

# Collector has affection for 'Tried and True' recipes

BY LANA NIEMI  
STAFF WRITER

There's an old saying: Behind every person lies a story. Sandy Fercho has three.

One: She helped create a cookbook for her church.

Two: She owns more than 350 historic Michigan-related cookbooks.

Three: She's a recipe whiz.

Fercho, a Canton resident, reads cookbooks like they're novels and fell in love with culinary arts as a child.

"I can read a recipe and tell if it's going to work or what's missing," Fercho said.

She was just 10 when she won a blue ribbon for sweet bread entered in a 4-H fair. Her affection for farm recipes and cooking grew.

Fercho's favorite recipes are from small, old, defunct Michigan farms, developed by wives who ran kitchens while their husbands tended fields.

Her love of farm recipes, like puffy sugar cookies, prompted this real estate agent and mother of two sons to work with parishioners at her church, First United Methodist of Plymouth, to develop a cookbook.

Fercho approved and edited every recipe submitted by fellow parishioners in *Tried & True: A Collection of Recipes by First United Methodist Church*.

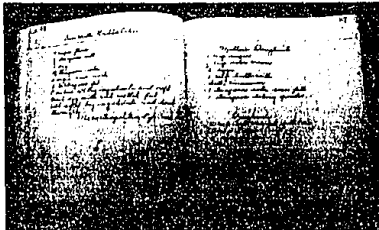
"The recipes have basic ingredients that everyone has in their kitchens today — or ingredients that are at least inexpensive," Fercho said. "We didn't include recipes that called for an expensive spice that you'd only use in one dish and never again."

*Tried & True* is a collection of simple, comforting dishes along with some updated versions of American classics, Fercho said, such as apple or peach cresp; broccoll salad with cheese and bacon; pretzel Jell-o; molasses cookies; sweet and sour meatballs; cheese-stuffed chicken; carrot bars; spinach soup; and salmon logs with cream cheese and pecans.

Joy Coyle, a parishioner at the church, pitched in to help with the cookbook and is a fan. "I use this book a lot and every time I do it brings back memories of the women who helped create it," Coyle said. "This book celebrates our heritage and the women and past staff of the church."

First United Method Church put out a cookbook in the 1940s, Coyle said, and some of those recipes are included in the new version.

**COLLECTING HISTORY AND SHARING ADVICE**  
Fercho's favorite cookbook, without a doubt, is a dilapidated, but original copy of the *Farm Journal*, 1971, long out of print.



Handwritten recipes from a faded and worn cookbook include: Sour Milk Giddle Cakes, Mother's Doughnuts and Doughnuts.

*Farm Journal* books and magazines have recipes from farmers for farmers.

"Every *Farm Journal* recipe I've tried has come out well," she said. "On those old farms, people ate what they grew ... the *Farm Journal* recipes are completely reliable."

Her love of farm recipes, like chicken fat was used instead of vegetable oil, Fercho said. "Pickles were a big deal back then ... and today we eat more carbs and much less vegetable."

But the stories behind the cookbooks she collects are what really charms Fercho.

She's found family notes, drawings and holiday poems in painstakingly handwritten cookbooks. She has books dating as far back as the Civil War.

Another book is dedicated to Jackson sanitarium workers from 1927; another was created in 1923 by the Order of Eastern Star.

One of her favorite handwritten cookbooks was owned by her friend, Marion Walker, 94, of Howell. Walker's mother, Laura Kimberly, created it when Walker was a child.

"They're recipes collected and shared by women ... back when women had stronger social circles and communicated more with each other," Fercho said. "Women today lack that strong female companionship. It's sad."

"Reading the notes in these old books, it seems the women were happier. They hung clothes on the line and chatted with their neighbors. They had a strong sense of community. Today, women are busier, more competitive and look to their husbands for the kind of chatting that's really fulfilled best from girlfriends."

Both Fercho and Coyle said *Tried & True* helped bond the women and few men who contributed to it. They both felt joyful about the companionship they shared during the process of writing a cookbook.

*Tried & True* is selling well and Fercho is still collecting cookbooks. They just seem to come her way. Her aunt, who owns an antique shop in Howell, gives her many of them.



Sandy Fercho sits in her kitchen, surrounded by a small portion of her cookbook collection. Her books date back to the Civil War. Fercho helped compile a cookbook for First United Methodist Church of Plymouth.

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