

Cookbook caters to the soul

By Barb Arland-Fye, *The Catholic Messenger*

Our *Catholic Messenger* staff looks forward to annual retreats at Our Lady of The Prairie Retreat near Wheatland as much for the delicious meals served as for the picturesque setting. Colorful salads made with produce and herbs from The Prairie's gardens, homemade soups and breads, locally produced eggs, hand-picked berries and nuts make for a feast of the eyes and palate.

"I remember all the fresh vegetables we had and the fresh bread. They even had fresh honey butter for the bread. It was a memorable meal," said circulation manager Nancy Hamerlinck. "Lunch there is better tasting, fresher and healthier than meals in many restaurants," reporter/page designer Celine Klosterman added.

We're not the only enthusiasts of the delicious, wholesome and attractive meals served at Our Lady of The Prairie Retreat, a ministry of the Davenport-based Congregation of the Humility of Mary. Guests' requests for recipes motivated Prairie director Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, to create a cookbook titled "Spirit of The Prairie, Catering to the Soul." More than 200 cookbooks have been sold in just a month's time.

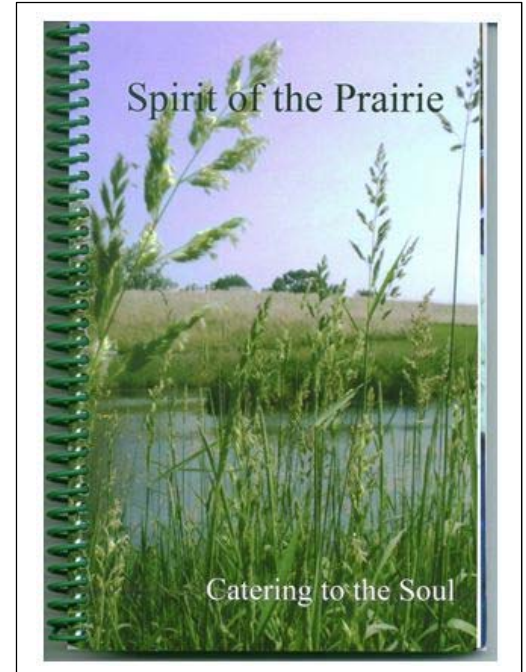
It's far more than a cookbook, though, because it provides lessons on healthy living, stewardship of the earth and hospitality along with 298 recipes and helpful hints for food preparation.



Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND

"Part of the ministry of The Prairie is to provide nourishing, locally grown foods. We believe that healthy eating is a spiritual act. Hence the subtitle of our cookbook: Catering to the Soul," Sr. Storms says in the cookbook's introduction. "Careful thought and planning goes into each meal. We have found local farmers who can provide us with naturally raised chicken and eggs, pork, vegetables and honey."

The cookbook's roots date back to childhood when Sr. Storms, growing up as the oldest girl in a family of 12 on a farm, learned to cook with fresh, frozen and preserved foods. Years later, she embraced the locally grown food movement after establishing the SSND Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry in Mankato, Minn., headquarters for her religious community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Farmers in the area challenged the Sisters to ensure that what they were doing on their land supported the earth and its health.



When she began her ministry as director of The Prairie 15 months ago, she introduced new recipes and meals that focused on what could be produced from The Prairie and neighboring farms. Guests praised the meals she and her assistant, Sister Kathleen Henneberry, CHM, prepared. "For the first six weeks we were passing out recipes after each meal. It was getting a little crazy," Sr. Storms said.

Guests responded affirmatively to inquiries about their interest in a Prairie cookbook. She earmarked recipes for dishes people enjoyed most and combed magazines for more recipes, looking in particular for vegetarian fare as a way to help foster good stewardship of the land.

In the cookbook she thanks Marlin and Judy Mowry and JoAnne Horstmann for their labor in the gardens. "Without their help, it would have been more difficult for us to have a consistent supply of organic, naturally raised vegetables."

Lisa Martin, communications director for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, assisted with the cookbook's layout and photography. An online publication house, Morris Press Cookbooks, produced the cookbook. Pleasant Valley High School students working with Ladonna Czachowski recorded the recipes as part of a service learning project.

The cookbook's photographs show off foods Sr. Storms has prepared or that she and others have grown. Martin took the cover photo which captures the idyllic setting of The Prairie. She's even hosted a couple of retreats for other communication directors at The Prairie and delights at their reaction to the food. "When you eat things out of the garden or eggs from the farm next door, it tastes so good," Martin said. "Sr. Kathleen cooks and caters to all diets."

Sr. Storms says that the recipes are very different from what you'd find in most cookbooks: Butternut Squash Casserole, Golden Mixed Greens Pies, Gingered Carrot and Kale Ribbons and Quinoa with Toasted Almonds and Cranberries, among others. "We have a lot of quinoa. That's a very new grain for people, but it's really high in protein," she noted. Meat-eaters aren't left out. There are recipes for Easy Pot Roast, Gone All Day Stew, Hamburger Casserole and Grilled Turkey Breast, for example. "We do need protein to get a complete diet. It doesn't have to come from red meat," Sr. Storms observed.

"I just love putting food on the table that is appetizing, nutritious and pretty, basically. It's really a work of art for me." But it's also about savoring relationships. "We need to come together in a way that honors the food and the company we're going to keep around that food."

~~~~~

"Spirit of The Prairie: Catering to the Soul" cookbook features a collection of recipes by Our Lady of The Prairie Retreat, 2664 145th Ave., Wheatland, Iowa, 52777-9670. The cookbook costs \$10.50 plus \$5 for shipping and handling.

To avoid shipping costs, you may pick up cookbooks at The Prairie or by calling Sister Rae at (563) 336-8414 to arrange a time to pick up at the Humility of Mary Center in Davenport.

Visit [http://chmiowa.org/prairie\\_retreat.cfm](http://chmiowa.org/prairie_retreat.cfm) for more information.