

# Eva's Kitchen Confidence



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## Introduction

When I was a child I often overheard adults exchange recipes in the following way: " I make it just like such-and-such except...." or " just start it like you would a regular this-or-that, substituting marjoram for the paprika and add a little more black pepper....." Nothing was written down; there was no need. The new recipe was a variation on the old traditional, tried and true. The basic methods remained the same, but the ingredients varied. Many a great cook will readily admit that their best and most original recipes were created when they were forced to substitute because they were missing an ingredient or two and it was too late to run to the store. I personally am at my most creative when cleaning my fridge or cupboards. That handful of peas in the freezer, the never used spice on the shelf, yesterday's left over pork chop and whatever I may come across, serve as an inspiration, and I set to work with the zeal and excitement that Picasso must have felt when starting one of his masterpieces.



**Cooking is not just following recipes:**

To cook well and enjoy doing it, it is absolutely essential to understand the basic methods, so that you can apply them to those recipes surreptitiously torn from magazines at the doctor's office, collected from friends or contained in the glossy cookbooks on your shelf. Understanding the methods will give your cooking flair and flexibility. Thus you will eventually develop a style of your own.



I learned to cook at the age of 13, and I am still learning 42 years later. I started with a small repertoire and added to it as the opportunity arose. I am a retired biochemist, who for years challenged herself to get a well cooked, inexpensive and nutritionally balanced meal on the table. In the meantime, I was working full time at a job and had a child who had all the typical needs of being listened to, taken to sports training, home work etc. All the while, my husband's job required him to stay late, entertain bosses and clients in our home, and could offer only limited help in the kitchen. I learned along the way from friends, colleagues and "experts" (books, magazines, TV) some techniques that helped me organize things into a system and an attitude that worked for me and that I hope will be useful to you.



I was 15 when I arrived from my native Hungary to Canada and entered high school. It was really fortunate that my English was not good enough to express my opinion of the cooking lessons in Home Economics! To begin with, we had to measure all the ingredients as accurately as if we were pharmacists

measuring potent poisons. All ingredients had to be lined up in order of use on the counter, lest we should forget one. Why or how those ingredients combine to produce their effect was never even mentioned. Cooking was a series of steps to be followed with unquestionable precision. Then the production could begin. With our noses in the book instead of in the pot, we worried ceaselessly about the outcome of our efforts.

Several things are wrong with this picture. Unless you are baking a cake, making a souffle or a complex sauce, you don't have to get too concerned about measuring. If you have read the recipe and visualized the product you are unlikely to forget an ingredient. However, for the sake of efficiency, while the onions are frying, you may want to lay out the next ingredients.



**The most important thing is to get your nose out of the recipe and into the pot. You need all your senses at full alert when cooking.**

- Eyes should be on all the parts of the preparation at the same time with an occasional glance at the recipe to double check. See the color and texture of the food. Remember it as a reference for the next time you are cooking a similar dish.
- Nose should work as a radar, scanning for off-odors in the ingredients, warning of early signs of burning, indicating spice blending and with practice it will even signal doneness as well. Smell the food you are preparing. Fresh ingredients vary with the season, growing conditions and freshness, dry ingredients are relatively stable, but spices tend to lose their luster in the cupboard. Adjust your recipe using your nose as a guide.
- Ears should be tuned to the sound cooking food makes. For instance: different sounds of sizzling can be distinguished depending on the cooking temperature. The hissing of a simmering pot may indicate that the heat is too high, while the gentle sizzle of frying indicates that the temperature is just right. Listen to the sizzling of the onions in the frying pan. Are they frying, burning or just steaming in their own juice? What did your recipe tell you to do?
- Touch so that you can feel how a spoon or fork enters the food to judge doneness, how the texture of a dough feels, how a knife cuts an ingredient to judge freshness and quality.
- Taste for flavor. As you get more and more adept at using your other senses this will be limited to tasting near the end of the cooking to adjust the seasoning if necessary.



**Think about your project!**



**Remember past methods, store new ones and to coordinate all the moves. Anyone who considers cooking to be a mindless chore will never become a good cook.**



**Note the setting of your stove when the heat is right, note the pot you are using. Remember to use the same settings and same pot for all similar preparations.**



**Recall the taste of something from your memory to imitate it.**



**File failures, mentally, so as not to repeat them.**



**Apply ideas, methods and techniques learned in conversation or from the media.**



### **The history of cooking went something like this:**

**Our ancestor, the cave man, gnawing on a piece of raw joint from his hunt, accidentally dropped a piece of meat into the fire. Fishing it out carefully, for wasting was not his style, he ate it and found it to be really good. From that day on he roasted his meat over the fire before eating it. When he dragged his prey home, from time to time bits of leaf and pine needles clung to it altering the flavor of the roast and seasoning started. Eventually roots, berries and mushrooms were added to the meat and cooked in bowls.**

**Simple cooking remained the fare of the poor for centuries. Various techniques, clever combination of ingredients and seasonal availability kept the meals from becoming too monotonous. With the beginning of explorations of the Far East and later of the Americas, many new ingredients and exotic spices found**

their way to the tables of the rich and well connected.

Can't you just hear the boastful host?

*"Uncle Harry just brought this new spice he calls pepper from his expedition to the East. The flavor is quite exotic, but do try it!"*



It's so-o-o SPECIAL!"

Onion, corn, peppers and a cornucopia of spices were brought back from far off lands and this started a new trend in cooking. Great chefs vied with each other in creating the most original and clever taste sensations. Housewives weren't far behind; cooking became a competitive art form. Even pioneer women tried to outdo themselves to create tasty fare from the limited provisions available for the task. Pioneer mothers cooked plain, stick-to-your-ribs fare. This was fine for the hard working, physically demanding life of the times. They had the talent to create an infinite variety of delicious food from the short list of available ingredients with their skills as expert cooks. They understood their ingredients and methods, and they challenged their own and their neighbour's creativity.

Wartime and post-war shortages and consequent rationing caused a brief renaissance of inventiveness. British and European cooks rose to the occasion with imaginative creations from the meagre resources available. They turned carrots into marmalade, substituted grated potatoes for lard in pastry and, in my home land, they cleverly turned cow's udder into veal cutlets for Sunday's dinner.

In North America the industrial revolution brought work saving appliances, canned, packaged and preserved foods to the aid of the homemaker. During the war years with food processing making leaping "progress" and women working in jobs to replace men, short cut cooking made inroads. Manufacturers of foods began a fierce competition for their market share. Heavy advertising and convincing recipes created the mushroom soup, Miracle Whip®, Jello®, marshmallow and processed cheese cuisine. Cooks lost their touch of techniques, lost their confidence in their ability to judge seasoning and left everything up to the appropriate canned or dry soup to make it right.

Increasing immigration, accessible travel and health conscious food fashion opened the door for the trendy restaurants of the latter part of the 20th century. With increased immigration and travel in the 1950's escalating to major proportions in the 1960's and 70's, ethnic cooking, exotic spices and ingredients gradually entered the cuisine of North America. The interest resulted in wide availability both in restaurants and in the markets of ingredients that were rare



and unusual before. The great slab of meat with a mountain of mashed potatoes, and a token helping of peas and carrots has quietly gone out of style. Today meat takes a supporting role in the kaleidoscope of exotic flavor, texture and color combinations. This movement rekindled the interest in food preparation as attested to by the number of food magazines and cookbooks on the shelves. The daily papers have a food section, glossy illustrated recipes peer out of all sorts of magazines, the gas company sends you a new one with the monthly bill and the Association of Red-spotted Guinea Hen Producers offers to send you a free booklet with 1001 recipes using Red-spotted Guinea Hens.

Interest in cooking by both sexes increased to the point that cooking can be called the number one hobby for a large segment of the population. Sadly since the preceding generation relied on the can opener, miniature marshmallows and Cheese Whiz® for staples, these new sophisticated palates had little opportunity to learn methods and techniques of cooking and became by necessity "recipe and cookbook collectors". Recipe organizing software for the home computer, while useful in keeping the collection filed and handy, adds to the volume without attempting to give explanations. What the recipes and cookbooks fail to teach is methods, substitution, tricks, techniques and the understanding of ingredients. Cooking has become an exercise of following recipes, often rigorously.

You dutifully cut out the recipes, send for the booklets and buy the magazines. You mean to try them one day, but the pressures of day-to-day living seldom give you the chance to do it. Even when you find the time, it turns out that you're missing one or more ingredients for the recipe.

I shudder when I hear people describe themselves as a "recipe collector". Most of the time, this means they flit from one stringent recipe to another mastering none. I visualize a great shoe box full of clippings in which one can never find what they need. I too collect some recipes, but mostly in my head. Mental notes like: "that chicken in the restaurant was delicious. Must remember to use a little ginger in my regular chicken recipe the next time." This way the new recipe evolves from the tried and true with little effort.

By all means, if you like to replicate the recipes in your cookbook or use newspaper clippings of how the chefs do it, keep doing it when time and the occasion allows. I trust that this book will help you understand and achieve those goals more easily.

**The purpose of this book is not to give you more recipes to feel guilty about not using, but to give you a basic framework of methods and tips to build your own unique and personal repertoire of recipes to use with confidence and passion.**

I feel that the time has come that cooks should understand methods and be freed from the yoke of recipes to create and take their hobby to the next level, to an "art form". For the uninitiated who cannot cook at all, I believe that understanding the methods will encourage them to try and, eventually, learn to

cook well.

My first thought was to make this book an introduction to cooking for those who don't know how, but as the work progressed I realized that those who claim not to know how to boil water are few and far between. Either they never wanted to learn because they are not interested or they are afraid to try lest they should fail. For the latter category I hope this work will encourage you to try. A very wise person once told me: "Only those who try can fail." I have been cooking for 42 years and still have an occasional flop, just to remind me that I am human!



**A positive attitude and a sense of humor is essential in a good cook.**

Since it is difficult to classify "very beginners", "novices" and "know littles", this book will presume that the reader only knows a smattering of disjointed facts about cooking. Therefore, I urge you to scan, skip through or omit sections that are too elementary for you. My intention is to teach you enough about cooking to tackle and enjoy cooking with confidence. Hopefully for many of you, it will become a pleasurable avocation and a creative medium.

