

Molding holiday cheer

With a collection of more than 300 and a talent for creating one-of-a-kind originals, Marje Snow knows a little something about Santa.

"I've always liked Santas," says Snow, who received her first Santa from a great aunt. "There's just something about him. He represents the spirit of giving, and for me, Santa is a symbol of Christmas and family."

As she added to her collection, Snow came upon Santas made of polymer clay. As one who "has tried every craft there is," Snow thought she had the skills to try one more.

So around 12 years ago, Snow bought her supplies and dug into the world of molding clay into loveable Santas. She took a class and learned the tricks of working with FIMO polymer clay, the stiffest of polymer clays that allows for enhanced detailing and durability.

She took some of her first projects to craft fairs, and the hobby took off from there.

By day, Snow works as a teacher with the Greater Lafayette Area Special Services Preschool program. But by night, you'll likely find her creating new patterns, colors and Santas in her family room-turned-studio.

Over the years she has custom made St. Nick in a variety of forms including astronauts, physicians, chefs, farmers, gardeners and a scuba diver. A proud Purdue graduate, you'll also find Santas sporting gold and black, as well as those who take on the likeness of the Purdue Glee Club.

"If I can picture it in my mind, I can do it," she adds.



Snow's favorite Santas to create are Old World Santas "with a new twist."

"I really like that style," says Snow, who did research on the jolly old fellow and his storied past. "I like to look at antique Santas and come up with new ideas."

Some Santas take more time than others to create, although each demonstrate the love and care Snow puts into each. With ornate coats and patchwork details, she also twists each individual strand for every beard.

"I did a crazy quilt coat once that took forever," recalls Snow. That Santa resides on her mantle.

And although she keeps those she is particularly fond of, there is one that slipped through her fingers: her very first Santa. "My husband sold the first one I ever made!" laughs Snow. "But I know who bought it; he's in good hands."

Another of her favorites is an Arctic Santa, complete with canoe, snowflakes on his coat and arctic pals that included a seal and polar bear.

She's even made Santas to look like siblings. "One woman wanted four Santas that resembled each of her four siblings," says Snow. "The thing I love to do most is to make special ones for people."

In addition to her own creations, Snow adorns her home with other artists' interpretations of Kris Kringle. Her collection includes several from the Pipka Santa Collections, an old Santa mug and antique Santa chocolate molds.

"Some aren't worth anything, but they mean something to me," says Snow. "It's the sentimental worth."

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Marje Snow



KAREN WEATHERWAX



The making of a Santa

Marje Snow has spent countless hours molding clay into art projects that include Santas, jewelry and watches. No matter what she decides to make, it all starts with the clay.

Snow primarily uses FIMO or Premo! polymer clays because they hold shapes better. To process the clay, Snow first chops it up in a mini-food processor. After additives are mixed in, she conditions the clay through a pasta machine to make it pliable. She then begins to mix the colors into patterns and designs.

Using different tools found around her home, Snow creates a variety of patterns. "I use an onion bag, lace, a Tupperware scrubber and pieces of corduroy," says Snow. "I also blend in different colors to make plaids, stripes and other patterns."

To begin a Santa, she forms a ball out of aluminum foil. She starts with the lower part first and builds the Santa's coat. She then adds the torso, arms and head. Extra time is taken when working on the beard, as each strand is individually twisted and then placed.

"And the hat goes on last," says Snow. Depending on the scene being depicted, she may add a reindeer or moose, a fishing pole or even a camera around his neck.

Depending on the intricacy, Snow may spend few hours or several days completing a design. But that's all part of the creative process. "I really enjoy it," says Snow. "It (polymer clay) seems to fit me." —slm

Interested in commissioning a special piece? Contact Snow at (765) 448-1240 or e-mail famsno@aol.com. Be sure to put "Santa order" in the subject line.



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Holiday recipes to satisfy the spirit

For many, the holidays are a time to indulge in favorite recipes. Here, some of our readers share the holiday foods found on their tables, plus a few of our faves.



Hearty Vegan Root Roast

submitted by Carli Astell

2 medium sweet potatoes
4 small turnips
4 medium potatoes
3 carrots
1 red onion
3 cloves garlic
4 sprigs fresh rosemary
4 sprigs fresh thyme
3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350. Wash all of the vegetables and peel the beets. Cut all vegetables into equal sized chunks about an inch thick. Toss with the olive oil, herbs, sea salt and pepper. Place in a baking dish and add water. Cover and let bake for an hour and fifteen minutes or until tender. Enjoy a savory and filling vegan dish for the holidays, or enjoy it as a complimentary side to your favorite meat dish.

Yields: 3-4 servings

Excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, dietary fiber, iron, potassium, and vitamin B6.

more recipes on next page!

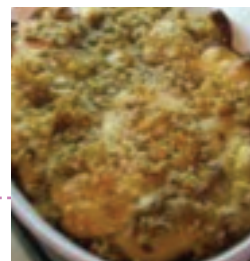
Christmas Morning Casserole

submitted by Susan Woodson

6 eggs, slightly beaten
1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
1 tsp dry mustard
1 tbsp parsley flakes
1 tbsp dried onion flakes
1 tsp oregano
1 lb. ground Italian sausage, browned and drained
1 cup biscuit mix
2 cups milk

The evening before, mix all ingredients and pour into a lightly greased 13x9x2 pan. Cover and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, bake the casserole at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Yields 10 to 12 servings.



Festive Spiced Cranberry Punch

Ingredients:

1 gallon of cranberry juice cocktail
2 cans of pineapple juice (46 oz)
2 cups of water
1 1/2 cups granulated brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon of ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon of allspice
1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together, stirring well to dissolve sugar.

Chilled Version:

Refrigerate the punch mixture until party time, and then place in a punch bowl over ice. Stir the mixture before serving, just in case some of the ingredients have settled.

*For adults:
add
vodka for
a kick!*