



Carol Coppola poses with one of the plum puddings she and fellow parishioners of St. George's Episcopal Church in Schenectady were making on Wednesday morning. The parishioners make their

pudding and mincemeat pies for the holidays as part of a church tradition. The goods are sold to raise money for the church's gardens. **MARC SCHULTZ** Gazette Photographer

CHRISTMAS TRADITION

Plum pudding orders benefit memorial garden of Stockade church

By **MARILYN HIPPI**
Gazette Reporter

SCHENECTADY — The recipe is not quite as old as Christmas itself, but the belief behind it is.

Using a 200-year-old English recipe, a handful of women from St. George's Episcopal Church have been preparing dozens of orders of English plum pudding, which "represents Christ, who will bring with him on his birthday all the good things of heaven," according to parishioner Rosemary VanDerhoof.

In Britain, the pudding is traditionally prepared on the first Sunday of Advent and refrigerated until Christmas.

For many years, St. George's was known for taking on that tradition, using a recipe that VanDerhoof said came from the late Patricia MacMillan, a doctor's wife and a member of the church. It had been her grandmother's. But the dessert's popularity dropped at the church in the mid-70s as

people began watching their cholesterol intake.

"Back in the '50s and '60s everybody did this when everyone was on a high-cholesterol diet," VanDerhoof said.

After about a 25-year hiatus, the annual church tradition of making the pudding returned at St. George's in 1997. That was when VanDerhoof and fellow Friends of the Gardens members started taking orders again to benefit the large memorial garden on the grounds of the historic Stockade church.

Full of raisins, currants, candied fruits, apples, brown sugar, spices, eggs, shortening and suet, the English plum pudding takes several hours to prepare between mixing the ingredients and steaming the dessert in a mold for three hours.

But little by little, a few hours a week, the women have already prepared dozens of orders they will sell for \$8 per pound.

"Altogether, we've made close to 75

pounds," VanDerhoof said. One pound serves six to eight people, she added.

"You don't want too much because it's very, very rich."

Busy filling orders, and anticipating more, the women began cooking several weeks ago.

"This is a nice big kitchen, but it requires a lot of work" to make the pudding in mass quantities, said Marilyn Humphrey, one of three women working at St. George's with VanDerhoof Wednesday morning.

"Usually you don't begin making it until the first Sunday in Advent, which is toward the end of November," VanDerhoof explained; "that's called 'Stir-up Sunday' because everybody gets stirred up for the coming of Christ!"

Orders are still being taken for one- to three-pound packages of the dessert.

"You serve it warm, and then you pour over it warm rum or bourbon and then light

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Plum pudding has rich significance

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and it flares up like an outdoor grill," VanDerhoof added. "The alcohol burns up, so you get the flavor, but you don't get the alcohol."

To place an order, call St.

George's at 374-3163 or VanDerhoof at 355-5487. The last pickup will be on Friday Dec. 15.

All proceeds benefit the church's Friends of the Gardens organization which, in addition to taking care of the gardens on North Ferry Street, also donates

money to the youth group at St. George's.

"The young people of the congregation are raising money to go to the Taize Monastery next year in France," VanDerhoof explained.