

# Berkshire Baby Box: Linking new families to Berkshire resources

By [Hannah Van Sickle](#) Friday, May 11 [Life In the Berkshires](#)



Hannah Van Sickle

Berkshire Baby Box founder Hinda Bodinger displays the organization's 'Sweet Berkshire' dessert cookbook.

South Egremont — Hinda Bodinger is getting really good at thinking outside of the box. As founder of Berkshire Baby Box, Bodinger has overseen the dissemination of 1,500 “baby boxes” to new and expectant families throughout Berkshire County. In a scant two years, her tiny seed of an idea has blossomed into a thriving nonprofit, one quite literally rooted in a box but figuratively aimed at connecting families to resources throughout Berkshire County. This weekend, Bodinger is using food and the camaraderie that comes from cooking for our loved ones as another way to connect families. On Saturday, May 12, Berkshire Baby Box will celebrate Mother’s Day by hosting a “Sweet Berkshire” dessert auction to benefit the nonprofit. The event, which will take place at the Country Club of

Pittsfield, will also feature the release of “Sweet Berkshire: A Family Keepsake Dessert Cookbook.”

“It’s not simply about the box...it’s about the connection,” said Bodinger, whose stance has remained firm in her first two years at the helm of BBB. It comes as no surprise that the organization’s first formal fundraiser seeks to connect mothers through stories and recipes. “Traditions, diversity and shared history are what bind us and connect us,” said Bodinger. “Sweet Berkshire” is an eclectic compilation of more than 60 recipes from over 50 contributors featuring personal anecdotes about all the special mothers in our lives—including Bodinger’s, Edith Kleinfield Pollock, who died when Bodinger was just 5 years old. Her grandmother’s recipe for date and nut bread, baked and shipped in a empty coffee can, recounts the kind of connection that ultimately creates the ties that bind us to one another.

“New parenting is hard for everyone,” said Bodinger, who was inspired by the successful program in Finland that began 80 years ago—she founded Berkshire Baby Box in 2016. Since its inception, Bodinger and a small team of volunteers have worked to spread the word: Every family in the county who is expecting a newborn is eligible. Each box, with its firm mattress and fitted sheet, is filled with essentials for newborns and moms and provides the baby with a safe sleeping space. But it doesn’t end there. The primary mission of Berkshire Baby Box is to celebrate new families in the Berkshires; the boxes are given out at workshops where parents receive education, support and vital connections to one another and to area resources as they transition into parenthood.

“All families are entitled to, deserve and need community support,” said Bodinger, who has worked tirelessly to make “baby boxes” available to all. BBB became an all-county initiative due to the generosity of the Baby Box Company; the makers of the actual boxes donated the first 1,500—as well as the mattresses, fitted sheets and several promotional items—but Bodinger estimates that her operating costs last year alone were close to \$30,000. Her choice to hold the fundraiser in Pittsfield was done in an effort to be inclusive of all; furthermore, the event’s design stems from Bodinger’s appreciation for the wealth of community support she has received.

“This is a multi-generational event, open to all,” Bodinger stressed. And there will be something for everyone: In addition to enjoying light brunch fare, individuals will have the opportunity to bid on outstanding desserts by professional Berkshire bakers from local establishments (from Blantyre to Barrington Brewery, SoCo Creamery to Seasons on Main, just to name a few). There will be fun entertainment by Roger the Jester, Balloon Ben, a wonderful face painter and close-up magician Mark Cook. There will also be music by harpist Elizabeth Morse from 11 a.m. to noon, and Release the Penguins jazz quartet from noonish on. You will be able to purchase the “Sweet Berkshire” dessert cookbook and be set with gifts for upcoming occasions if you win some really cool auction items (ranging from rounds of golf at Wyantenuck and Cranwell to Catamount Aerial Adventure Park admission tickets and gift certificates to Salon 7 and Frankie’s Ristorante among dozens of others). You will also be able to purchase a Mother’s Day card acknowledging your donation to Berkshire Baby Box in honor of a special mom.

“It’s my passion,” said Bodinger of the work she is doing. Berkshire Baby Box received the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network’s 2017 Excellence Award in the Small Nonprofit Category; in addition, Bodinger was named one of Berkshire Magazine’s “Berkshire 25 – Most Dedicated, Most Creative, Most Influential” in 2017. “My goal and expectation are that “Sweet Berkshire” will become an anticipated annual tradition, with opportunities to recognize people who are part of the fabric of Berkshire County,” said Bodinger. The event will take place at the Country Club of Pittsfield, located at 639 South St. For more information about the event, including a complete list of auction items or to inquire about receiving a BBB, visit [www.berkshirebabybox.org](http://www.berkshirebabybox.org).