**The real aim of the book and the author is to help you become a relaxed and happy cook.**

**That more than any ingredient, will translate into super creations on your table.**



**Why should one learn to cook?**

- ◆ **To keep the cost down. Home cooking from scratch is much cheaper than eating out, take-out or buying semi-prepared foods.**
- ◆ **To control ingredients. It is easier to maintain control over ingredients used when you make it yourself. This is of major importance for people on special diets for health or weight control.**
- ◆ **To make meal preparation quicker and easier. Cooking from stringent recipes makes putting a meal on the table more time consuming than necessary. Knowing how things go together and how to improvise simplifies the process.**
- ◆ **To get personal satisfaction. Putting a little of one's "self" into creating good food makes it an artistic creation. Your feeling of caring and loving goes right into the taste. Adding all kinds of expensive ingredients or slaving with long complex recipes will not. It is thought and care that does it. Creativity and success in**

cooking can raise self-esteem, giving one a feeling of accomplishment and contentment.

◆ To create a focus for the family. Family meals, well prepared and eaten together, provide a catalyst for solving each other's problems, airing fears and generally feeling close giving the support that in today's fast paced living is a necessity if we are to live a fulfilled productive life.

◆ To entertain family and friends. "Breaking bread" with our friends or colleagues achieves the same bonding quality. We cook to entertain friends or family and express our appreciation for having them.



Please note: I didn't say impress them!

*You want them to feel that they are important enough to you to have put on the best you could, but you don't want them to feel intimidated by the cost, work and opulence of the meal. Everything from planning to preparation and serving should be done in such a way as to make the guest feel important, yet comfortable and have them leave with a very positive feeling about the time spent with you.*



The emphasis is on time with you!

*If they wanted to spend their time in a roomful of harassed, scurrying waiters they would have gone to a third-rate restaurant. So whatever you serve, plan it to be effortless or seemingly so.*



When you use new complex recipes the focus is on the food preparation rather than on the guest and the guest can sense this. No matter how perfect the fare, the rule of true hospitality is that the food served is a way of showing consideration and respect for the guest, but not as a distraction to his/her importance. A scurrying host/hostess does nothing to add to the ambience, good conversation, relaxation, companionship or as the Germans call it "gemutlichkeit."

*The guest may be full and sated at the end of such meal, but he would feel that way after a solitary meal in a good restaurant. The mellow feeling of having shared warm feelings and good cheer with friends goes unsatisfied if the host or hostess is frazzled.*

**This work endeavors to teach you the methods to become a flexible, creative and relaxed cook whose table becomes the focal point for satisfying human interaction.**

## Getting Started

This work is intended to be a basic guide to cooking. If you get interested in a specific subject, build on what you learn here. The way to do that is keep asking questions.



### ***Remember:***

- ◆ Good cooks love to share their knowledge.
- ◆ Knowledgeable store owners or department managers can be a valuable source of information.
- ◆ Get subject specific cookbooks out of the library. Ask the librarian for suggestions.
- ◆ Get free booklets and recipes from government agencies, marketing boards and manufacturers of food products. They are full of good information and have a vested interest in your success.

*Learn to group (mentally), recipes by method of preparation, not by ingredients required. Remember a beef stew easily becomes a lamb stew if lamb is what you have or it is what you wish to buy. Don't be limited by the type of meat, vegetables or seasoning called for in the recipe. If you understand your ingredients and the way they behave during cooking you've freed yourself of restraints and can create your own unique combinations.*

## ***What is a recipe?***

A recipe is a series of instructions on how to combine ingredients and specific methods to prepare a certain food.

***A recipe is only a ground rule for building.***

If you examine recipes closely you'll realize that traditional spicing is what gives ethnic food that special flavor. Methods of preparation vary little from country to country.

If you want to become a creative cook, choose a simple recipe that mentions several variations and practice by cooking several of the suggestions. Then start creating your own variations. When trying new recipes do make notes on the margin, recording your observations. For instance: double the recipe the next time, big blue pot at #3 setting, add more pepper, reduce liquid.



## ***How to decide what to cook?***

This work's main aim is to give you know-how, understanding and techniques to get a well cooked, tasty meal on the table for your family. Since the emphasis is on the family, in a broader sense those you live with and share your meals, their special likes, dislikes and food sensitivities, must be taken into consideration when preparing food. This means if you understand how things are made you are in a good position to alter, omit or vary ingredients to fit in with those preferences or needs.

Choose ingredients appropriate to the dish. Understand the cuts of meat and choose the appropriate kind for the type of cooking method you wish to use. The same goes for vegetables and all other ingredients.

The other important consideration is what is on hand? Running out to the store in mid-preparation is frustrating and time-consuming and often impossible. How to substitute, ad lib or change the menu with little effort will come from understanding the events happening in the pot.

Today's cooks must realize that a large segment of the population has gone to a vegetarian lifestyle. While this form of eating requires a nutritional know-how well beyond the realm of the conventional cook, you need not panic if a guest is vegetarian. They know how to balance their food, even if you don't. Just provide a variety of meatless dishes, preferably one with legumes, and let them eat without fussing over them and making them feel self-conscious. While we're on the subject of meatless dishes a great percentage of people have reduced their meat intake in the past few years. For this reason it is a good idea to always provide a quantity and variety of meatless side dishes, as options, for your guest.




## ***Why are methods important?***


If you understand the method, you can cook with only a glance through the recipe. On the other hand, if you take the recipe as mysterious unrelated steps to follow religiously, you can easily miss a step or an ingredient.

|  |
|--|
| Familiarity with basic methods is most important in becoming a confident cook. |
|--|

Basic cooking methods are the building blocks in the creation of a meal. Recipes are the blueprints of how to assemble the blocks.

### Cooking methods can be put into three categories:

 **Dry Cooking**- roasting, barbecuing, smoking, broiling, grilling. The food basically cooks in its own juices.

 **Moist Cooking**- stewing, braising, steaming, boiling. Food is cooked by hot liquid that penetrates and tenderizes it.

 **Frying**- sautéing, stir-frying, deep-frying, pan frying and rendering. Hot fat, at 325° F or higher, cooks the food.

Many recipes combine several of these methods in succession to achieve the desired results.



### *How do I plan a meal?*

How to link the recipes successfully together to create a well balanced, harmoniously flavored, eye and palate pleasing meal is seldom mapped out. This linking needs careful planning of the menu taking into consideration the amount of time and logistics the situation allows, good nutrition, food preferences of the family or guests, availability of ingredients and space and utensils available to the cook.

The aim of planning is to achieve excellent timing so that all parts of the meal appear, seemingly without effort, at the right time at the peak of their flavor, temperature and appearance.



*Timing is the trickiest of the kitchen skills!*

It takes lots of practice to have all the dishes at their peak arrive at the table at the same time piping hot.

This is a tall order and good cooks will admit to seldom succeeding completely in reaching this goal of perfection, but you must aim to try your best.

Whether it's a sit down formal dinner or "just" a family meal you should plan it. For everyday meals, the planning may be done in your head in the grocery store or while waiting for the elevator or a traffic light.

For important events I suggest sitting down with a large sheet of paper and making 3 columns:

|             |                       |                  |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>MENU</b> | <b>SERVING DISHES</b> | <b>GROCERIES</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|

**MENU:** Write down each course to be served, checking to make sure there is a harmony of colors, textures, flavors and rich dishes are counterbalanced by light. Make sure not all dishes need last minute touches, build a workable balance of make-ahead, no-attention and complex-preparation dishes. Cross out and change items until you are satisfied.

**SERVING DISHES:** Visualize your completed course served and choose the plate or bowl that is the right size and will best set it off. Write it down, because you may forget and in the rush of serving you may pick up another.

*No great problem you say? Not until you find that you used a bowl that must be used for another dish and find yourself scrambling to pour things from dish to dish and a pile of unexpected containers to wash and dry just when you should be serving. Don't forget to add tablecloth, napkins, centerpiece if any and serving utensils to this list.*

**GROCERIES:** List the ingredients needed, go to your cupboard to double-check the items that are available and cross them off. The rest you'll have to buy, so that is your grocery list.



## ***What is visualizing?***

Before you start cooking you should read the recipe carefully, to visualize each step: the ingredients, the utensils needed, the look of the food at each stage, try to estimate the time available between steps and how you'll utilize that time for other preparation. Envision the garnishing, the serving presentation, the serving utensils and most importantly how the recipe will interact with the preparation of the other parts of the meal. If you visualize the recipe you will not make the mistake of using too small a container for mixing or cooking and will not end up with a mountain of unnecessary dishes. Obviously, if you have no willing and able help you must design the menu to balance the work-intensive items with easy and make-ahead preparations to accomplish good timing.





## ***Why do I have to be relaxed?***

One of the greatest problems of many cooks is trying too hard, or as one of the students in my Community Class put it "I worry my stew to death." Constant watching, stirring and "worrying" have several drawbacks:



You may lose patience and start frying or boiling, whichever the case may be, before the temperature is right or conversely quit before it's time.



lot of time that could be used to prepare the next ingredient or clean up the remnants of previous preparation are wasted on something quite unnecessary.



You'll work yourself into an nervous exhausted state and then feel disappointed when either the food or the accolades do not measure up to your expended effort.

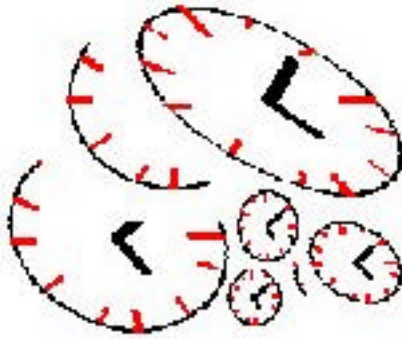


In some instances you may ruin the texture of the food with stirring too often and too vigorously.

### ***Chill out!***

Things do not turn black and char in an instant. You may want to try training yourself with a timer and set it to 5 minutes and force yourself not to lift a lid or stir until the time is up. With stews, soups and braised foods you should aim to increase the time to 10-20 minutes, with roasts 40-60 minutes until close to being done. As you gain confidence and learn the settings on your stove and oven and become familiar with your own basic techniques you might become as blasé as I am and know without looking when it's time. Of course no one is infallible. I have had my own share of burnt offerings and disasters, but it's important to realize that we all have good days and bad, and a not-so-perfect-dinner, even if it is for company is not the ultimate failure. Just repair it the best you can, pay a little extra attention to presentation, put on a bright smile, apologetically admit to having a bad day and I bet you'll be praised by all for your food, if for no other reason, but out of sympathy. While I encourage you to relax and turn your back on the preparation and let it happen, I also urge you to never leave the kitchen during preparation. Time seems to have another dimension when you leave the kitchen for the distractions of the other regions of the home. A minute can end up being 20 and real disasters can happen in your absence. Of course, sometimes it's necessary to see to something else in a busy household. Buy an electronic timer that pins or clips to your pocket or shirt and be sure to set it before you leave the kitchen for that so-called "minute".

