

## Parenting with Fran

It was the first of December 1977 when my husband John and I decided to save money by making all of our holiday presents. We got out our Mother Earth News magazines for ideas. During our search, John remarked that his father made peanut brittle every year for family and friends. Fortunately, the recipe was still in an old family cookbook. That year we made simple wooden toys for our young son Ben and other children in the family. We also created macramé plant hangers, beaded necklaces, and lots of peanut brittle. I even sewed a flannel shirt for John which turned out to be a true labor of love. Since I didn't know how to do button holes, I used Velcro buttons. Needless to say Ben had great fun popping open his dad's shirt every time he wore it.

In 1978 our son Joe was born and we were now into another season of holiday gift making. When my sons were preschool age, we started involving them in the creation of simple gifts. I would help the boys make presents for their dad, and John in turn helped the boys make presents for me. We also helped the brothers make presents for each other. When they were little, a favorite gift was an ABC book they wrote and illustrated all about their dad. Coupon books for various jobs around the house and favorite meals and desserts were also quite popular. A wooden shield decorated with shiny gems by Ben was a huge hit for brother Joe when he was heavily involved in his knighthood stage.

Sadly, when my sons went off to college, the home-made present tradition seemed to fade away for a few years. Then they each got married and the gift making tradition was rekindled. Some of the truly memorable presents from the past few years include crocheted hats and knitted scarves, holiday aprons, home-made apple butter, birdfeeders, earrings, collages of family pictures, Roling sessions with Ben, family recipe cookbooks, tins of cookies, and of course lots of peanut brittle. I look forward to the future when I have grandchildren and they hopefully learn about the joy of creating simple home-made gifts for those they love.

This year my husband and I decided to share our delicious peanut brittle with the community, so we started Papa Ben's Brittle, gourmet peanut brittle made with Organic Valencia Peanuts. Our website [www.papabensbrittle.com](http://www.papabensbrittle.com) was created by our son Joe who has taken home-made gift giving to a whole new level.

Let me know if you have any parenting issues that you would like me to address. You can contact me at [parentingwithfran@gmail.com](mailto:parentingwithfran@gmail.com)

Hope you have a joyful holiday season.  
Fondly, Fran