

# rhoda janzen's top shame-based foods for mennonite youth lunches



*Discover the joys of growing up Mennonite with these printable recipe cards featuring authentic Mennonite dishes, including two recipes for those with weaker stomachs.*

My sister, Hannah, and I have often thought that it would be pleasurable to revisit the very Mennonite foods that used to shame us as we tried to conceal them in the cafeterias of our youth. After considerable reflection, we came up with a list of Shame-Based Foods, which I urge the reader to imagine tucked into Shame-Based Lunchpails, dooming the transporter whereof to social ostracism at Easterby Elementary School.



FROM THE  
KITCHEN OF  
mary janzen  
(rhoda's mom)

**"[Janzen's] wry, affectionate depictions make for an honest and entertaining memoir."**

—FAMILY CIRCLE

**"The most delightful memoir I've read in ages."**

—ELIZABETH GILBERT,  
author of *Eat, Pray, Love*

**"Hilarious and touching."**  
—*People* (four stars)

"This is an intelligent, funny, wonderfully written memoir.

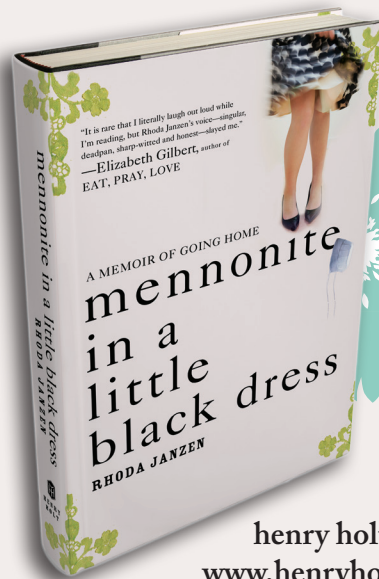
Janzen has a gift for following her elegant prose with the perfect snarky aside. If it weren't for the weird Mennonite food, I would like very much to be her friend."

—Cynthia Kaplan, author of

*Why I'm Like This* and *Leave the Building Quickly*

**"Janzen mines Mennonite culture for comic effect, but she does so with love."**

—*Entertainment Weekly*



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# borscht

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 SMALL PORK ROAST
- 1 BAY LEAF
- 1 MEDIUM CHOPPED ONION
- SALT AND PEPPER
- CUT-UP POTATOES
- SLICED CARROTS
- 1 SMALL CABBAGE OR A BIG ONE, CHOPPED AND CORED
- PARSLEY
- 1 CAN TOMATO SOUP

SIMMER YOUR ROAST FOR A LONG TIME, BUT NEAR THE BEGINNING ADD YOUR BAY LEAF, ONION, AND SALT AND PEPPER. WHEN MEAT IS TENDER, ADD SOME CUT-UP POTATOES AND AT LEAST FOUR CARROTS.

ADD THE PARSLEY WITH YOUR CABBAGE. WHEN POTATOES ARE ABOUT DONE, I ADD A CAN OF TOMATO SOUP. I KNOW YOU GIRLS LIKE THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY, WITH BEETS, BUT A TOMATO TASTE IS JUST AS NICE AND MUCH EASIER. YOU CAN ALSO USE REAL TOMATOES INSTEAD.

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### # 1. borscht

There was really no contest here. Honors for Most Embarrassing Shame-Based Food went hands-down to Borscht, which is the hearty winter soup of the Russian steppes. Our people borrowed it from the Russians during the long Mennonite occupation of Ukraine. Borscht has a distinctive ruby color, a stain to anything it touches. This distinctive color comes from beets. The soup also has a distinctive smell, a noxious blast of savage fart. This fart smell comes from cabbage. As if that isn't appetizing enough, borscht is served with vinegar and a dollop of sour cream. The vinegar curdles the cream so that the whole thing looks and smells like milk gone bad. Yet there is more. The bottom note, the lingering afterwhiff, presents with an intensity reminiscent of our friend the soldier's lumpy Hosen.

Don't get me wrong; it's good soup. As an adult I have even sometimes served it to guests as a kind of novelty, though I naturally don't mention the vinegar thing. But Borscht is not what you want to tuck into your child's lunch. Trust me.