For long slow cooking or roasting on the other hand, do leave once the preparation is done and the area cleaned up, but set a timer to remind you when to look next.



## Important techniques:



### ◆ Stock and Broth:

These two expressions are often used interchangeably. Many recipes call for stock as the liquid in preparation. Cookbooks often give elaborate instructions for preparation of stock. This is fine if you have the time, the ingredients and the inclination, but many an experienced cook will tell you that their stock making is unplanned and variable.

Place ingredients in a suitable pot, add water to cover, a few pepper corns and 1-2 bay leaves. Bring the pot to a boil, reduce the heat to gentle simmer, cover and cook for 1½ -2 hours. Strain, cool and skim off all fat and package in small plastic containers, clearly label and freeze for use later in soups and sauces. You can if you wish, add a few vegetables like an onion, some carrots, parsnip and celery. You can add a small amount of salt, but keep it light. Adjust the salt instead, as required, in the final recipe where the stock is used.

Using this method may not give you a consistent flavor and quality, but you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you salvaged nutrients and flavor from that which was destined for the garbage. Skin and gristle is high in collagen and protein, while the bone provides calcium and trace minerals.

You can either save the bits suitable for stock in a container in the freezer until you have enough for a large pot or just do a small quantity when the ingredients are right there. I sometimes make as little as a cup in a small sauce pan, because it's easy and I am in the kitchen cooking something else.

**Beef stock:** For crystal clear stock for making consommé or aspic use only boneless shank, for anything else you may use bone, gristle, bits of meat.

**Chicken or Turkey stock:** You can use whole stewing hen, but it's more economical to use back and neck, feet, fat-free skin, giblets, wing tips or any other parts you think would go to waste.

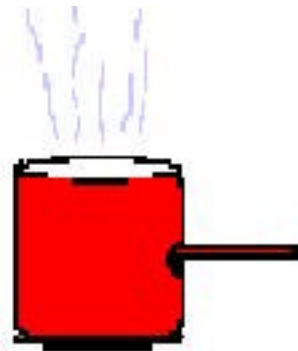
**Brown stock:** Any roast leftovers, generally beef or turkey, with their drippings,

will give a robust brown stock.

**Fish stock:** Heads, tails, filleted bones, washed shells of shellfish and poaching liquid can be used for making fish stock.

**Vegetable stock:** All vegetable cooking liquids, woody stems, washed peelings, left over vegetables, wilted salad ingredients can go into making stock. Seeds and scrapings from squashes and pumpkins make an excellent stock resembling chicken in flavor. Vegetable stock needs only about ½ hour cooking time. Drain and discard solids.

**Smoked stock:** Use skin and bones of ham, water in which smoked meat was cooked, dried ends of smoked sausages to make a stock to be used in bean, pea or lentil soup.



*If you run out of stock and a recipe calls for it, canned broth or consommé is a good substitute. You may also use bouillon cubes, but with caution, because most of these are loaded with sodium and salt.*

◆ **Tenderizing:** The various methods of tenderizing meat are designed to break down the tough connective fibers between the muscle tissue of meat, thus "relaxing" the toughness, making the meat more tender and more penetrable and better able to take up added flavors, such as seasonings.

Meat, if you examine it closely, has a thin membrane covering bundles of muscle fiber and the bundles end in a thick tendon or sinew, that attach it to the bone. The older the animal and the harder the particular muscle works the thicker the membrane and sinew. This membrane prevents the muscle fibers from "relaxing" and allowing flavors to penetrate. The membranes and sinew also shrink during cooking to make their grip around the muscle fibers even tighter causing toughness.

**Tenderizing may be accomplished physically or chemically:**

Physically cutting the connective tissue improves the quality of the meat. Sliced meat like chops and steaks will curl when the membrane shrinks resulting in uneven cooking. The connective tissue need not be removed altogether, as it

contains important nutrients, flavors and proteins, but should be cut into in several places to "relax" the meat. For instance 2-3 cuts through the membrane, but not into the meat, will improve the looks and cooking quality of your chops or steaks immensely. Another way to tenderize meat is to pound the meat with a mallet. Place the slice of meat between sheets of waxed paper and pound with mallet (or a hammer) to break the connective tissue. The thick outer membrane should still be slit open. Low-fat cuts of meat and poultry benefit from this treatment.

Chemical tenderizing can be achieved, with liquids and spices that penetrate the membrane, moisten and soften the meat. One of these methods is marinating.

Marinades usually consist of:

1. An acidic ingredient to "etch" through the membrane, like vinegar, wine, lemon juice, tomatoes, buttermilk, sherry or yoghurt.
2. Spices, sauces and sometimes sugar to flavor.
3. Fat or oil to moisten the meat.

Enzymes can have the same effect as marinating. Papain, an extract of the papaya fruit, is a protein-splitting enzyme which is extensively used as a tenderizer. The crystals sold as meat tenderizer are papain. Care must be taken to follow directions, because over-long exposure of the meat to papain can make it mushy. Heat deactivates the enzyme so that its action stops as soon as cooking begins.

*I have a friend who used to sprinkle generous amounts of tenderizer on her meat while it was cooking in the pan. She might as well have thrown the tenderizer over her shoulder and said an incantation of some magic words, the tenderizer was dead in the pan.*



◆ **Cutting:** Cutting up the fresh ingredients is usually the start of preparation. The terminology is simple. Slicing needs no definition. Chopping or mincing generally implies food cut into fine and very fine pieces, dicing produces little cubes, cubing refers to larger cubes, while Julienne means fine strips.

|   |
|---|
| Food will cook, brown and fry in the same length of time if prepared in pieces of uniform size. |
|---|

**Pureeing** is liquefying a chunky food and can be done with a potato masher, blender or food processor.

◆ **Blanching:** Blanching or parboiling is a procedure where the food is briefly

immersed in boiling water to stabilize and disinfect the surface or loosen the skin for peeling without cooking the food through.

◆ **Combining ingredients:** There are several expressions used to describe this procedure. The terminology is rather confusing because different people interpret the directions differently.

**Blending** means to lift the ingredients with a spoon or spatula from the bottom to the top until the mixture is uniform.

**Stirring and mixing** suggest a more vigorous, circular motion to get the same effect. It often bruises the ingredients causing a change in texture especially in stir frying.

**Shaking** the pan horizontally is a safer method of loosening the ingredients.

**Lifting or flipping** with a spatula is also less disturbing.

**Tossing** is a vigorous motion, but without applying pressure to the ingredients, so as not to crush them.

**Creaming** is usually done to agitate butter or shortening until smooth and creamy.

**Beating** is done to incorporate air into the mixture with vigorous motion using a wire whisk or electric beater.

**Folding** refers to a special technique when an ingredient is merged into beaten egg whites or whipped cream by gently lifting from the bottom to the top and folding it over so as not to damage the structure of the foam.

**Kneading** is to work a mixture with the palm of the hand, making it smooth and elastic.

◆ **Searing:** Searing is one of the most important techniques in cooking. It means that the food is cooked at a high heat on all sides. This causes a seal to form on the food which acts as a barrier keeping fats from penetrating it and seals the juices into the food.

◆ **Stuffings, fillings and dressings:**

I don't understand why there seems to be an aura of intimidation about making stuffings. There are very few rules of preparation and a wide scope for the cook's creativity.

Stuffings usually start with a starchy base, usually bread, dry buns, bread crumbs, corn bread, seasoned breads, chestnuts or rice. Choose the type of base according to the texture you wish to achieve.

To this base various things may be added like sausage, ground meat, liver, giblets, oyster, onion, walnut, parsnip, celery, dry fruit or mushroom. The seasonings are usually two or more of the following: sage, thyme, rosemary, marjoram, savory, salt and black pepper.

The mixture is then moistened to a consistency that is loose, but can be formed into balls. Water, milk, broth, wine, fruit or vegetable juices, oils, fats, cream, eggs or yogurt can be used singly or in combination. The mixture is then placed loosely, to give it room to expand, in the cavity of the bird and the skin flap is secured.

Although we usually think of poultry when talking about stuffing, there are many other things that can be done with this showy preparation. A slit may be made in just about any meat to make room for stuffing. Stuffing can be "sandwiched" between pork loins for a roast. Fish can be stuffed. Cutlets and thin steaks can be rolled with stuffing mixture inside them for a dramatic presentation. A number of vegetables can be stuffed which will elevate them to main course status. If the stuffing is kept meat-free the resulting dish is great as a focus for a vegetarian meal.

*My personal favorite is stuffing placed under the skin of birds, rather than in the cavity. A handful of dressing goes into the neck skin, the loose skin between leg and breast holds another handful and some more fits under the wing. This gives the bird a very plump appearance at serving. Extra filling can be arranged in the pan in balls around the meat or poultry.*

# Tools

## Kitchen Furnishings

You don't need a model kitchen straight off the pages of a glossy magazine to cook well. Many good cooks will tell you that some of their most indispensable tools are ancient beat up utensils or pots that cannot be replaced by a new shiny replica.

You do need some comfortable tools, but buying every gismo will clutter your kitchen. Being able to lay your hand on a tool quickly, is more important than having every gadget.



### *Ask Yourself:*



**Will I use it?**

If you are not sure at the buying stage it's unlikely that you'll change your cooking habits to accommodate the new what's-it.



**How often will I use it?**

Will this tool make my daily life easier or is it another item that will languish in the back of the drawer?



**Do I have something that will do the same job?**

This is a very important question for those with limited space in their kitchen. Double duty utensils save valuable space and time.



**How easy is it to clean?**

No one I know likes cleaning up. Tools that need special care have to justify their worth in my kitchen. Chrome plated small appliances look nice in the magazines, but one careless move and the splatters scream for polishing. Thank goodness chrome in the kitchen is fast going out of style.

# Major Appliances

## ◆ Stove:

This is the most important appliance in the kitchen, as well as, a very expensive item to replace. Therefore, most of us make do with what we have. I will list a few things to look for if you're planning to replace your stove. Features as well as prices vary so I will stick to general considerations. The comments below largely refer to electric stoves, because most homes are equipped with them. Some of the general considerations can be applied to gas as well.

