

This Free E-Book is brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

**Wintergreen**

**By LeAnn R. Ralph**

**Wintergreen**

by: **LeAnn R. Ralph**

From the book: Christmas In Dairyland (True Stories From a Wisconsin Farm)

<http://ruralroute2.com>

As we drove along the dirt road north of our farm one Sunday afternoon, the color of the sky reminded me of Mom's silver cream and sugar servers when they were tarnished and needed to be polished again.

Since morning, the sky had been cloudy, but now at mid-afternoon, the clouds had grown much thicker and darker. Earlier in December we had gotten a little snow. Several forty-degree days had melted most of it, and the landscape was a combination of dun-colored grass, black tree branches and the russet color of certain oak leaves.

Every year in December, Dad and I went on a Christmas tree expedition, and we were on our way now over to what we called our 'other place' to cut a tree. During the summer, I made frequent trips to the other place, a second farm my parents owned that was about a mile away, to help Dad with the haying or just to tag along when he checked on the corn or the oats or the soybeans.

But after school started, I rarely went to the other place, and it always took me by surprise how different it looked in the winter. Instead of green alfalfa and timothy and clover waving in a warm south breeze, what had grown back after third crop was now brown stubble that trembled in the face of a north wind. The fields were strangely silent now, too, without the songs of meadowlarks and bobolinks, and the bobwhite quail which lived in the narrow section of woods lining the road.

We were only about five minutes into our journey when Dad shifted the pickup truck down into first gear and then eased into the field driveway. The rutted track that ran along the edge of the hayfield was so bumpy that a merry jingling came from the glove compartment — probably a few bolts and

## Wintergreen

washers, along with a couple of wrenches and maybe a screwdriver or two. When you're a farmer, you never know when you might need a wrench or a screwdriver or a bolt.

"Is it going to snow, Daddy?" I asked. Now that we had gotten past the trees lining the road, the sky had opened in front of us again.

Dad leaned forward to look up through the windshield.

"I'd say there's a pretty good chance," he replied.

"How much?"

My father shrugged. "Don't know. Maybe quite a bit. Wind's out of the east. And that usually means we'll get at least enough to shovel. Could be a lot more, though."

When we reached the pine plantation at the other end of the field, Dad turned the truck around, driving forward a few feet then backing up, then driving forward and then back again, forward and back, until we were facing in the direction we had come. He let the engine idle for a few seconds before shutting it off.

"Daddy?" I said, as we started walking toward the rows of planted red pine. "When do you think it will start to snow?"

Dad stopped and tipped his head back. "Soon," he said, "that wind feels raw and damp."

When my father said 'soon,' I was not expecting it to start snowing within the next ten minutes. At first, while we were cutting the tree we had selected, only a few random flakes drifted to the ground. By the time we reached the truck and had securely stowed our Christmas tree in the back, it was already snowing harder.

"If it keeps up like this all night, you won't have school tomorrow," Dad said as he started the truck. He slowly let out the clutch, and soon we were retracing our route along the field driveway. He turned on the windshield wipers, and with each pass — clickety—snick, clickety—snick — the wipers cleared an arc through the wet flakes plastered to the glass.

After we had pulled onto the dirt road, Dad shifted into second gear, although when we reached the 'Y' — where you could either turn left to go toward our farm, or right to go toward the house that had at one time been part of our other place — he shifted into first gear again.

"Hope we make it up the hill," he said, glancing at me. "Wet snow makes the road kind of slick."

It was touch and go for a few seconds when the back wheels started spinning, but finally we reached the point where the hill leveled off. Trees grew on both sides of the road here, and to the right, a steep bank gave rise to a small wooded hillside.

## Wintergreen

"Look," Dad said, pointing toward the bank. He inched over to the side of the road and stopped.

I peered through the curtain of falling snow. The bank looked pretty much the same as it always had — exposed tree roots, patches of moss and bare spots where flat sandstone rocks had slid toward the road.

"What do you see?" I asked.

"Wintergreen," Dad answered. He shut off the truck and opened the door.

Wintergreen?

The first time I had tasted wintergreen, I decided that it was my favorite flavor. Peppermint was a little too sharp, although candy canes at Christmas were all right. Spearmint didn't taste like much of anything. Wintergreen, it seemed to me, was just right. In my opinion, Teaberry gum was the best, with wintergreen Lifesavers following as a close second.

Dad liked wintergreen too. Lifesaver books were popular gift exchanges at school for our Christmas party, and if the person who had drawn my name gave me a Lifesaver book, I would trade with other

kids who had also gotten books. Sometimes I managed to acquire several extra rolls of wintergreen. Then I would share them with Dad. I thought Teaberry gum was better than candy because the taste lasted longer, but Dad preferred Lifesavers. Gum, he said, stuck to his dentures.

During the summer, every time I went to town with Dad to grind feed, I hoped he would buy a package of my favorite candy or gum. Not at the feed mill, of course. They didn't sell Teaberry gum or Lifesavers at the feed mill. But if we went to the restaurant for pie while we waited for our feed, or if Mom had asked Dad to pick up a couple of things at the grocery store, I would try to talk him into buying some gum or candy.

Going to the feed mill with Dad was a summertime activity, however, and there were long stretches during the school year when I never even saw a package of Teaberry gum or a roll of Lifesavers, much less had any in my possession.

So what was Dad talking about when he had stopped the truck and said, "wintergreen?"

I stared at the embankment and then at the hill beyond but I couldn't see anything out of the ordinary. I shut the truck door behind me just as Dad scrambled nimbly up the bank into the woods.

