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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, November 27, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MAKE-IT-YOURSELF CHRISTMAS GIFTS." Information from the Farm Security Administration. U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Gangway for Christmas! Here it comes ..... lickety-split.

And half of us aren't ready for it ..... not half ready for it! But it's coming and we might as well get ready. We might as well start now deciding what we'll give Aunt Mary and Uncle Bob and Mother and Dad and Fred and Jane and Helen and the rest.

To most people, a Christmas gift list means a shopping list. But the Farm Security Administration reports today and says a lot of its borrower families are making their gifts. They are turning to their cookstoves, tool kits, and work baskets instead of to the stores. They are cooking and growing and sewing much of what they'll give ..... because money is scarce at their houses and they have to save.

One woman this year is making wastebaskets for Christmas gifts. Odd idea, isn't it? But - come to think of it - a nice waste basket would make a very practical gift, especially if it had bookends to match as this one does. To make a wastebasket, this woman takes anything from a small leaky bucket that's lost its handle, to a brand new five-gallon lard can, and covers it with old burlap from a feed bag.

Then she paints or embroiders a simple design or some initials on the front of it, and shellacks it. The shellac protects the burlap and makes it look better. She makes her bookends the same way, except that she covers bricks instead of buckets. Sometimes she makes attractive flower pots by covering small containers with burlap, or woolen cloth scraps.



A young girl, daughter of a Farm Security borrower, makes dainty sewing kits from small tin or wooden boxes. She often makes a tiny kit from a typewriter ribbon box or a face powder box. Or if she wants to make a larger kit, she takes a wooden cigar box, tin candy box, or even a good pasteboard box. Whatever it is, she usually paints or enamels it inside and out, and puts a little design or figure on it. Sometimes she takes a pasteboard box the right size and quilts a cloth covering for it. She sews the covering on neatly, and then makes pasteboard partitions for the spools, needles, and thimble.

A southern woman has made some lovely doily sets from unraveling orange bags. She takes the large reddish-colored net bags oranges come in, and unravels the thread. Then she crochets the thread into doilies. She uses the thread with black printing on them for the centers to get an interesting mingled effect.

Of course, a lot of women turn to their old standby, the flour sack, when they want material for Christmas gifts. They rip up the sacks, wash them, and make all sorts of useful, attractive articles. Some not only make little kitchen doodads like pot-holders and tea towels, but also slips, shirts, blouses, aprons, pillow cases, luncheon sets, and even bedspreads and tablecloths. A little dye, or bright-colored bias tape disguises their humble origin.

Along the handicraft line, some women are very clever with a bag of tools and a pen knife. They make such things as small cedar chests from wood scraps, tie racks from shingles, table mats from woven corn shucks, bird houses from gourds, baskets from honeysuckle vines, and buttons from acorn cups. One woman makes a colorful necklace from grains of corn. She drops the grains of corn into different colored enamel, and when they are dry, strings them on cord or wire.

A woman in Virginia is giving away her recipes for Christmas. Not a bit jealous, is she? She's giving away the recipes that have made her known as the best cook in the neighborhood. Maybe she's just tired of telling people how to make this and that, and has decided to end questions by circulating answers.



She is making a neat little recipe book for each persons, and her daughter, who is taking typing at school is typing the recipes for practice. To make her book covers, she is taking heavy cardboard and cutting it into the right shapes and sizes. Then she is covering the backs and fronts with bright-figured cloth and in turn, covering the cloth with cellophane. She glues the cellophane to the covers, or fastens it with small strips of transparent adhesive tape. Of course, the cellophane protects the book and keeps it clean, or if it gets soiled it can easily be freshened up with a damp cloth.

Speaking of recipes, some women give what the recipe makes - a cake or cookies or candy. They go to the flour bin, spice shelf, or pantry and make or choose a gift. Some give their canned fruit specialties - peaches or pears, jelly, sun-preserved cherries, tomato or fruit juice, mincemeat, pickles, or relish.

A number of women give candy or nuts for Christmas - candy they have made or nuts they have gathered from the woods. One woman makes peanut brittle from home-grown peanuts. She also roasts and salts some peanuts for her friends who don't grow them. Other women give bags of hickory nuts or walnuts or pecans. A few even crack the nuts and get out a quart or two of nutmeats for their friends - for very dear friends, I'd guess, if they don't like to pick out nutmeats any better than I do!

Well, Farm Security says these are just a few of the gifts its borrower families will wrap and label "Do not open until December twenty-fifth." I am sure you think of many other make-it-youself items, and you may be able to use a suggestion or two you've heard today.