◆ **Burners:** If you intend to use your old pots and pans complete with dents and bulges, stay with the old fashioned coil element. Solid elements and solid tops will create hot spots when used with less than perfect pots. Check for ease of cleaning. A top that lifts to wipe up spills is a definite advantage. Two large and two small cooking surfaces are more practical than one large and three small. A large fast boiling element is definitely useful, especially for pasta.

Familiarize yourself with your settings. The heat of the settings is usually thermostatically controlled except on minimum and on high. If you pay attention you will start remembering the settings that gave satisfactory results the last time you had that pot and made that dish in it. If you can remember and use that knowledge you save yourself a lot of pot-watching-time and fiddling with the knobs. This is particularly useful with slow-to-respond electric ranges.

◆ **Oven:** This is what usually gives the most grief. You must realize that oven walls and doors are insulated to give even temperatures throughout the interior. If the insulation is poor or your oven is located on a cold outside wall, you'll have different temperatures in different parts of the oven resulting in lopsided cakes or half of a sheet of cookies done before the other half. Short of getting a new oven or relocating the old one, you can do nothing, but be vigilant and turn the cookie sheet or pan around half way through the baking.

Make sure that the oven is never so overloaded as to impair the heat circulation. This can also cause uneven baking. Although the oven comes with two racks it's best to bake on only one as a rule because the circulation is better and the heat more even. On this score convection ovens do better because the action of the fan distributes the heat more evenly.

◆ **Gas Stoves:** There is a new trend that favors gas stoves, particularly professional type of stoves. Gas stoves are initially more expensive, but last much longer than electric stoves, because they have fewer complex



parts. The lag time required to heat the electric coil is virtually non-existent with gas and, therefore, the response to increasing or decreasing the heat is instantaneous. This is a great advantage for quickly bringing something to a boil or decreasing the heat under a pan. There is no need to remember settings, because you can see your response in the pot. Since there is no flat element to worry about, hot spots created by uneven or warped cookware is less likely to cause a problem. But, because the flame is adjusted to get the proper temperature, adjusting the flame to low is sometimes tricky and the danger of such low flame being blown out is ever present. Most people resort to a gadget that diffuses a medium gas flame to get a true simmer temperature, without risking the flame being blown out. Broiling in a gas oven necessitates constant vigilance, because a fire can start easily. This is done by frequently opening the often inconvenient floor-level compartment.



#### ◆ Refrigerator:

The two door self-defrost type is the most useful, although the self-defrost cycle tends to dry foods and care must be taken to wrap foods well. It's good to keep a shallow dish of baking soda in the fridge as well as in the freezer to eliminate odors.

#### ◆ Freezer:

Use a hair dryer to loosen the ice and a clean dust pan for scooping it out of your chest freezer. This is the quickest method I have found so far. For those with manual-defrost upper freezer, I suggest turning the fridge off, placing a large pot of hot water into the freezer compartment, putting all your clean rags on the bottom shelf and then go shopping. This will stop you from giving into the temptation of scrapping and poking and possibly damaging the freezer.

#### ◆ Dishwasher:

This is the biggest work saver for the modern cook. This appliance needn't have millions of options, just do the job well. To maintain it in good working order clean the food screen often and examine the holes on the spinning arms regularly and lift out any stuck food particles. You may occasionally run a cycle with an up-facing bowl containing

1 cup of white vinegar. This will remove scaling. Do not use the heat dry feature unless you have a flu bug going around the house or cleaning equipment in preparation for canning or making baby food. In those instances the extra heat will help kill germs and it disinfects better, but ordinarily, the heat cycle is unnecessary and a waste of electricity.

◆ **Microwave:**

The type to buy depends on how much you'll use the features. To clean, boil a cup of water in it for 3 minutes and wipe it out with a damp cloth. Repeat if necessary. Don't forget to wipe the seal too!



# Tools

I was going to go with the conventional method and make a list of the equipment needed for a kitchen. However, looking at the many lists of that sort, I've come to the conclusion that they were put together by kitchen shops to try to sell more stuff. Since that goes against my philosophy of keeping things simple and buying only what you'll use, I scrapped that idea. Instead I'll offer an assortment of thoughts on kitchen equipment that I hope you'll find useful.

Specialized utensils (like melon baller, apple corer, bean slicer, zester) are necessary only if you do a lot of that particular preparation, otherwise it just clutters storage space, making for extra work. Enormous amounts of money can sit in seldom-used gismos. Choose high quality multipurpose utensils.



## To organize kitchen shelves for efficiency:

❁ If possible lower the top shelves. This will give you more reachable space.

❁ Place like items together. This will cut down on searching time.



## Clean cupboards often

❁ discard or store gismos not in use.

❁ discard or use up ingredients forgotten in the back.

❁ wipe shelves when nearly empty, before a big shopping trip or when most of your dishes are in the dishwasher.

❁ Pots and pans: It's better to have a few good pots than to have a complete matching set of poorly constructed ones.

*I got a beautiful set as a wedding present and I was glad to chuck most of the hand me downs of my single days to cook in these wonderful pots, but every time I used them I had a major clean up on my hands, removing the traces of burnt on food with steel wool pads from my new pristine pots. I thought I was doing something wrong, until my mother-in-law decided to make her famous mushroom soup one day and wondered what she did to burn the one dish that she had been making the same way for eons.*

*Comparing notes we've come to the conclusion that the beautiful new pots*

*had hot spots. I relegated them to boiling and hauled out my old mismatched hand-me-downs until I could afford to buy new ones. Some of those hand-me-downs are still in use in my kitchen, because they are indispensable for certain preparations, and I am so familiar with their behavior that I can rely on them to do the job with little supervision.*



**Roaster:** Medium or large size enamel is the most practical for turkey or goose. For smaller roasts a large (3-4 quart) oven proof glass casserole dish will do double duty.



**Casserole dishes:** You can never have too many oven- and microwave-proof glass or ceramic covered dishes. They can be used for casseroles, serving dishes, storing dishes and for reheating leftovers.



**Lasagna Pan:** A large lasagna pan is a must in every household. It can double as an open roaster or for baking squares.



**Tea Kettle** is handy for boiling quantities of water, but for 2 cups or less using the microwave is more economical.



**Food Processor:** This appliance has become almost indispensable in the modern kitchen and for good reason. It can painlessly prepare bread crumbs, pureed soups, mince any number of things from meat to onions, mix dough, slice cucumbers, as well as grate carrots, cheese and nuts.

Just one tip here: choose one with bowls that are dishwasher safe. The plastic used for food processors is very hard to clean by hand and even harder to deodorize so that aromas are not carried from one preparation to the other.



**Knives:** Buy the best you can afford. You don't have to have a big set. You'll need at least one paring knife, one 8-10 inch blade for chopping and a bread knife. Keep them sharp with a sharpening steel or specially designed sharpener.



**Wooden utensils:** ( spoons, spatulas, boards and salad bowls) have to be dedicated to one type of use, because they absorb flavors and odors. They should be hand-washed in warm soapy water, never soaked or put into the dishwasher.

Wooden spoons and spatulas are a must for sautéing, making roux, concocting sauces and are safe for non-stick pans. Mark the wooden spoons and spatulas dedicated to be used for sweets and baking. You don't want to transfer garlic and onion flavor from regular cooking to your

muffins.



**Mixing Bowls:** Start with a set of 4 stainless steel mixing bowls and keep adding to that collection when you can. - You can never have too many bowls!- Glass salad bowls, plastic storage containers, soup bowls, roasting pans or a plastic bag can be pressed into service if you run short of mixing bowls. I recommend stainless steel as a starter set, because it conducts heat so well.

In a stainless steel bowl you can quickly chill your stock for skimming, you can use it as a mold for a paté, fit it on the top of a saucepan for a makeshift double boiler or fill a large one with ice and place a small one in the middle, lined with lettuce, to hold your shrimp at the buffet table.



**Measuring cups:** Here again, the more the better. The collection should include a 4 cup glass one for heating milk, soups, cooking custard and alike in the microwave. When buying plastic ones, look for raised markings and good transparency.



**Coffee filters and funnel:** Set aside a coffee filter funnel for all non-coffee uses. I use this method for filtering home made flavored vinegars, used deep frying oil and sometimes stocks.

Great low fat cheese can be made in a coffee filter from yogurt or the finest cream cheese from sour cream.



**Egg separator:** Since I am a klutz who doesn't like to take chances, I use an egg separator whenever I can. It's an inexpensive small gadget that has saved me from untold frustrations.



**Rolling pin:** A heavy, seasoned maple pin is the best. To clean it, just rub it with a dry paper towel and a drop or two of cooking oil and it is ready to use the next time. Cheaper rolling pins often stick or don't roll smoothly and are frustrating to use. Don't buy one until you can afford a good one! Marble is excellent, but test it to make sure it rolls freely. If you seldom need a rolling pin or if you find yourself without one, like I did at the cottage, use a wine bottle or the cardboard tube from paper towels. It works just fine as long as you don't press too hard.



**Rolling surfaces:** Just about anything that has a smooth surface and can be kept clean will do: arborite, marble, wood or waxed paper. I love the piece of arborite that was cut out of my new counter to fit the sink. It is large, smooth and stashes well next to the fridge.



**Whisk:** This is a good tool for blending mixtures that need to be smooth and whipped. It's even easier to use if the bowl is oversized. In a pinch with lots of muscle power and patience you can even beat egg whites or whip cream with this.



**Meat thermometer:** While oven charts give you a good approximate measure of time required to roast something, only a meat thermometer will give an accurate reading of doneness, which is particularly important with pork and poultry. When nearing the end of cooking time, insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the meat in the center of the roast, chop or hamburger patty, insert it half way to the bottom and wait until the needle stops climbing to take a reading.



**Colander:** A colander is a strainer with large holes that stands on legs. You need a large one to drain pasta and "drip-dry" meats and vegetables. I use my cheap plastic one constantly for all sorts of things.

I even press well-cooked Nanking cherry flesh through its holes with a wooden spoon leaving the pits behind. Some people use it to make tiny dumplings (spaetzle), but that is better accomplished with a gismo designed specifically for the job.



**Mesh strainers:** You'll need two of these. A small one for tea and sprinkling icing sugar and a large one for sifting flour, draining canned food, straining stock, soups and sauces. I prefer the inexpensive plastic ones that can be washed in the dishwasher.



**Flour sifter:** A strainer and a wooden spoon will do unless you do a lot of baking. Flour can also be fluffed with a spoon instead of sifting before measuring.