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mennonite  
in a little  
black dress

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# cotletten

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 LBS GROUND MEAT
- 2 EGGS
- 1/4 OF A BIG BOX OF SODA CRACKERS
- ABOUT 2 TSP SALT
- PEPPER
- BAKING POWDER
- 1 SMALL ONION, CHOPPED
- EVAPORATED MILK
- BACON DRIPPINGS FOR FRYING

CRUSH CRACKERS IN PLASTIC BAG WITH ROLLING PIN. IN LARGE BOWL BREAK 2 EGGS. MEASURE SALT IN HAND; ADD PEPPER SO THAT IT LOOKS TASTY. ADD ENOUGH BAKING POWDER FOR THE COTLETTEN TO FLUFF UP. THEN STIR IN A GOOD SCHULPS OF EVAPORATED MILK. ADD CRACKER CRUMBS. NOW MIX IN THE GROUND BEEF, BUT WET YOUR HANDS FIRST. FRY COTLETTEN IN HOT FAT UNTIL BROWN. TURN AND BROWN THE OTHER SIDE. SERVE WITH ONION CREAM GRAVY.

## ONION CREAM GRAVY FOR COTLETTEN

- SMALL ONION, CHOPPED
- HEAPING TBS FLOUR
- HOT POTATO WATER
- EVAPORATED MILK

MINCE THE ONION AND COOK IN 1 TBS OF THE REMAINING FAT. STIR IN THE FLOUR AND ADD SOME HOT POTATO WATER. WHEN IT STARTS TO THICKEN, ADD SOME MORE EVAPORATED MILK.

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### # 2. cotletten & ketchup sandwich

Cotletten are Mennonite meatballs. What makes them Mennonite is the addition of many, many saltine crackers, bagged in a preowned plastic bread wrapper and decimated with a rolling pin. Cold Cotletten are hard to describe. Each pungent saltball assumes a jellied viscosity, heavy as a puck. The addition of ketchup is an intriguing choice. It gives homemade bread a moist pink pliancy, not unlike damp Kleenex.

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# platz

## INGREDIENTS

- A SLIGHTLY SWEET YEAST DOUGH
- TART CHERRY-PLUMS OR OTHER FRUIT
- STREUSEL TOPPING:
  - 1 CUP FLOUR
  - 1 CUP SUGAR
  - 1/4 CUP BUTTER

ROLL OUT YOUR YEAST DOUGH TO THE SIZE OF YOUR PAN AND LET IT RISE A LITTLE SO THAT IT STARTS TO COME. NOW CUT UP YOUR FRUIT. IF YOU USE CHERRY-PLUMS, BE SURE TO GET THE PITS OUT. ARRANGE THE CHERRY-PLUMS ON THE DOUGH.

CUT UP YOUR FLOUR, SUGAR, AND BUTTER FOR THE STREUSEL AND SPRINKLE EVENLY OVER THE FRUIT. BAKE AT 350 FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES, UNTIL THE CRUST TURNS A NICE GOLDEN BROWN.

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### # 3. platz

Platz consists of a kneaded egg dough topped with sweetened fruit, in this case the stunted, picked-at-by-birds cherry-plums from the backyard. Platz emitted an embarrassing yeasty odor that made the other kids glance at us headlong and scoot away. This yeast smell was the product of the Platz's final layer, a sandy-crumbed streusel, sticky as well as odorous.

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# warmer kartoffelsalat

## INGREDIENTS

- BOILED POTATOES, CUT UP.  
(BUT I DON'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU LEAVE THE PEEL ON.)
- WURST OR SAUSAGE
- 1/2 CUP CHOPPED CELERY
- 1 MEDIUM CHOPPED ONION
- SALT
- PEPPER
- ABOUT 2/3 CUP OF ROOM-TEMPERATURE WATER
- 1 TBS FLOUR
- 2 TBS BACON FAT
- 1/3 CUP SUGAR
- 1/3 CUP VINEGAR

COOK THE ONION IN THE HOT FAT, BUT DON'T LET IT GET TOO BROWN. ADD THE FLOUR AND STIR. ADD SUGAR, SALT, VINEGAR, AND WATER, AND BRING MIXTURE TO A BOIL, STIRRING CONSTANTLY. POUR OVER THE HOT POTATOES AND THE CHOPPED WURST. SPRINKLE WITH PEPPER AND SERVE WARM.

