



Heritage Story

Hello!
I am Rita Thompson

We are excited to share a tiny bit of Rita's huge story! Rita is a powerhouse in Central Alberta, having been instrumental in a decade-long initiative to have her community of Olds designated an 'Age Friendly Community' by the World Health Organization.



Rita was born in The Netherlands in 1945, into a war-torn country and a grief-stricken family. Just the year before, a bomb had seared through her family's home and instantly killed her older sister and brother (who were just a toddler and baby at the time). The blast left her mother permanently wounded, both physically and spiritually. But from that heartache came Rita! A person full of joy and spirit, and a passion for promoting tolerance and understanding

"All of us who were born in the aftermath of the war were shaped by it, said Rita. "I don't recall making a vow to try and do my part in creating a more humane and just society - I just started doing it and have never stopped."

Now nearly 80 years old, Rita leads many initiatives for community improvement and speaks to countless groups about 'acceptance, understanding and respect for others'. She is well known throughout Alberta for her tireless advocacy and impact, and has been a much-requested guest speaker at area schools. Amid all her efforts, Rita is a devoted wife to Brian, her husband of nearly 60 years, and a loving mother and grandmother.

"Four of our five children are adopted, so I was also active in schools while trying to meet their diverse needs. But it was the war that had an endemic impact on me forever. That's why I ensure I'm living a life of purpose, even if the wheels of progress grind slowly. I'm quite prepared to do this work of promoting understanding, and to stand up to hatred and fear, for as long as I possibly can."

Rita's Recipe - Seafood Casserole

(Rita calls this a family favourite, and we call it a perfect recipe for Jungle Farm produce!)

- 1 cup long grain rice
 - 1 egg beaten
 - 1/3 cup butter
 - 1/4 cup flour
 - 1 onion chopped
 - 3 gloves minced garlic
 - 1 1/2 cups celery
 - 2 carrots finely chopped
 - 1 Tbsp fresh dill
 - 1 tsp each salt & pepper
 - 1 lb of scallops
 - 1 lb raw shrimp
 - 1 can of chunk crab meat (125 grams)
 - 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 - 1 cup of milk
 - 1/2 cup of dry white wine
 - 1 pkg. Phil cream cheese (250 grams)
 - 1/4 tsp of thyme
- Topping:
- 1 1/2 cups of bread crumbs
 - 2 Tbsp of melted butter
 - 2 Tbsp chopped parsley
- In a saucepan, combine rice with 2 cups salted water bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 15 to 20 min or until tender and the water is absorbed. Stir in egg and 2 tbsp of the parsley. Line the bottom of a greased 13 X 9 baking dish with the rice, pat down and set aside.
 - In a large skillet, melt 2 tbsp of butter over medium heat, cook onion, garlic, carrot and celery 3 to 5 minutes or until softened. Stir in 1/2 tsp dill and 1/4 tsp each of salt and pepper, transfer to a large bowl and set aside.
 - Wipe skillet clean. Pour in 2 cups of water and bring to a gentle simmer, poach scallops until opaque (1 to 3 minutes) Using a slotted spoon remove scallops from liquid and add to the bowl with the vegetables.
 - Poach scrimp in the liquid until firm and pink, about 3 minutes. Drain liquid, reserving one cup. Shell & de-vein shrimp and add to the bowl.
 - Open can of crabmeat, drain, reserve liquid and add to the other liquid. Add drained crabmeat to the bowl.
 - In the same skillet as above, melt remaining butter and add flour whisking for two minutes until it's a paste, gradually stir in reserved liquid, milk and wine. Add Philadelphia cream cheese and continue whisking until it has completed dissolved. Add thyme and remaining salt and pepper, blend thoroughly.
 - Pour the mixture in with the seafood and vegetables blend thoroughly. Then pour over the rice.
 - Prepare the topping - mix bread crumbs with butter & sprinkle over casserole.
 - Bake at 325 for 40 to 50 or until heated through and topping is golden and crunchy. Remove from oven, sprinkle with parsley and let stand for 10 minutes. Enjoy!