**Mallet:** The knobby end is for tenderizing. I prefer to use the smooth side for flattening meat. Meat tenderized with the knobby side will retain more fat when frying and will lose its juices easily.



**Egg beater:** A hand held electric one is handier than one on a stand unless you bake a lot. Takes up less space too.



**Salad spinner:** This gadget is not a necessity, but is very useful for drying lettuce, spinach and other leafy vegetables. The basket can also double as an extra colander when the need arises.



**Nutcracker:** Even if you never shell nuts a nut cracker is handy for opening

sticky bottles and cracking crab shells.



**Rubber spatulas:** These are handy for scraping out bowls without waste. Make sure you buy the soft rubber kind. It gets into the nooks and crannies better than the hard plastic ones. Rubber, however, doesn't last long and has to be replaced as soon as the edges show fraying.



**Oil dispensers:** There are several different kinds on the market, all of them designed to stop your heavy-handed use of oil. There is one that is a jar with a brush to just barely brush your pan with oil. Mine is a pump, like a hand lotion bottle and works well. It dispenses 1/4 tablespoon per press and allows me to measure without searching for a spoon.



**Funnels:** Have at least two, a wide tube canning one for filling jars and a regular narrow one for refilling spice jars, oil dispensers, flavored vinegar bottle and alike.



**Canisters:** These are rapidly going out of style. They have been replaced by attractive bottles that can be washed in the dishwasher, the contents are in plain view and one can use the size that fits the family's eating habits instead of the designer's whim. You can buy the jars or use empty pickle jars, mustard containers, jam jars. If you need really large ones ask a friendly restaurant to save some gallon ones for you. They look very attractive.



**Timer:** This is a very important item! If you can, buy one that attaches to your clothing or hangs from your neck. That way if you need to answer the door or are off doing the laundry you'll hear it.



**Pastry brushes:** These should not be synthetic. Have one for pastry and one for brushing on savory sauces. They do not clean perfectly and you don't want to transfer the flavor of barbecue sauce to pastry.



**Ice scraper:** You heard me right! We in the frozen north usually use them to scrape the ice from our car windows and a number of companies give them away as advertising. Save a new one for your kitchen. It's the cheapest utensil you ever had to smooth the sauce over lasagna or pizza, level cake batters and to ice cakes. The tooth edge can be used to make decorative grooves in the frosting, too.



**Molds:** Just about anything will do for a mold. Any mixing bowl, cake pan, loaf pan even a straight sided coffee-tin can serve as a mold. Unless you really want fancy molds to decorate your kitchen, give these the miss.



**Marking Pen and Tape:** You need to have handy a permanent marker and some masking tape for labeling freezer foods with name, date and number of servings. The pen can do double-duty labeling glass jars and plastic bags.



**Other useful tools:**

- soup ladle
- baster with rubber bulb
- slotted spoon
- simple potato peeler
- pepper grinder
- splatter screen
- garlic press
- cookie sheets
- metal and bamboo skewers
- kitchen shears
- hand-held blender
- wire whisk



## Easing the Burden

*Making things from scratch need not be the onerous task that it sounds. Work smarter, not harder! There is no rule to say you cannot make ahead.*

*Here is where your freezer can become your best friend!*



### *This is what's in my freezer:*

✦ Chopped vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, mushrooms, celery, peas, broccoli stems, green peppers in zip lock bags. When the price is right or I am in the mood I buy a vegetable, clean it, chop it to the desired size and store it for future use. One whack with a mallet and the vegetables separate so that you can take as much or little as you need and you will have all the makings of a good home made soup or sauce.

✦ Grated cheeses. I prefer Romano to Parmesan for a variety of recipes, and like to grate it coarse. I want to know that it's real and not sweepings of this and that gathered, grated and sold as Romano or Parmesan. This doesn't mean that I am willing to haul out (and wash!) the grater every time I need a little cheese. I generally buy about a 1/2 pound, when the price is right, use my food processor to grate it, put it in glass jars and have it ready to use in the freezer. Dry cheeses like Parmesan and Romano don't clump and can be used without thawing. Mozzarella and Cheddar clump, therefore you will want to package them in serving size portions and thaw them before use.

✦ Fresh chopped seasonings: chives, parsley, dill, lemon grass, ginger root, jalopeno peppers, celery leaves and any other herbs grown or bought in quantity. These are washed and drip-dried on a paper towel before chopping. You can store them in a glass jar and "carve" a suitable chunk with a paring knife as needed. Basil is the exception: it will turn a muddy brown. Basil can be frozen in the wells of ice cube trays covered with water in which a vitamin C tablet has been dissolved to keep it green.

✦ Roasted peppers and roasted garlic are handy to round out a salad or some other dish.

✦ Home made croutons add that extra home-made look to the most mundane canned soup. I make this when suitable bread is sitting stale in

my basket. Cube it, fry it or oven toast it and season it if you wish.

✦ Many of my Hungarian recipes call for browned bread crumbs so I keep a generous supply in my freezer. To freshen them up I reheat them on a flat plate by microwaving them for 1 minute.

✦ Left over pasta and rice. I quit worrying about how much to cook when I realized that both of these will revive in minutes in the microwave to their original goodness and are handy to have when pressed for time. Now I cook too much on purpose to ease my work load.

✦ Grated nuts go stale quickly in the cupboard, but are oh so nice to grab when needed in baking or as dress up garnish for an otherwise mundane dessert or vegetable dish.

✦ Pasta Sauce: slowly simmered with spices and tomatoes, some vegetarian and some with meat. The former, used as is, it makes a very good topping for pizza or a filling for calzone. Just add cheese and adjust the seasoning if necessary. The later, mixed with a little chili powder and a can of red kidney beans, garnished with grated cheddar, becomes an excellent [Chili Con Carne](#). Either variety can be reheated and diluted with tomato sauce, some basil and a bay leaf for a tasty topping for spaghetti, fusilini or the sauce layer for lasagna.

✦ Hungarian gulash: this is an onion, beef, paprika stew, staple of the Hungarian diet. Gulash freezes well and enables me to serve a good home-made meal on a moment's notice. It is good enough dressed up with tiny dumplings and a good salad for unexpected company. Diluted, seasoning adjusted, re-cooked with cubed potatoes, caraway seeds and hand-made pasta, it becomes a wonderful hearty soup to serve family or friends on a winter night. Any good stew has the same versatility. It can be a life saver in a pinch or can be made into a hearty soup with little effort.

✦ Leftovers of all sorts: Roast, boiled, fried or stewed meat, cooked vegetables, can serve as a base for creative pates, meat pies, sauces and soups. Your imagination is the limit.

✦ A variety of stock boiled up from ham bones, chicken bones, beef bones and leftover roast turkey.

✦ Home made jams made when the fruit prices coincided with my mood and frozen in assorted odd jars.

✦ Frozen berries, fruits and tomatoes, chopped or stored whole, when the price was right during the growing season.

- ✦ Stewed turkey and chicken made when ingredients were on sale.
- ✦ Stuffed and stewed peppers in quantity made when my favorite banana peppers were plentiful.
- ✦ Small pieces of meat such as chops, chicken parts, fish, steaks, meat balls and patties can be frozen individually on a cookie sheet, popped off with a slight twist of the sheet and placed in heavy plastic bags. Any number of these can be taken out, as required, and often can be cooked without defrosting. Herbs and spices (no salt!) may be sprinkled on before freezing, making the portions semi-prepared for a quick meal or unexpected company.
- ✦ Similarly, I make fully seasoned oven-ready meat loaves in a great batch and freeze them ready to cook when the fancy takes me.
- ✦ Finely sliced raw steak, chicken or turkey frozen in a single layer on cookie sheets, is ready to go into a stir-fry.
- ✦ Frozen fish fillets that I bought in bulk and can be removed one at a time from the bag, as well as salmon steaks that I asked the meat department to cut from frozen whole fish when it was on sale.
- ✦ Boiled corn mush: Base for a number of recipes from corn bread to polenta takes a lot of time and I usually make a mess of the stove. Doing a big pot occasionally and freezing it in portions saves time and clean up. Recently I moved away from this item when I developed a mess-free quick recipe for making corn meal mush.
- ✦ Several home-made soups, like mushroom, pea and bean soup in servings for 2, portioned out when I made a great pot.
- ✦ Home-made Won Tons: the recipe is large and time-consuming. I freeze these cooked, ready to be reheated in a good soup at a moment's notice.
- ✦ Small containers of left overs of favorite foods for when one of us has to eat alone and doesn't want to bother cooking.

***Remember, your needs are probably different from mine, so stock your freezer with what YOU use often and if you're not sure how it will work, experiment!***



### ***Keeping dry and canned ingredients stocked...***

is always a bit of a problem, especially in large families. Even my little family had a problem, until we made it a rule never to put back empty containers nor throw them away until they were put on the shopping list. This, of course, meant leaving things on the counter to create a clutter, but it became a workable system, because I would rather clean up the clutter than to find myself out of a key ingredient in the middle of food preparation.

*I also keep a small stock of "sale-bought-in-quantity", hard to find and "never-want-to-be-without-it" ingredients in my basement. Canned chicken, ham, fish and seafood are handy in a pinch to add to salads, fill croissants, make patties or balls. Canned vegetables can be added to salads, casseroles or made into a quick soup.*

# **Microwave Cooking**

With the advent of microwave ovens, recipes for anything and everything adapted to the microwave appeared all over. I remember being worn out trying to follow the fast pace and demands of these complex recipes. They were time saving, but not work saving. I have yet to see a recipe for cooking meat or baking that produces a result that is quite as good as conventional cooking or baking. The no-browning problem has not been solved by gadgets and gizmos. Besides, I need the "feet-up" time while something simmers or bakes. Others must have felt the same because the novelty soon wore off and in many homes "the nuker" has been relegated to heating leftovers.

This is a shame because in my opinion using the microwave is superior to conventional methods in preparing: vegetables, rice, fish, some sauces, custards, puddings and crisp bacon. For these items it is a real time and dish-washing saver.

Don't fall for new utensils "designed for the microwave." All you need is your oven-proof glass or ceramic dishes, some plates without metal trim, a large measuring cup, paper towels and some microwave-safe plastic wrap.



