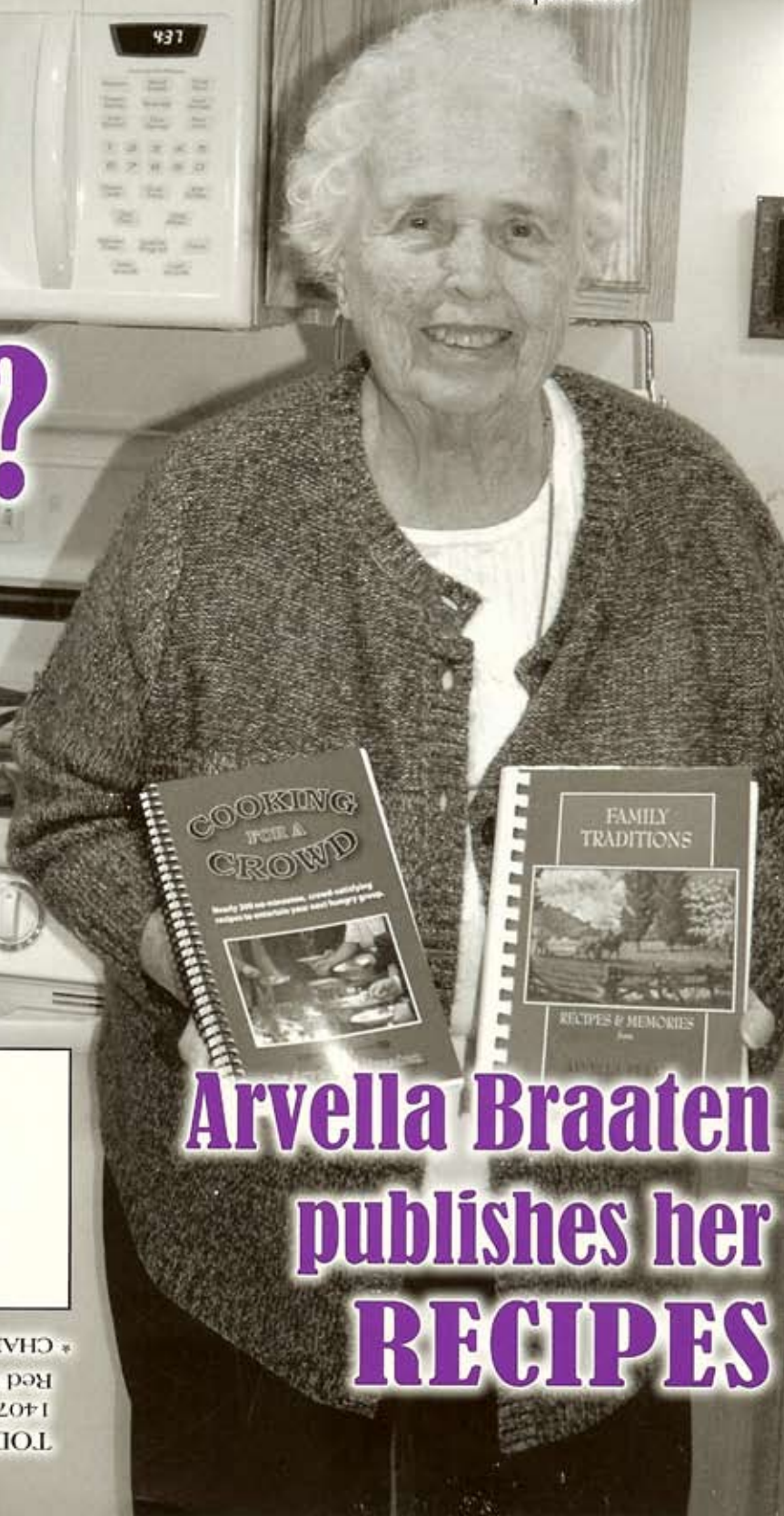


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April 2009

## What's Cooking?



**Arvella Braaten  
publishes her  
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June 21, 1948, was the beginning of a happy marriage for Arvella and Joe.

By the

As a young girl, whenever Arvella Larson heard pans rattling, she knew that cooking would soon follow. At around the age of three, Arvella began helping her mother bake and prepare meals. "Anytime I heard the pots or pans, I was right out there, ready to go," she recalled. "Mom let me measure the dry ingredients; then a few stirs, and I was good to go." Cooking and baking have been a lifelong journey. Arvella is pleased with her accomplishments in the

kitchen. She has written two cookbooks that give testimony to her skill.