"It's growing all over here," he said, pointing to the ground. "They've got berries, too."

I struggled up the bank behind him to get a closer look. Underfoot were small plants with shiny green leaves.

"That green stuff is wintergreen?" I said.

## Wintergreen

My father nodded.

"Like what they use to make gum?"

"Yup. Here. Taste."

He reached down and picked a couple of small, pinkish–red berries, popping one into his mouth and handing one to me.

I sniffed the berry. It smelled like wintergreen, all right, but I wasn't one bit sure about eating the thing.

"Taste it," Dad urged. "You'll be surprised."

So, I ate the berry. It had a strange consistency — sort of dry and mushy, all at the same time. . .and then my mouth was filled with the marvelous taste of wintergreen. The same as my favorite gum, but different, too. More delicate.

"It's good!" I exclaimed, grinning. Then I frowned. "How come we haven't seen it before?"

"Usually too much snow by this time," Dad said.

"What about in the summer, though?"

"Too much underbrush and other green things."

"And this is really the stuff they use in gum?" I asked.

Dad took his cap off, slapped it against his leg to rid it of snow and then put it back on his head.

"Well. . .they probably don't go into the woods and pick wild wintergreen. People probably raise it and sell it, and I think they might use the leaves rather than the berries, but yes, this is the stuff."

By now the snow was falling so hard it made a hissing noise as it struck the copper–colored oak leaves above us. Unlike other trees, some of the oaks, I had noticed, keep their leaves until spring.

"How do you know so much about wintergreen?" I asked.

"Oh," Dad said, "when we were kids, we used to pick it so we could make ice cream."

I turned to look at him. "Ice cream?"

"Our kind of ice cream, anyway. A little dish of snow with winter–green berries mixed in."

Suddenly I struck upon a wonderful idea.

## Wintergreen

"I know! I can try some right now."

I took off my mitten, picked a few wintergreen berries and scooped a small handful of fluffy, fresh snow. I put the berries in the snow, and — well — I have to admit it was pretty tasty.

I put my mitten back on. "Didn't you have real ice cream when you were growing up, Dad?"

My father smiled. "Sure — sometimes. Not store bought, though. We made our own with a hand-cranked ice cream freezer. But that was mostly in the summertime. We thought wintergreen ice cream was an awful lot of fun."

Dad had been the middle child among several older brothers, an older sister, and three younger sisters. My grandparents had worked as cooks in a lumber camp in northern Wisconsin in the early 1900s. Many years ago, long before I was born, Dad had made his living cutting pulp wood.

"Daddy? How did you see the wintergreen from the road?" I asked.

My father hesitated before answering. "I didn't see it. Not today, at least."

I stopped trying to adjust my mitten so the thumb lined up like it was supposed to and turned my full attention toward Dad.

"Remember last fall, when the county forester came out here?" he asked.

"Yeah, I remember."

Just on the other side of the small wooded hill was a two-acre stand of tall red pine with a couple of

rows of white pine next to the road. Dad said the trees were among the oldest of the plantations in the county that had been planted just after the Great Depression to keep the sandy soil from eroding. Nearly every year, the forester would come out to check on them. One year he used Dad's pine trees to demonstrate a brand new trimming device to foresters from other counties.

Well," Dad continued, "while we were out here, I decided to take a little walk. I don't get much of a chance just to walk around back here."

"And that's when you saw the wintergreen?"

Dad nodded. "I was waiting for the right opportunity to show it to you."

He turned back toward the truck. "It'll be dark soon. We'd better get home. The cows are waiting to be milked."

As we slid down the embankment, I glanced over my shoulder.

Wintergreen.

Growing in the woods not far from my house.

And in that instant, I knew gum and candy would never again taste quite the same.

\*\*\*\*\*

LeAnn R. Ralph is a freelance writer for two newspapers in west central Wisconsin, is the editor of the Wisconsin Regional Writer (the quarterly publication of the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Assoc.) and is the author of the book, Christmas In Dairyland (True Stories From a Wisconsin Farm) (Aug. 2003); trade paperback. For more information about Christmas In Dairyland, visit

<http://ruralroute2.com>

[bigpines@ruralroute2.com](mailto:bigpines@ruralroute2.com)

## **Make Your Own Toothpaste**

**By ThriftyFun.com**

### **Make Your Own Toothpaste by ThriftyFun.com**

You are free to publish this article as long as you include the footer and hyperlink where possible. Please send a courtesy copy to [fisher@thriftyfun.com](mailto:fisher@thriftyfun.com).

Make Your Own Toothpaste

By ThriftyFun.com

Making your own toothpaste is both easy and cheap.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1/3 cup salt
- 3 teaspoons glycerin
- Flavoring for taste (Wintergreen or Peppermint Oil)

Directions:

Mix baking soda and salt together. Then add 3 teaspoons of glycerin and mix thoroughly. Add flavoring to taste. 5 to 10 drops will usually work. Find out what is best for you. Put paste into a squeeze bottle. Use as you would commercial toothpaste. You can also add a drop of food coloring to add a little color. Add a little more glycerin for thicker toothpaste.

About the Author: ThriftyFun.com publishes the Daily Thrifty Tips newsletter. <http://www.thriftyfun.com>

About the Author: ThriftyFun.com publishes the Daily Thrifty Tips newsletter. <http://www.thriftyfun.com>

Related Content:

Read more Content at

: A genuine resource center for Quality Ebooks and Softwares



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**