## ***How do microwaves work?***

Microwaves cook by agitating the food molecules and the consequent movement and rubbing of molecule against molecule generates heat. This motion starts at the centre of the food and works outward. Consequently the food, if very dense, can be cool on the outside and be hot in the centre. This necessitates frequent stirring of stews, soups, sauces and other viscous reparations. The microwaves also bounce off the surface of the food. The fan attempts to keep the microwaves moving evenly, but these stray waves may cook one part of the food while missing another.

For best results, the food should be evenly placed in a circle on the cooking dish with the most tender part facing the center and the dish rotated several times during the cooking period. Microwave times are also affected by the depth of food. If you want to cook it fast, use a large flat plate.

Timing is essential in microwave cooking. If you are unsure how long a preparation will take, set the timer for a short period, keep checking the food and cook it a little longer if necessary.

Microwaves do not penetrate metal, therefore they bounce off the metal

causing sparks and waves that are sent back to the source, which can cause damage to the tube. Although most people know this, gold rims and twister ties are easily forgotten. If you see or hear any sparking, turn the oven off immediately and examine the cause.



***Standing time:***

Foods continue to cook after they are removed from the microwave. Be sure to take this into consideration. You can get your mouth burnt, if this standing time is not observed. Let microwaved food "rest" for 1-2 minutes before serving. For the same reason, undercook your food a little.

Power levels usually are accomplished by having the microwave generating tube off or on.

High means the tube is continuously on, that is 100% of the time.

Medium means the tube is on 50% of the time.

Defrost means the tube is on 30% of the time.



***Preparations for which the microwave is the method of choice:***

➤ It is the most economical method for heating 1-2 cups of water or other liquid.

➤ Vegetables really lend themselves to microwaving. The rule of thumb is about 6-10 minutes. Set it to cook for 6 minutes, test, do it for another 1-2 minutes and test again. Be careful not to overcook.

Cook vegetables in a covered casserole dish with only as much water as adheres from washing. The quality will be similar to steaming.

Potatoes in the skin can be done as above, but peeled and cubed potatoes have to be covered with water.

➤ Nuts can be refreshed or toasted in the microwave. Spread the nuts on a flat plate and microwave on high for 1-5 minutes, stirring once or twice between.

➤ Toast coconut for 2-3 minutes on high.

➤ **Melt chocolate in the microwave for easy clean up and less waste. Chop the chocolate, place it in the smallest container that will hold it and microwave it for 2-3 minutes on medium.**

➤ **Slightly stale potato chips, pretzels, crackers can be refreshed by microwaving for 30 seconds on high.**

➤ **Bacon is crisper microwaved than by any other method. Place slices between layers of paper towels and microwave on high 1 minute/ slice. Let it cool a little and pat off the excess fat with a fresh towel.**

➤ **Popcorn can be done in a covered casserole with 1 tablespoon of water. Do not use any fat and keep watching. Turn off when the popping sound becomes less frequent. Depending on the amount this should be 6-8 minutes. Popcorn is easy to burn. Care must be taken.**

➤ **To soften shortening, butter or cheese, microwave on defrost for 30 seconds.**

➤ **Warm buns and dinner rolls for 20-30 seconds on high. Sugary buns and donuts heat faster. Do them for only 10-15 seconds.**

➤ **Liquefy crystallized honey in the microwave in 1-2 minutes on high.**

➤ **Melt cheese slices on toast or pasta on high for 1-1.5 minutes.**

➤ **Dry herbs in the microwave. Spread out chopped herbs or grated lemon rind on a flat plate, cover it loosely with a paper towel and microwave for 1-4 minutes on medium.**

➤ **To melt marshmallows on top of a cake, arrange the marshmallows and microwave on high for 1-2 minutes.**

➤ **Soften brown sugar by microwaving it on high for one minute. Then add a piece of bread to your jar to keep it soft.**

**Do:**

➤ **Use an oversized dish when cooking rice, cereals, puddings, sauces or**

heating milk. These items have a tendency to boil over and need lots of head room.

➤ Defrost meat in the microwave. The general rule is 6 minutes/pound on the defrost setting. When doing large chunks of meat microwave it for 6 minutes, let it rest for five, turn it and do it for another 6 minutes. Repeat if necessary. This method will somewhat prevent the ugly and tough microwave burns around the edges of the meat.

➤ Pierce egg yolks with a toothpick in 2-3 places, before microwaving. You can make a quick poached egg in a salad bowl in the microwave. You can make a reasonable facsimile of a coddled egg this way too.

➤ Always vent plastic wrap, otherwise pressure of steam develops behind a tight wrap.

➤ Cover all dishes with plastic wrap or a paper towel to reduce the need for clean up.

## **Cleaning the microwave oven.**

There is a very good reason to keep the inside of the microwave clean. Stuck-on bits of food absorb the waves just as the food being cooked does, therefore reducing the efficiency of the oven.

➤ Wipe up all spills as soon as possible.

➤ Microwave a cup of water and wipe out the inside of the oven immediately with a clean damp cloth. Repeat if necessary.

➤ Wash the glass tray in lukewarm soapy water. Rinse well and wipe dry before replacing it.












# Ingredients




## Eggs


Eggs are nature's most perfect food. An egg is a balanced source of all the important vitamins and minerals, plus 6 grams of high quality protein. This statement makes sense, if you think about it. Nature created the egg to nourish the young bird and ensure its survival. Such a project requires the most perfect ingredients possible.

Egg facts:

-  The older the egg the lighter it is. To test freshness, dissolve 1 tablespoon of salt in 2/3 cup of water. If the egg sinks, it's fresh. If it floats in the middle of the cup it's still usable, but no longer very fresh and if it floats on top it's old and might even be rotten.
-  Refrigerate eggs in the carton. The carton keeps odours from penetrating the egg shell.
-  Shell color doesn't reflect nutritional value, taste or freshness. It is characteristic of the type of chicken that laid it.
-  Raw egg whites should be clear and not cloudy.
-  Whites freeze well, yolks don't.
-  Recipes usually presume that you are using large eggs.
-  One large egg is about 3 tablespoons and contains 75 calories.
-  Eggs contain less cholesterol than previously thought, but they are still quite high at 180-230 mg per egg, depending on the size.
-  Eggs cause silver, copper and aluminium to discolor due to their high sulphur content.



Rinse egg and egg based residues from dishes under cold water, because hot water will cook them on.



Do not use cracked eggs. If you accidentally bought them cracked, toss them. Eggs are the perfect medium for bacteria and they multiply fast in a cracked egg. If you cracked it accidentally, use it up immediately.

#### **The Cholesterol Factor:**

Of late, eggs have had a bad rap because of their purported high fat and cholesterol content, but when you think of it, it's better to reduce other sources of cholesterol (like bacon, butter and "trimmable" fat on meat) than to try to omit eggs from cooking and baking. Although I will not advocate returning to the high egg consumption of yesteryear (bacon and eggs daily), I feel that the paranoia of the 1970's must be tempered.

A lot of research is being done to lower the cholesterol and increase the beneficial fats in eggs using different feeds. I predict this will soon result in eggs that we can eat and use guilt free.



Eggs are very important in the chemistry of cooking and used as such, add little in way of cholesterol to the diet. For example dumplings made with 1 egg for 4 servings of soup add only 45 milligrams cholesterol per serving or equal to 1½ tablespoons of butter. Is it not better to skim all the fat from the soup and add the dumplings than to omit the dumplings for fear of the small amount of cholesterol?




In the chemistry of cooking, eggs act as:



Emulsifier helping to suspend oils in water-based liquids, like in mayonnaise and Hollandaise sauce.



Thickener of sauces and puddings.




Binder of ingredients like in meatballs, stuffings, croquettes, pastry, dumplings and pastas.



Leavening agent in some cakes and cookies.


 Texture controller in pastries, cakes, cookies and a variety of other preparations.


#### **Working with egg whites:**


 Make sure both the bowl and the whisk or beater are scrupulously clean. Whites will not beat up properly if there is an oily film on the utensils.


 Even though there are various pieces of advice for salvaging a white that has a drop of yolk in it, I prefer not to try them. Save the broken yolk and white for something else.

 Always separate eggs when they are cold.

 When beating egg whites have the whites at room temperature. Choose a large, narrow bowl. Use a metal bowl, copper is preferred, but stainless steel will do very well. It is harder to beat eggs in glass or porcelain containers, plastic has a slippery surface and the whites will not beat up properly. Aluminum will cause the whites to take on a grayish color.

 Some recipes may call for soft peaks, which means that the peak created when the beater is removed gently flops over. Stiff peaks will stand up and stay standing after the beater is removed.

 The addition of a small amount of cream of tartar stabilizes egg whites so that the structure built by beating will not break down and release the incorporated air. Use cream of tartar very sparingly, because it does impart a flavor that might be unpleasant to some.

 When breaking a raw egg, rap sharply with a knife at the mid point or hit it against the edge of the bowl or the counter. Stick thumbs into the crack and ease it open, over a small empty bowl or cup, tilting to contain the egg in one half until you have a half in each hand. Now transfer the yolk gently to the empty half, letting the white drip down into the bowl. Repeat passing it back and forth until all the white is in the bowl. Since this is a tricky procedure, pour the separated white out into your mixing bowl before breaking the next egg into the empty cup. If you should have some yolk break accidentally, you only lose one white not a bowlful. If you're

inexperienced, timid or, like me, don't want to take chances, buy an inexpensive gismo for separating the whites.


## **Cooking Eggs**


There are many different methods for cooking eggs and all of them depend on careful timing for best results, because eggs are delicate and solidify quickly.


*An old joke comes to mind: "The young bride was in tears when her husband came home. In response, she wailed: The eggs the farmer sold me must have been old because I boiled them for hours and they would not soften."*


The methods listed below are the ones I use, but it doesn't make other methods wrong. There are several ways to achieve the desired results when cooking eggs.

 **Soft Boiled Eggs:** Bring eggs to boil in cold water, turn off the heat, cover and let stand 1-3 minutes.

 **Coddled Eggs:** These are done the same way as soft boiled, but for only one minute to produce the very runny consistency required by some recipes such as some Caesar salad dressings.

 **Hard-Cooked or Hard-Boiled Eggs:** Add eggs to cold water, bring the water to a roaring boil, turn off the heat, cover and leave it on the burner for another 25 minutes. To peel, run cold water into the pan, crack the wide end of each egg and leave the eggs in the ice cold water for a few minutes before peeling off the shell.

 **Poached Eggs:** Heat at least 2" of water to a gentle simmer. Add 1 tablespoon of vinegar. Break an egg into a serving spoon. Lower the egg with the spoon slowly into the water. Let it simmer for 3 minutes for soft, 5 minutes for firm.