Arvella wishes she had retained the first book of recipes she received as a child. Her interest centered on creating variety from common ingredients found in the home. "By age ten," she said, "the basic recipes didn't interest me anymore. I wanted to try things that were a bit more unusual, like salads appealing to the eye."

Whenever new recipes caught her attention, whether in a

magazine or newspaper, they were cut out and stored in a shoebox. When she felt like preparing something new, Arvella retrieved the box and searched for just what was required. The collection accumulated over the decades. She admits to having an obsession with cooking.

Arvella married Joe Braaten, "my biggest critic," in 1948. Now she "really got into cooking." Because of his strong Norwegian heritage, Joe was a "meat and potatoes"

# Arvella Braaten's Tried and True Recipes





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Arvella's granddaughter, Elsie, brings a lot of joy into Grandma's life.

kind of guy who also enjoyed many traditional Scandinavian dishes.

Before her marriage, Arvella had never made lefse. "One day, Joe suggested we make it. I thought, 'Oh no!' The first few batches were terrible, but my husband encouraged me to keep trying." Using all her culinary talents, eventually Arvella mastered the art of lefse making. Joe was extremely pleased.

Terry, the couple's first son, was born in 1950; thirteen years later, brother Jim arrived. Although busy raising her family, Arvella found time to enroll in a few cooking classes, improving her

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proficiency in the kitchen. “I took a home economics course and cake decorating classes. Most were in Faribault, although one was in the Twin Cities.” Joe readily agreed that the classes added to her repertoire of tasty dishes.

Joe’s family often entertained, something that was new for Arvella. Soon the couple invited friends to dinner parties. They collaborated on the menu, often pulling ideas from Arvella’s shoebox collection. Guests always departed happy and satiated.

After Joe died, Terry and Jim came up with the idea to put their mom’s recipes in print. They thought the ten shoeboxes filled with recipes would make a perfect cookbook. “My sons encouraged me to get all my favorites down on paper, to share with others. I agreed to do so.” Arvella began creating

her cookbook after retiring from Kenyon Sunset Home, where she had been in charge of food services. She’d also been the food service director at Kenyon Elementary School and had run a small catering business from her home.

She completed her first book, titled *Family Traditions*, during the cold winter months. “We decided to print two hundred copies. Those went so quickly, I had to do a reprint, twice!” Arvella’s premier venture ran a total of five hundred copies. Some were given

Arvella learned to cook on the family farm, where she lived until age twelve.



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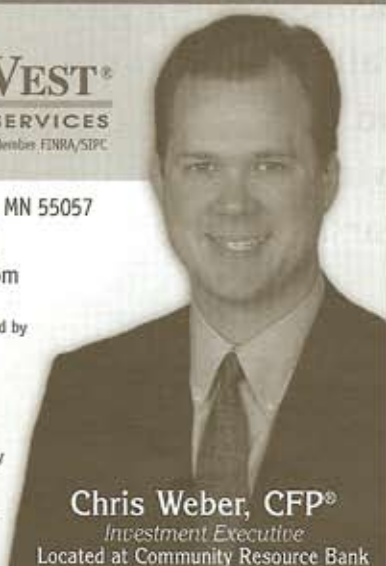
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to friends and family; others sold by word of mouth or at craft fairs.

Surprised by her success, Arvella used up the remainder of her favorite recipes (approximately three hundred) to complete a second book titled, *Cooking for a Crowd*. With her years of catering

experience to groups both small and large, Arvella has the experience necessary to cook for any size crowd. Her newest edition is hot off the press. "Only two people have the cookbook, so far." With the triumph of the first volume, Arvella is bound to have a repeat winner. Those



Above: At the age of three, Arvella began helping her mother in the kitchen.

Below: Mabel, Arvella's mother, shared many recipes and baking tips with her daughter.



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fortunate enough to have been served by Arvella know that her feasts are among the best around.

After eighty years of collecting, Arvella is finally at a place where she is comfortable disposing of her shoeboxes. The important ones are written down for eternity. "The rest can be shredded." Arvella may now add "author" to the list of titles that encompass her life.

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