Recipes for the Soul ...

Father Rozum’s Irish Embassy Eggnog

One of my favorite parts of the holiday season is drinking eggnog. As soon as I see the first carton in the store before Thanksgiving, I pick some up and call some friends for the first taste of the season. Most of my life, I have drunk the heavy store-bought kind, but Dad used to make it most years and I loved it. Now, I make it from scratch for my brother’s annual Christmas party.

My favorite recipe comes from Father George Rozum, C.S.C. Fr. George is the longest serving rector of a residence hall in Notre Dame history and is finishing his 46th year at Alumni Hall. For many years he made this magnificent eggnog for the hall Christmas gathering until the University lawyers decided it had to stop. Handed down for generations in his family, the recipe was first obtained from the Irish embassy in the 19th century. It is delicious, but not for the faint of heart.

Ingredients
One dozen large eggs
3 1/2 quarts heavy whipping cream
One fifth (750 ml) of cognac or brandy (Remy VSOP or Christian Brothers)
One fifth (750 ml) of white rum (Bacardi)
Powdered sugar to taste (1 to 3 cups)
Whole nutmeg

Directions
1. Separate the yolks from the whites.
2. Beat the egg yolks in a bowl.
3. Beat the egg whites in another bowl until stiff.
4. Beat 3 1/2 quarts of whipping cream in a third bowl until fairly stiff.
5. Pour equal amounts of rum and cognac into a pitcher.
6. Put the beaten yolks into the large container you will use to store the eggnog.
7. Add some whipped cream to the container, and blend a little. Add a blob of egg white, and, as it thickens, pour in some of the mixed liquor. Shake in powdered sugar, and keep blending.
8. Repeat this process, taking time to mix the ingredients thoroughly, until they are finished.
9. Pour in the remaining quart of cream, and mix until consistency is even again.
10. Let the eggnog ripen a few hours in the refrigerator, preferably overnight.
11. When you are ready to serve the eggnog, mix it until the consistency is even again. As each guest is served, grate a little fresh nutmeg onto each filled cup.

Tips: I recommend using a hand mixer. Leftover eggnog makes the world’s best French toast, but be sure the bread is not too thick.

Merry Christmas!
One Christmas morning when I was a kid, probably six or seven years old, I was finally allowed to go into the playroom where the Christmas tree stood guard over a fantastic array of boxes wrapped in colorful Christmas paper, shiny ribbons and glittery bows. The tree stood tall, its shimmering lights twinkling off the brightly colored glass ornaments, and fully half the floor was covered in boxes and bags and gifts already set up because they were too big to wrap. These treasures came so far into the room, one could never hope to get near to the tree. This was all too much for the eyes of this child to comprehend, and as I stood there agape, with my older brothers and sisters looking on in delight, I gasped aloud and softly whispered, “It’s Christmas everywhere!”

It will be spoken again this Christmas at every house where one of us Chamberland kids lives. Someone will look at the tree and the gifts that surround it and say with a smile, “It’s Christmas everywhere!” I know this to be true because it happens every year. I used to get embarrassed because I thought they were making fun of me - it was a safe bet, they usually were - but I have come to see it as a brief statement of awe and wonder and appreciation at the reality of Christmas gift giving, the love it speaks to, and the care for others that it represents. That the number of gifts may be over the top, the participation in unbridled American consumerism all too real, and the potential for obscuring the real message of Christmas a clear and present danger cannot be argued, but neither can the fact that it is all done in joyous celebration of the gift of love we all received one Christmas morning so long ago, when God was born as one like us and laid in a manger for us to see and wonder and appreciate at the reality of Christmas. Where there is no room at any inn, there must be a place for the Christmas child to receive. When we know a guest is coming to stay, we hustle about preparing the house and making ready the room. Sheets are washed, cabinets cleaned out, comforters are aired on the line. The same is true as we prepare for the coming of Christmas. We need to dust off the inclination to do good for others that may have sat unused for a while; it may even need a good confession and a little oil of penance to get all the parts moving freely again. We must get rid of any clutter that has built up in our souls and let go of the petty hurts and annoyances that we have let creep in and harden our hearts. We have to prepare a manger in the center of those newly softened hearts to receive the Christmas child.