 **Fried Eggs:** Heat pan and butter or cooking fat on medium high before adding the eggs. Turn the heat down and cook until the desired firmness is reached. For "over easy", turn the eggs when nearly done or lightly cover the pan during cooking.

 **Scrambled eggs:** Beat eggs slowly for extra fluffiness. A bit of milk can be added to the egg mixture to improve the flavor and texture.

Start with hot butter or cooking fat to keep the eggs from sticking to the pan, but reduce the heat immediately. Gently fold cooked parts from the bottom to the top until the desired texture is reached. Hold the salt until the eggs are done!



**Shirred or Baked eggs:** These are done in lightly greased individual ramekins, muffin tins or little casserole dishes. The dish may be lined with buttered toast, cooked meat, chopped spinach or shellfish and topped with the raw egg(s). The portions are baked in a preheated oven at 350°F for 8-10 minutes and served immediately.

I love this recipe for breakfast preparation for a large crowd, when cooking the eggs in a pan is not practical. With a little creative garnish this preparation can be very glamorous, yet stress free.



**Omelette:** Break eggs into a bowl. Beat a little cream, water, milk or yogurt into the eggs. Start by sauteing the raw ingredients, such as onions, mushrooms or peppers, on medium high heat, add the cooked ones, such as ham or meat then the egg mixture, lower the heat to allow the eggs to cook through without burning. Serve, folded in half when the top is still a bit moist and the bottom is set.



**Frittata:** This Italian omelette can contain any or all of the following: ham, mushroom, shallots, potatoes, cheeses, vegetables and all sorts of herbs.




Just a few examples of the versatility of eggs are: egg salad, egg drop soup, dumplings, pastas, soufflés, pasta with eggs, ham and pasta casserole, kasha, deviled eggs and quiche.


# Fats and Oils

For years North Americans have had an aversion to even the word "fat". Yet nutritionists tell us that the average North American consumes several tablespoons of fat a day. It is obvious that, in spite of the daily bombardment with diet information by pseudo-experts, the truth is we do not understand fats. Although I don't pretend to be an expert on nutrition, I will try to clarify some of the terminology used in describing fats and related substances.

## **Some truths about fats:**

 All excess food is stored for future use in the body as fat. Cutting out fats will not make you slim if your intake of food exceeds the calories burned. Excess carbohydrates, sugars and proteins are all stored as fat.

 Fats add flavor, aroma and texture to food.

 Fats give a feeling of fullness, because they are digested more slowly than carbohydrates and proteins.

 Dietary fats have a role in metabolism. They supply the body with essential fatty acids and transport the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) through the body.

 A teaspoon of fat contains about twice the calories that a similar portion of protein or carbohydrate does.

 Fats can be visible as in marbling, bacon, oils, margarine and floating on top of a soup or invisible as in cold cuts, milk, baked goods, thickened soups, mayonnaise and the like.

 Vegetable oils are fats. Although they are not as saturated nor contain cholesterol as animal fats do, they are still fats.

All authorities agree that too much fat is bad for you, but some fats are less detrimental than others. The less saturated the fat the less harmful it is. The North American diet is very high in fat, especially in saturated animal fat. Part of this is due to our affluence, of being able to afford a lot more meat than people in other countries.



Lack of skill in food preparation methods and our own ignorance, which allows restaurants and food processors to pull the wool over our eyes, are responsible for a major portion of our dietary fat intake.

Restaurants prepare high fat foods for several reasons:



fat tastes good and the customer is happy.



cooking with excess fat is easier, takes less personnel time in watching that it doesn't burn and cooks evenly.



fat is filling and the fats they use are cheap.

The solution is to ask questions, but don't expect too many answers, because the server seldom knows and often the cook is quite ignorant of the ingredients. They frequently use packaged pre-mixes in parts of the preparation and have no idea what components those may contain. This is a grim, but realistic, picture that is improving due to patron demand and pressure.

As for the food processors, your only defense is to read the fine print on labels with a critical eye.

Don't fall for the big splashy *Cholesterol Free!* label at the top. Corn oil never did contain any cholesterol, but it is 100% fat.

*I just noticed today in the supermarket that since hydrogenated fats have become the target of the health-conscious all the margarines, I looked at, state that they are not hydrogenated and are 100% vegetable oils. Then how come they are not liquid at room temperature? Close inspection with a magnifying glass will tell you the secret is palm and coconut oil. The only saturated vegetable oils!*

There is not room enough to list all the other hidden facts of processed and semi-processed foods. Some of the other names for fats on food labels are shortening, hydrogenated oils, glycerol, esters and glycerides. The only advice I can give is:

**Read the Labels!**



**Read the Labels!**



**Read the Labels!**

*While a healthy person should not fall for the "get rid of all fats and cholesterol will kill you" hysteria, everyone can benefit from a well balanced food regime and can make a conscious decision to eat better.*

# ***What are fats?***

Fats are termed to be triglycerides.

What does that mean?

In plain language: when a glycerol molecule holds together three fatty acids the substance is called fat.

If the fatty acids have no double bonds they are termed saturated, if they have only one unsaturated double bond they are mono-unsaturated and if they have more than one they are called polyunsaturated.



**Saturated Fats** are usually solid at room temperature. Usually they are of animal origin such as meats and dairy products, with the exception of palm and coconut oils which are saturated, but are a vegetable product.



**Polyunsaturated Fats** are usually liquid at room temperature. The sources of these fats are nuts, vegetables and fish. The common cooking oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean, cottonseed and sesame oils belong to this category.



**Mono-unsaturated Fats** are usually liquid at room temperature, but have only one unsaturated bond per fatty acid. Olives, canola, peanuts and avocados are the main source of these oils. These usually solidify in the refrigerator.



**Hydrogenated Fat** is unsaturated fat that has been processed by chemically adding hydrogen to the double bonds in the fatty acid to saturate them and cause the fat to be solid at room temperature (for example margarine, and vegetable shortening).



**Omega-3** is a polyunsaturated fat found in fish and has the apparent ability to lower elevated levels of triglycerides in the blood stream. Consequently, it is thought to reduce blood cholesterol.



**Cholesterol** is a vital substance for life, an essential building block of the cell walls, because it helps insulate nerve fibers and is the basic component of many hormones. In humans most of the cholesterol circulating in the blood stream is manufactured by the liver. Only a small portion originates from dietary intake of cholesterol, from foods of animal origin, eggs, meat and dairy products.

Excess cholesterol can settle in the blood vessels causing them to clog



and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. It is unclear what causes elevated blood cholesterol, the overproduction by the liver, the transport mechanism, dietary intake or poor degradation by the liver of the used cholesterol. A low cholesterol diet may be prescribed for persons with high circulating blood cholesterol, to avoid adding to the already high levels.



Lipoproteins are compounds that have both fat and protein in their molecular structure. They carry cholesterol to and from the liver and tissues in the blood stream.

## Animal Fats



Lard is rendered from pork fat and is very high in cholesterol. It is quite inexpensive and is often used in restaurants for frying and other food preparations. Lard makes an excellent pie crust and is used in a variety of pastries. For the home cook, vegetable shortenings can be used very successfully to substitute for lard in any recipe.



Suet is beef fat that is usually sold ground in the meat section. It is the essential ingredient of English puddings. It is seldom used for other purposes.



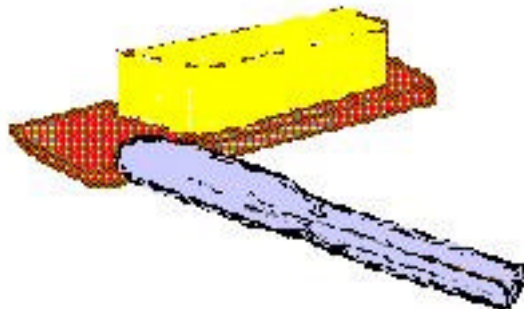
Poultry fat used to be very popular for cooking especially in Eastern Europe until recently, when it was replaced by low cholesterol margarine and vegetable oils. Either of these can successfully be used as a substitute for poultry fats in most recipes.



Olive oil: This is a mono-unsaturated vegetable oil. However, there is a belief that it has some properties which make it healthy, especially if you use the pricey cold-pressed variety. I am slightly skeptical about this. I use olive oil sparingly for salad dressings, because it tastes good and I can get away with using less oil than the recipe originally required.



Butter versus margarine: Butter is naturally high in saturated fat with a high cholesterol content, but it also contains important vitamins and minerals.





**Most margarines are as saturated as butter due to hydrogenation or the addition of saturated fats.**



**Most margarines contain no cholesterol, however, they have few if any vitamins or minerals.**



**Margarine behaves like butter in most recipes.**

The above statement applies to "normal" brick type margarine. There are soft, light, unsaturated and alike, on the market. While they make a very palatable spread, their behavior in cooking and baking, due to additives, may be unpredictably different. Read labels carefully to make informed choices.

To reduce the fat in your diet sensibly:



**reduce the quantity of cooking fat use to a minimum**



**increase the vegetable component of the meals**



**use lean meat and fish**



**make your own soups and skim off all visible fat**



**use legumes frequently as a source of lean protein**



**choose low fat dairy products as often as you can**



**make your own salad dressing or buy low fat ones**

Easiest place to reduce fat intake is in salad dressings:



**you can reduce the oil to about half without anyone noticing**




**add a pinch of sugar and the oil can be reduced to a few drops**





**make a marinade type dressing without any oil**

**A few facts to remember:**

 **If you are fat-conscious, the thing to watch for are the sausages, wieners and salamis. In these products large amounts of fat can be masked with fine grinding and the addition of cereals to the mixture.**

 **Yogurt is an excellent low fat substitute for sour cream.**

 **Things fried in oil will absorb less of the fat than those fried in shortening or lard. The higher the oil temperature, the less fat will be absorbed by the food.**

 **Large amounts of fats are hidden (kept in suspension, therefore invisible) in prepared foods, especially table-ready (packaged or canned) soups.**



**Removing fat after cooking:**

**The extra work is well worth it when you take the time to remove all visible fat from soups, stocks, stews and the like. After cooking is finished, the fat has done its job and can be eliminated without loss of flavor, texture or appearance. If possible refrigerate the liquid for several hours before skimming off the solid fat from the top with a slotted spoon. This is the easiest and most efficient method. If this is impossible, cool the liquid as much as you can in a sink full of cold water. Have ready, in the freezer, a tall narrow container. Pour the liquid into this and let it stand for 10 minutes. Pour through a fine tea strainer slowly. You may want to use a gravy separator cup designed for this purpose. You can also use a baster with a rubber bulb to patiently suck the fat off the top of the liquid. I have tried several other methods, but most of them are tedious and ineffective.**

# Milk and Milk Products

Milk contains a large number of nutrients and is a good source of high quality protein. Milk and its products are fundamental to keeping a vegetarian diet balanced. It supplies the essential amino acids that are lacking in vegetable proteins. Milk and milk products are our main source of calcium and vitamin D.



