller one, which they would take down the road to the grandparents S. P. and Mary Metzler Yoder when it was ready.

On this particular Saturday night, calamity struck. After both freezers had been duly prepared and cranked to perfection, it was found that salty water had leaked into the largest freezer and ruined all that ice cream. What a disappointment and a waste of good dairy cream!

There was just enough ice cream in the small freezer to fill the bowls of all the family, so they decided to sit down and enjoy it themselves.

About that time a car sped down the long driveway from Lucas Creek Road. It was Amos Yoder, my dad's friend and contemporary. (Later to become famous as the father of our Ted Yoder.) Amos knew good and well that Saturday night was ice cream night in this family, and he knew there was always room at this farm table.

I'm not sure which of the Yoder children got the idea, but when Amos came in the door, someone handed him a bowl of ice cream so he could sit down and join the family.

The first spoonful of the beautiful cold concoction told him something was amiss. So salty! Amos looked around at the family. Smiling, they each were enjoying their ice cream as if it was the most delicious treat in the world. He took another bite and had to spit it out. How could those kids eat the stuff!!! Well, if everyone else could eat it, he'd give it another try. Ugh! It was inedible!

By this time everyone burst out laughing and explained to Amos why there was nothing but salty ice cream left when he arrived on the scene. Knowing my grandmother's cake-baking fame, I imagine she brought out something else delicious for Amos to enjoy since the ice cream had been ruined.

One of the things I love about this story is the assumption that wherever a Colony family was sitting down to a meal, any other random community member knew they were welcome to join them.

This is before anyone knew about pizza, and how you could pull out a frozen one. There was no instant anything. If you were to be hospitable, you not only had to be willing to share, but you had to actively plan to have enough to share. The unsung heroes of this story are the women (maybe men too but I only know about the women) who kept fresh bread and butter at the ready to stretch any meal. They spent hot summer months gardening, picking, and canning quart jars of peaches and green beans that could be brought up from the basement at a moment's notice. Even the beautiful caramel cakes and lemon sponge pies were just another way to fill in whatever skimpiness resulted when a Sunday roast was shared too many ways. (I was probably in my teens before I realized you could bake a single pie. They were produced in quantities of four or five at a time in the households I was familiar with.)

These days and moments of isolation make such stories almost a fantasy. But there are still ways to share a place at the table. When we donate to Thrive, for example, families can sit down to meals they would not have had otherwise, all practical jokes aside. We can turn our nostalgia for closer times into a benefit to society in ways not imagined from that long-ago farmhouse table, where Yoder kids were enjoying laughter along with their homemade ice cream.