## *Date and Nut Bread*

Contributed by Hinda Pollock Bodinger, South Egremont

### *Edith Kleinfield Pollock*

*My mother was born in 1919 in “Rural Kings,” as it was described in a census I found on Ancestry.com. To us, it was Brooklyn. When she graduated from high school, her father told her that girls don’t need a college education. She had studied French and Italian, and wanted very much to travel, so she joined the Women’s Army Corps. As a WAC, she was stationed in Italy and North Africa (Tunisia), where she served as a translator.*

*Her mother, my Grandma Rose, used to send her care packages, even overseas. She always included Date Nut Bread, which she baked and shipped in empty coffee cans. My mother kept a journal and I read several passages about how happy (and popular!) she was when these packages arrived.*

*My mother was a warm and vibrant woman, absolutely beloved by her family and her many, many friends. She would light up any room she entered.*

*I do not have the original recipe, but I was amused to find several recipes for “Coffee Can Date Nut Bread” online, so I guess it was a thing.*

*My husband’s cousin, Stuart Altschuler, makes a Date Nut Bread that is very much like the one I remember, and he has sent it to us from California, well wrapped in aluminum foil. It is indeed a treat to receive a lovingly prepared baked good in the mail.*

*Stuart won the Blue Ribbon for this recipe 2 years in a row at the Humboldt County Fair.*



### **Ingredients**

1 cup of water	2 eggs
2 cups chopped dates	3 ½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda	2 cups chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons butter	2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups sugar	

### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.	Pour mixture into a well-greased
Boil one cup of water.	8 ½” x 4 ½” x 2 ½” loaf pan.
In a small bowl, add baking soda and dates.	Bake at 350 degrees for about one hour until
Set aside to cool.	a toothpick inserted in the center comes out
In the bowl of a mixer, cream butter with sugar.	clean.
Add eggs and mix until smooth.	Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn out
Add dates with water, flour, nuts and vanilla.	onto a wire rack and cool completely.
Combine just until mixed.	

(It goes very well with cream cheese.)

**YOU ARE INVITED TO**  
***SWEET BERKSHIRE***  
**DESSERT AUCTION and more**  
Supporting **BERKSHIRE BABY BOX**



**Saturday, May 12, 2018**

**11 AM – 3 PM**

**The Country Club of Pittsfield**

639 South Street Pittsfield

**Event GUESTS will be able to:**

- bid on amazing desserts by wonderful bakers from:  
Blantyre, Canyon Ranch, Wheatleigh, Patisserie Lenox, Haven Café, Taft Farms, The Old Mill, Barrington Brewery, The Sweetish Baker, Natalya's Ethnic Cuisine, At the Kitchen Table, Tyler & Pine, Wild Oats Market, Seasons on Main, The Store at 5 Corners, Klara's Cookies, Berkshire Mountain Bakery, Number 10, Simply Sweet, Anna Gershenson, The Morgan House, The Red Lion Inn, SoCo Creamery, GB Eats and more!
- buy the ***Sweet Berkshire*** keepsake cookbook (great Mother's Day gift!)
- visit with families and neighbors on the day before Mother's Day
- bid on a wide variety of auction items (golf, yoga, Pilates, farm share, aerial adventure park, flying trapeze, Ani DiFranco tickets, tubing, lift tickets, pet communication, filled Berkshire Baby Box, docent tours + more)
- buy dessert-themed tree ornaments from our Festival of Trees tree
- **help support ALL new families in the Berkshires**
- enjoy light brunch fare

**Entertainment includes:**

**Elizabeth Morse, Harpist      Release the Penguins Jazz Quartet**  
**Balloon Ben      Face Painting      Roger the Jester**

**Entrance fee: \$10 adults, \$5 children under 6**

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**Berkshire Baby Box is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which provides a safe sleeping space for newborns, essential items, and an educational component which connects ALL new Berkshire county parents to local resources and community support. We have given away over 1400 Berkshire Baby Boxes in our first 2 years!**

**[www.berkshirebabybox.org](http://www.berkshirebabybox.org) to donate**