

'When Santa Rode the Witch's Broom'

things, and then you will want me to help you deliver the presents."

Santa took the cake and thanked her. He promised to call Dolly if he needed any help, but he thought to himself that he could really handle Christmas quite well without her. And Dolly went home to wait.

Santa looked at the cake; it did look nice. And come to think of it, he was a bit hungry. Santa poured himself a glass of milk, cut a large slice of Dolly's cake, and sat down to eat it. Yes, he was hungry. He opened his mouth and took a great big bite of the special cake.

SANTA COULDN'T believe his senses. Never, no never, had he tasted anything so awful. He spit and sputtered, and he sputtered and spit. It was positively the worst cake anyone could imagine. He walked to the door, opened it, and threw the cake out into the snow.

Out in the yard, Santa's reindeer were waiting for him to come out and hitch up the sleigh. When Santa threw out the cake, they thought it

was a treat for them and they all rushed over and tasted it. It was different from anything they had ever tasted before. But they thought it was rather good, and they ate every last bit of it — even the crumbs.

Inside the house Santa was very busy filling his bag with toys and goodies for the little children. When he was finally ready to leave, he went to the door and whistled for the reindeer. He waited, but the reindeer didn't come. He whistled again. When the reindeer still didn't come, Santa Claus became worried. He walked around the house, and there they were, every last one of them, rolling in the snow, moaning and groaning with terrible stomach aches.

Santa called Mrs. Claus to come out and help. She made peppermint tea for the reindeer, and put them all to bed where they belonged. Dolly Witch's cake had made them far too sick to be flying tonight, even if it was Christmas Eve.

"CHRISTMAS EVE," cried Santa. "Christmas Eve and I have no reindeer to pull my sleigh. How can I deliver all the presents to the boys and girls?" Mrs. Claus had never seen Santa so angry. "That Dolly Witch," he shouted, "I wish she were here right now. I'd give her a piece of my mind."

Now, of course you know Santa is magical, just like witches. And when he said "I wish she were here right now," Dolly Witch got the message and knew that he wanted her.

Swish! Dolly landed right in front of Santa. She was smiling a jolly, happy smile because Dolly thought Santa had called her to help him. When she learned that Santa was angry, and that her cake had made his reindeer sick, poor Dolly witch began to cry.

"Oh, Santa, I'm so sorry," she wailed. "Oh, those poor reindeer, and those poor, poor boys and girls who won't find any presents under their tree in the morning."

Then Santa got an idea. "Dolly witch," he said, "tell me, when I wished for you, how did you get here so fast?"

"Why, I flew on my broom, of course," answered Dolly.

"Let me see that broom," said Santa. "Do you think it would hold both of us?"

"Both of us, and a bag of toys, too," she laughed.

Santa and Dolly climbed onto the broom and flew off to deliver the presents. So Dolly Witch finally got her wish. At last she was helping Santa.

That night as they slept in their beds, some people heard the strange pair laughing as they placed the presents under the tree and filled the children's stockings.

Some may have thought Santa's "Ho! Ho! Ho!" sounded more like "Heh! Heh! Heh!" But no one ever knew for sure about the night Santa flew on the witch's broom.

But now you do.

Gundella's fruitcake

In addition to being a short story writer, Marion Kuclo writes a food column, Kitchen Witch, for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers under the name of Gundella. Here is her recipe for a dark fruitcake she says is moist and chewy — and best of all — easy to make.

2 cups corn flake crumbs
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup flour

Mix together eggs, milk, mincemeat, nuts, fruit and baking soda. Add corn flake crumbs and flour. Pack into greased, paper lined, pans (loaf or tube). I use non-stick cooking spray instead of grease and paper. Bake at 300 degrees for 1½ to 2½ hours depending on the size of pans.

Gloze top, bottom, and all sides with corn syrup thinned with a few drops of water — use a pastry brush. Cool. Wrap. Store.

SIMPLE DARK FRUITCAKE

3 eggs, beaten
1 can sweetened condensed milk
2 cups prepared mincemeat (1 jar)
1 cup chopped dates
1½ cups any candied fruit
1 cup nutmeats

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