

The wind is howling outside the cabin, the thermometer reads zero degrees Fahrenheit, and Christmas day is about finished for this year. Our annual Christmas Eve festivities are just a memory. We will think back on this year as one with definitely a “white Christmas.”

But, there will be other recollections, too. There is always an event that stands out as the focus for our minds when we try to remember something in particular about a certain holiday. For many, this year might have been notable for the windy, cold weather with lake effect snow that reduced visibility to near zero at times.

For me, though, I have to admit that this Christmas will stick in my mind because of a kitchen failure. This is not an isolated incident—most or all of us have experienced cooking or baking something that just did not “turn out.” Often, the products of our less than perfect execution are, in fact, still edible. Maybe, something doesn’t look just right, or a baked item is a bit too brown or not quite even in color. Still, we eat what we make and usually find some enjoyment in our less successful concoctions.

Leaving out an ingredient has consigned a few batches of cupcakes or other baked goods to the hen house, but yesterday, as I made dessert for our Christmas Eve get-together, I don’t think even the chickens would have consumed the result of my efforts. I had a monumental kitchen mess.

The color picture in the baking book was impressive. The list of ingredients contained no unusual items that I would not be able to easily obtain. The instructions were clear and not hard to follow. And, I am not a novice in the kitchen.

This chocolate mousse dessert would have been delicious, I think. But, something went horribly wrong. I don’t know if I did not have the gelatin in the recipe thoroughly dissolved, or if I tried to incorporate some ingredients into a mixture that was too hot, or if I just had too many things going at once and did something entirely wrong.

I tried to spread the mousse on the baked brownie layer I’d removed from the springform pan, but it did not thicken enough, and the chocolate mixture ran over the edges and onto the cooling rack and down to the cupboard top. The part of the mousse that was mixed with whipped cream was equally uncooperative. There was no redemption at all for this dessert.

I looked at it a minute or two, wondering if there could be a way to salvage it, at least just for us to eat the next day. Certainly, there was no chance of making it presentable to serve to guests. But, no, the dessert was a total failure.

I took a large pan out of the cupboard, retrieved my bench scraper from the drawer, and scraped the entire mess into my big pan. I carried it to the basement and chucked the contents into the fire. Then, I came back to the kitchen and began to clean up the mess I had made.

I had good rice pudding, so I knew that we would not be entirely without dessert on Christmas Eve. But, we had several guests, and I was not sure that the rice would be enough. Also, some people don’t care for rice pudding. Luckily, there was plenty of cream cheese in the refrigerator and graham

crackers in the cupboard, so I quickly mixed up a plain cheesecake in a graham cracker crust. I put it in the oven, baked and cooled it, and slipped it into the refrigerator. Then, I cooked some blueberries with a little sugar and potato starch, making a nice sauce for the cheesecake.

Problem solved, I enjoyed Christmas Eve, and the cheesecake was a success. I am tempted to try the dessert recipe again some time, but I doubt if I will. The memory of scraping that chocolate mess into my kettle will stay with me too long, And, I will remember the Christmas of 2017.