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Food Tradition

What comes to mind when you think of Christmas? For most of us one of the first things is the smell of cakes and cookies, turkey and stuffing.

Food is as much a part of American holiday tradition as the Christmas tree and the giving of gifts. And the Southern Christmas Show, Nov. 8-18 at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart is carrying on its 16-year tradition of having lots of food, recipes and ideas to tempt show visitors.

When you walk into the feature hall and make your way through the festively decorated shops and tents, you'll smell gingerbread - that's Sandra Fletcher, proprietress of the Gingerbread House, creating her gingerbread houses right on the spot. She'll make one for you if you like, with your own house number and name.

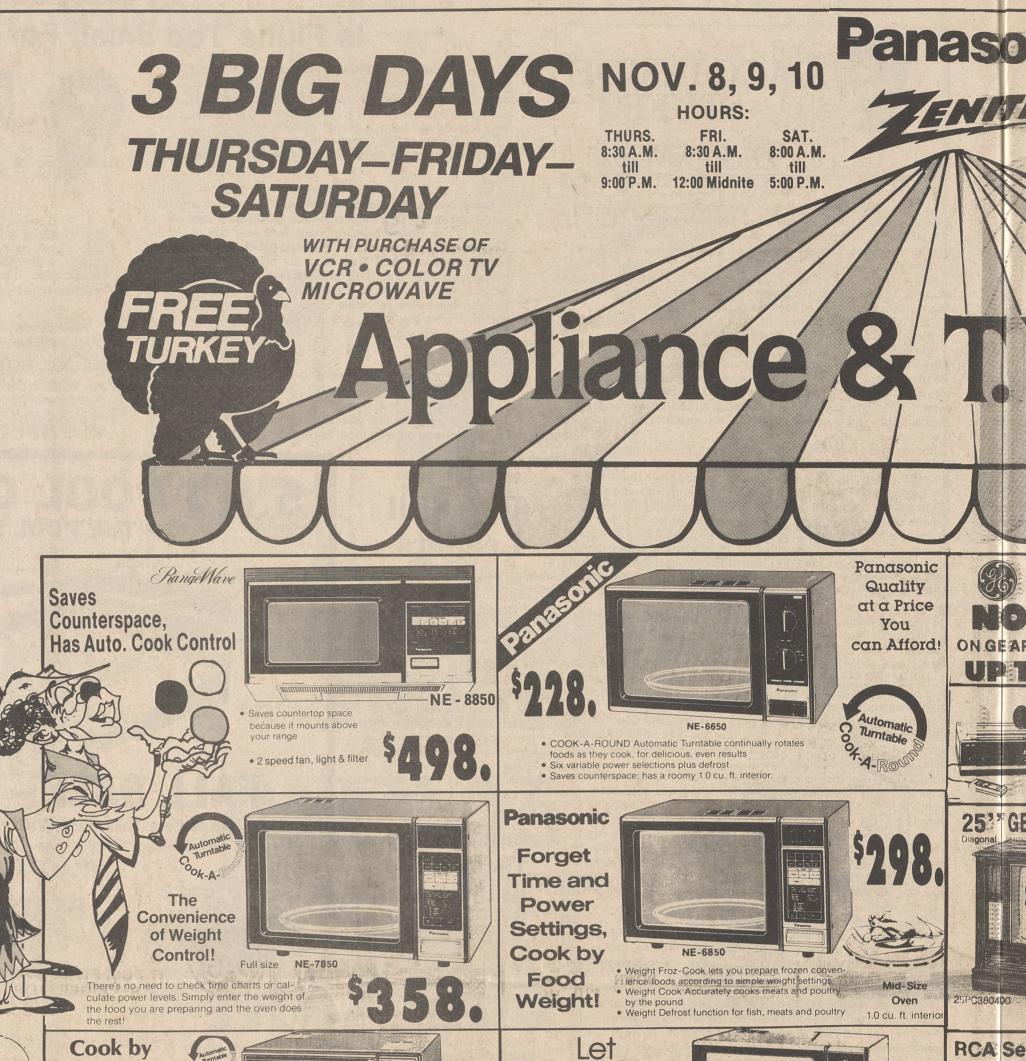
As you go through the feature hall and into the next huge hall, even more tantalizing aromas greet you. There's Helmut's Strudel, with their authentic Austrian strudel baking - take your pick of cheese and apple flavors and eat it right on the spot.

Next comes the plum pudding ladies in their red checked aprons, handing out samples of pudding with scrumptious white sauce. Across the aisle there's chocolate and karob covered pretzels, peanus brickle, fudge, wine jellies and jams and holiday mints being formed.

And what is Christmas without a turkey? Smoked turkeys and hams can be sampled, along with tangy cheeses, summer sausage and crisp North Carolina mountain apples.

If you've been to any previous Southern Christmas Shows then you've met Eva and Travis Hanes. They're easy to spot in their Moravian costumes, but if you can't see them just follow your nose to where the delightful spicy smells are coming from.

The Holiday Cooking Theatre will have daily clinics, and lots of free recipe books will be handed out. Food Lion is sponsoring the theatre along with Plaza Appliance & TV, and they'll be giving each show goer a coupon worth \$1 on every \$10 worth of groceries purchased at Food Lion stores.



On Tuesday, Heidi Edidin of The Charlotte Russe, known for her fabulous cooking schools, will show her audience how to do holiday garnishing out of vegetables, and how to make not just gingerbread houses - but gingerbread puzzles, games and yummy eatables you can enjoy looking at as well as eating.

Dieters who want to whisk briskly by the food section will find plenty to enjoy. Apart from Olde Towne with its old-timey post office, fire station and village church, there are quaint shops, decorated mantels, windows, tables and trees.

Santa Claus is on hand to greet youngsters and young at heart oldsters. There's an entrance castle that looks like it came right from the Magic Kingdom, and craft tents by the dozen.

There are craft booths galore, plus a holiday marketplace packed with boutiques selling one-ofa-kind gifts, greenery and lots of holiday fun. You can see wreaths made, buy candles at wholesale prices, and catch the Christmas spirit without even trying.

Show hours are 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Admission during normal show days (Nov. 8-18) is \$4 for adults, \$3.50 in advance, and \$3 for purchases of 30 or more. Youth age 6-18 are \$2, and children under 6, excluding groups, are free with an adult.

Wednesday, Nov. 7, from 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. is a Benefit for the Empty Stocking Fund. Tickets are \$6 in advance and \$8 at the door. There will be light refreshments and the cost of tickets that evening is completely tax deductible.

For more information about the show or the Benefit, or to order tickets, you may write or call: Southern Christmas Show, Box 36859, Charlotte, NC 28236. Toll Free in NC: 800/532-0189, outside NC: 800/334-0248, and locally: 376-6594.

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