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The beauty of the Advent season is that it gives us time to reflect and prepare for the coming of Christmas. It allows us time and space to prepare our hearts for its celebration. When we knew a guest was coming to stay, we hustle about preparing the house and making ready the room. Sheets are washed, cabinets cleaned out, comforters are aired on the line. The same is true as we prepare for the coming of Christmas. We need to dust off the inclination to do good for others that may have sat unused for a while; it may even need a good confession and a little oil of penance to get all the parts moving freely again. We must get rid of any clutter that has built up in our souls and let go of the petty hurts and annoyances that we have let creep in and harden our hearts. We have to prepare a manger in the center of those newly softened hearts to receive the Christmas child.

Where there is no room at any inn, there must be room in each of us to welcome the light of the world and to bear him with humility and hope. For just as he came once to a humble stable in Bethlehem, he comes again looking for welcome and respite from the cold. Just as he arrived naked and unable to care for himself, he comes looking for strong hands of support to carry him, able hands to protect and feed him, and loving hands to hold and comfort him. When he was no longer a babe, he grew to do all those things, I am sure, I got a Matchbox car from Kevin who got the same in Pep-O-Mint), this was simply selecting flavors, but it began an exercise in thinking about the others and what they might like. It was also an early realization that doing nice things for others felt good!

As kids, we can begin to think that Christmas is all about receiving gifts. Hopefully, at some early age, we come to realize that Christmas is actually about the receipt of one gift - the gift of the Christ child - and the new life he opened up for us. In time, we grow to realize that we give gifts to become ever more like the giver. We give, sometime with reckless abandon, because we have received so much and we want to give too. It is a beautiful instinct that we can hone into something even more powerful and revealing of the gift we first received.

As you prepare for Christmas, think about the gifts you want to give. There will be iPads and XBoxes and jewelry galore, but what gift can you give that best represents the gift? If you have prepared a home for Jesus in your heart, how will the light and warmth of his presence shine out to the world? Will you volunteer Uncle Hal and evangelize him all over again with gentle words of hope? Will you embrace Cousin Pete’s son and his girl and witness to the joy of marriage in the way you cherish your spouse? Will you broker peace between Grandma and Aunt Pat and call them to forgiveness before it is too late?

There are other valuable gifts to be given as well, gifts that cost a little more. As a retired engineer, might you volunteer to tutor calculus at an inner-city school so as to give these kids a fighting chance to succeed in your profession, a gift that will pay back in their families and community for generations? Imagine giving a gift card to your shut-in neighbor that provides a meal that your family one night a month for a year? It may cost you twelve days of irritation and inconvenience while providing love and warmth to a lonely soul. Providing piano lessons for the child of a single Mom, providing piano lessons for the child of a single Mom, joining the RCIA team at the parish, teaching teens how to jitterbug, volunteering for the suicide hotline in your town, all are gifts that can flow from your heart. All are manifestations of the Christ Child alive in our world. Each such act of generosity will proclaim that the best part of the whole process was selecting the right gift for the right person. Since my gifts were all lollipops (except for Brian who loved Five Flavor Lifesavers and Dad who got the same in Pep O’Mint),

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**Be The Gift!**

We know each year as we do so that our celebration is fraught with the human frailty that comprises the human condition. Uncle Hal doesn’t go to Church anymore and has always had doubts about God’s very existence. Cousin Pete’s son is living with a girl, they don’t plan to ever marry, and are tired of being judged. Grandma and Aunt Pat haven’t spoken meaningfully together in years and the tension at dinner can be cut with a knife. We celebrate the victory of Christ over hate, sin and death that can be, at times, hard to catch a glimpse of. We hold candles of faith while beset by the darkness of doubt. We try to practice acts of love when there is little to be found in our own hearts. It is often difficult to believe that, “It’s Christmas everywhere!”

The Advent season is that it gives us time to reflect and prepare for the coming of Christmas. It allows us time and space to prepare our hearts for its celebration. When we knew a guest was coming to stay, we hustle about preparing the house and making ready the room. Sheets are washed, cabinets cleaned out, comforters are aired on the line. The same is true as we prepare for the coming of Christmas. We need to dust off the inclination to do good for others that may have sat unused for a while; it may even need a good confession and a little oil of penance to get all the parts moving freely again. We must get rid of any clutter that has built up in our souls and let go of the petty hurts and annoyances that we have let creep in and harden our hearts. We have to prepare a manger in the center of those newly softened hearts to receive the Christmas child.

Be the gift you give this Christmas. Be the gift!