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### # 4. warmer kartoffelsalat

This is a hot tangy potato salad, which, although delicious, had two significant strikes against it. The first strike is that it had cooled and congealed by the time we opened our Shame-Based Margarine Containers to eat it. The second strike, and this is somehow more critical, is that we were unable to consume Warmer Kartoffelsalat without thinking of our mother's merry little ditty: Auf den Hügel/ da steht ein Soldat./ Er macht in den Hosen/ Kartoffelsalat! (On the hillside/ stood a soldier./ In his pants he made/ potato salad!)

The reader might justly inquire why this soldier was making potato salad in his pants. So I called my mother. Was he ill, was he traumatized? My mother disclaimed all causal knowledge. "It's just a little soldier standing on a hill making potato salad in his pants," she explained. "You're not going to put the Kartoffelsalat into your book, are you?"

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# cashew coconut bars

## BASE

- 1/2 CUP BROWN SUGAR
- 1/2 CUP SOFTENED BUTTER
- 1 CUP FLOUR

COMBINE AND PAT INTO A 9 X 9 PAN.

BAKE 12 MINUTES AT 375.

## TOPPING

- 1 CUP BROWN SUGAR
- 1/4 CUP FLOUR
- 1 CUP UNSALTED CASHEWS
- 1 CUP COCONUT
- 2 EGGS
- 1 TEASPOON VANILLA
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT

COMBINE AND SPREAD EVENLY OVER PRE-BAKED BASE.

BAKE ANOTHER 23 MINUTES AT 350.

COOL AND CUT INTO 1 -INCH-SIZED PIECES.



*Also: note that Mom and I both have convection ovens. Bakers who don't may want to add a few minutes.*

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# sour cream toasted pecan tea ring

## DOUGH

- 1 3/4 TEASPOONS DRY YEAST DISSOLVED INTO 1/4 CUP  
+ TWO TABLESPOONS WARM WATER
- 3 CUPS FLOUR
- 3/4 TEASPOON SALT
- 1/4 CUP SUGAR
- 1 EGG
- 1/2 CUP SOUR CREAM
- 1/4 CUP MELTED BUTTER

MIX AND LET RISE UNTIL DOUBLE.

ON A FLOURED SURFACE, ROLL DOUGH OUT  
INTO A BIG RECTANGLE.

## SPREAD WITH THE FOLLOWING MIXTURE:

- 1/2 CUP PACKED BROWN SUGAR
- 1 CUP CHOPPED TOASTED PECANS  
(TOAST IN A PAN AT 375 DEGREES FOR 7 MINUTES)
- 1/2 TEASPOON CINNAMON

ROLL UP LONGWISE, LIKE A JELLYROLL. CREATE A SEAM BY PRESSING DOUGH TOGETHER. BRING ENDS TOGETHER TO FORM A CIRCLE. PLACE ON A COOKIE SHEET. EVERY 3/4 INCH, MAKE A CUT 2/3 OF THE WAY INTO THE RING. SLIGHTLY TWIST THE SLICES SO THAT THEY FAN OUT INTO THEIR FULLEST SHAPE. EACH SLICE SHOULD BE CONNECTED TO THE RING, BUT LYING ON ITS SIDE, LEANING AGAINST THE PREVIOUS SLICE. BAKE AT 375 UNTIL LIGHTLY GOLDEN BROWN, ABOUT 15 MINUTES IN A CONVECTION OVEN.

## DRIZZLE WITH ICING AFTER COOLING FOR 15 MINUTES:

- 1 TBL VERY SOFT BUTTER
- PINCH SALT
- 1 CUP POWDERED SUGAR
- 5-6 TBS CREAM

**YUM! TASTY  
TREATS FROM  
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