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Norwegian Tea

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Karla Childers
Meridian, California
November 11, 2017

Norwegian Tea

Tradition

Informant: Karla Childers is my aunt. She is the middle child in a family of 3 children, she was adopted into the family after my grandmother did not think she could have more children after having my father. She spent part of her years growing up in Sacramento, before moving to our family's farm in Meridian, California. Our family has owned property on that same stretch of land since the late 1800s. My aunt Karla was very close with great grandma Nora who passed on Norwegian stories and traditions to my aunt Karla. Karla and her family still reside on our family farm in Meridian, California.

Context: This conversation about Norwegian Tea occurred with my aunt at her kitchen table. I was always under the impression that the annual tradition of Norwegian Tea was started long ago by my great grandma and her sister (Nora and Anna Pederson). This is the story of how the tradition actually began.

Text: The Norwegian tea actually started with me. The picture that you see was a tea that was given to Anna Tarke when returned from Norway it was one tea given to her by the Sons of Norway, which both Anna and Nora were members of so that was just one tea one picture. Where the tea started is remember I only had sons, didn't know you were coming Mel [Karla's daughter who is 10 years younger than her youngest son] I read something in some magazine how nice it was to have a tea and so I actually tried with the boys and did like hot chocolate and stuff and they were like, not like Norwegian Tea but just like when they would come home we would do a tea, it didn't go over very well okay. They were like, "we'll drink some hot chocolate and you give us some food." But then um I remembered a story from Shelley and her sister, one year before Anna passed in Maureen's house which was Anna's home, they dressed up in all the bunads and they made all the traditional Scandinavian desserts for a Christmas and that was one time thing a long time ago. And I said, 'I want to have a tea, my boys don't like to have tea so I'm, this is seriously how it came about, so I'm going to have a tea and I'm going to invite all of the offspring of Anna and Nora who were sisters okay. Now I didn't do their brothers and stuff, which is the Pederson side and I just don't know them as well. And that's how it started. So this

started a long time, Maureen would know, before I even, I thought I was done, I never knew I was going to have a daughter. So I kicked the boys out because they didn't like to have tea they just liked to eat the stuff and I invited you all over and that's how it started. And I dressed up in the Bunad and I made horrible lefse, it was awful. Um because lefse is like a potato, every culture has a pancake. You got a tortilla and lefsa is a potato you know dessert. So I made lefse, and I wanted to make the Kransekake, and I had ordered on eBay that had the recipes in it. This was a long time ago before amazon and all that. It was a used book, notably Norwegian and that's where I got the recipe for the Kransekake. So, that's how the Norwegian tea came about. So actually, a lot of the things that we do at the Norwegian tea, the are more Scandinavian than they are Norwegian and they are not things that were done in our family. Okay so Doug, the owners of Doug's company and they are Danish, and a few years into this they found out, I think Doug told her, and she asked 'Do you do the almond in the rice pudding?' And I said no, so that's how that started. Okay so we had never done that in our family either. Actually, my grandmother had never made Kransekake, ever. I do remember Krumkake and so that's how I got the recipe for that and I actually bought an iron for that, because I didn't have an iron. But I do remember grandma making krumkake.

Texture: This story was particularly interesting to me because I had always thought that this tradition had started a long time ago. My aunt told this story with happiness as she described the development of Norwegian Tea. She was very engaging as she told the story and assured that I got the story straight. The feeling in the room grew warmer as she talked about having a daughter. I think this tradition became even more special to her after her daughter Malena was born.

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