## **Fresh milk**

is usually pasteurized and homogenized before reaching the supermarket shelves.

- ❄ Pasteurization kills harmful bacteria and increases the shelf life of milk.
- ❄ Homogenization holds the milk fat evenly distributed throughout the liquid and keeps it from rising to the top.
- ❄ The percent on the milk bottle denotes the amount of butter or milk fat (MF) the particular type of milk contains. Whole milk is about 3.4% MF, while skim milk has nearly all the fat skimmed off.



## **Cream**

is the butter fat that rises to the top when unhomogenized milk is allowed to sit. There are different milk fat content cream products available on the

supermarket shelves and on close inspection their fat content is listed on the carton somewhere.

- ❄ Whipping cream is the highest at 32.7% MF.
- ❄ Cereal Cream or half-and-half is 10%.
- ❄ Sour Cream or fermented cream usually contains 18% milk fat.
- ❄ Ice Cream is a frozen, flavored and sweetened cream product.



## Butter

is the milk fat separated from un-homogenized cream and pressed into bars. Butter can be made from sweet cream or sour cream.

- ❄ cultured butter is made from soured cream
- ❄ sweet or creamery butter is made from sweet cream



## Buttermilk

is usually 1% MF. It is the liquid left when cream is fermented and the butter is removed. It contains the milk proteins, amino acids, vitamins and minerals. Buttermilk is mainly used in baking where its acidity activates the baking powder in the leavening process.



## Yogurt

is a fermented milk product that usually contains 0.5-3.4 % milk fat, depending on the type of milk used in the processing.

Yogurt can be used to substitute for sour cream in most recipes, thus lowering the fat content of the preparation.

Many yogurts contain gelatin, cornstarch or other additives to improve the "eating" texture, but may behave in an unpredictable way in cooking and baking. Look for the words "natural", "additive free" or "pure" when you choose your yogurt for cooking and baking.

❄️ Plain, it lends itself to cooking.

❄️ Flavored it's a favorite healthy snack food.

❄️ Yogurt cheeses or spreads are made from plain yogurt by letting the whey drip out from the yogurt placed on a filtering device, thus thickening and concentrating the protein constituents, resulting in a spreadable low fat cheese that can be used as a substitute for cream cheese in a variety of recipes.

❄️ Frozen Yogurt is flavored, heavily sweetened yogurt in a frozen form, usually as high in calories as ice cream. A real treat for those with lactase deficiency.



### Kefir ( also known as Koumiss or Kumiss)

is similar to yogurt in taste, but the microorganism responsible for the fermentation is a yeast.

As a result, the product has a slight alcohol content. It is of Middle Eastern origin and was traditionally made of camel's milk. Today's kefir is made of cow's milk.



### Sour milk

is milk allowed to sour at room temperature. Store bought pasteurized milk will not sour. Pasteurization kills the natural flora of microorganisms, therefore when pasturized milk goes bad it usually goes bitter, rather than sour and

### Clarified butter

is the milk fats that have been separated from the milk solids by heating the butter until the proteins coagulate. Used in making sauces, mainly in French cuisine. Ghee is a similar product used in Indian cooking.



## Cheese

Generally, cheese is made by separating the milk solids from the liquid or whey.

There are three usual ways of coagulating the milk so that the solids can be separated:

❄ by acidifying the milk

❄ adding rennet.

❄ by fermentation with microorganisms to ferment the milk.



Rennet is an enzyme naturally occurring in calf's stomach.

Often all three methods are used in tandem to produce the desired type of cheese.

Salt is added to nearly all cheeses. Different microorganisms, condition of fermentation, type of milk and aging methods produce the wide variety of cheeses that are available.



### Cottage type cheeses:

(These may be called different names such as curds in different locales.)

❄ Dry curd cottage cheese usually has about 0.3 % milk fat.

Originally, before supermarket times, cottage cheese was made at home. Excess milk was left to sour and then gently heated until the curds clumped. The vigor of stirring determined the size of the clumps. The resulting mush was then drained in cheesecloth.

❄ Creamed cottage cheese is dry curd cottage cheese, with cream and sometimes milk solids added for texture, usually contains 4% or more milk fat.

For cooking and baking, dry curd is easier to handle. It's not as runny.

**Fresh cheeses:** are made by acidifying or adding rennet an enzyme to fresh the milk.

**Aged Cheeses:** Are allowed to age under controlled conditions of temperature, humidity and air circulation for a period of time. The method depends on the variety.

*Fermented, aged, cheeses should be served at room temperature for best flavor. They may be left at room temperature for a period of time. The flavor will become stronger, but the cheese will not spoil.*

### ***Cheese is a very versatile food:***

- ❄ for sandwiches
- ❄ with fruit or fruit pies
- ❄ to make spreads and dips
- ❄ in breads and biscuits
- ❄ as an ingredient, incorporated into sauces and main dishes
- ❄ in salads and salad dressings
- ❄ as a topping or garnish

### ***Cheese Tips:***

- ❄ Care must be taken when cooking with cheese. Keep the temperature low and remove the pot from the heat as soon as the cheese melts, otherwise the cheese can become stringy and tough.
- ❄ To make cheese sauce, add chunks of cheese to hot liquid not the other way around. Add a thickener to stabilize the sauce. The liquid may be broth, consommé, wine, cream or a combination of all of the above.
- ❄ Coarsely grated cheese, such as Romano or Parmesan has a more interesting texture. If you grate your own cheese you can be sure of the ingredients. Dry grated cheese can be kept in the freezer in jars. It will not lump and can be used without thawing.
- ❄ Freeze soft cheeses (like Mozzarella) for easier shredding.





# **Fish and Seafood**

Fish and seafood have gained tremendous popularity in the North American diet in recent years. This phenomenon has increased the variety of fresh and frozen offerings at our supermarkets, as well as interest in the preparation of fish and seafood. There are too many varieties of fish and seafood to list here, consequently this chapter can only be an outline of fish and seafood cookery. If you want to be trendy and knowledgeable, follow my true and tried method: Consult your seafood manager! If you're lucky you'll find one who loves his job and is proud to share his knowledge with you. If your store hasn't got such a person, chances are you'd be better off to buy your fish and seafood elsewhere. If you are a beginner and do not want to invest too much time into specialized fish recipes, use ones that you have for chicken pieces and reduce the cooking time.



## **Fresh Fish and Seafood:**

While fish and seafood may have a slight seaweed scent, it should not smell fishy. When buying whole fish, the eyes should look clear, full and bulging. The flesh should be firm and springy to the touch. Gills should be red or pink. Lobsters, clams and mussels should be bought live, if possible, kept on ice and cooked promptly.

## **Frozen Fish and Seafood:**

Quick freezing gives us (especially us in-landers) the opportunity to savor a variety of fish and seafood that we would otherwise not have or that would be too expensive, because seafood spoils faster than meat and the waste would be added to the cost.

Always buy frozen fish and seafood frozen. Never buy frozen fish and seafood that has a quantity of ice crystals encrusting them or jangling loose in the package. These are suspect of having been thawed in storage or in the latter case having been around so long that the flesh dried out and the moisture crystallized. Look for and avoid, patches of freezer burn that will never rehydrate during the short cooking period and will seriously impair the texture of the finished product. Cook frozen fish while it's still frozen.

## **Canned Seafood:**

Canned seafood is a boon to the cook and is handy to keep around for quick, but elegant lunches or appetizers. Its versatility is unlimited. Use them

alone or combine several kinds. Canned seafood is excellent in salads, spreads, dips, antipasto and fried or broiled fish cakes.

### Shell Fish:



**Clams and Mussels** If you're lucky enough to live in an area where you can dig your own clams or purchase them live, you have to clean them to remove excess sand before shucking them or steaming them. Soak clams in salt water, scrub the shells and steam over boiling water until the shells open. Discard any clams whose shell doesn't open.

Clams may be used raw in clam cocktail, steamed in salads, sauteed, fried or in clam chowder. Mussels should be cleaned similarly and the beard cut off. They can be served raw, steamed with a spiced sauce or stuffed.



**Crab** is usually boiled whole and served with heated butter or a dipping sauce. Cooked and chilled, it is excellent in salads or may be reheated in a variety of sauces.



**Lobster** should be bought and cooked alive. Tails may be bought packed in ice. For salads and cream sauce preparations canned lobster is acceptable and is much lower in price.



**Oysters** can be eaten raw with lemon juice sprinkled on them or in a cocktail sauce, pan fried or deep fried, broiled or baked on a half shell and stir fried. Oysters cook very quickly.



**Scallops** are the hinge muscles of a shell. The small pinkish bay scallops are usually more expensive and more tender than the large white sea scallops. Excellent broiled wrapped in a strip of bacon, grilled, deep fried, stir fried or steamed and served in a sauce.



**Shrimps** are the most popular of the shellfish. There are over 80 species, sold fresh, frozen, cooked or canned. Shrimp is done as soon as the flesh turns pink, in a matter of minutes. Do not cook it until it curls. Shrimp is very versatile and can be used in a variety of hot or cold dishes.



**Squid (calamari)** is usually served baked, stuffed, stewed in its own ink, in salads or fried. Squid is available fresh or frozen whole or as cleaned tubes, as well as cut into rings ready to use. Squid turns rubbery if overcooked.



### Other Fish and Seafood Products:

❁ Roe is fish eggs. Raw, it can be pan fried or pickled. Salmon roe is preserved with salt and is sold as red caviar. Real caviar, according to the purists, is salted sturgeon roe that comes from the area of the Caspian Sea. Real caviar is extremely expensive. Imitation black caviar prepared in the Scandinavian countries from lump fish makes a good substitute for the real thing for garnishing hors d'oeuvres and salads. It gives that little extra opulence and the black contrasting with the pale seafood is always dramatic.

❁ Anchovy Paste is a very useful product that comes in a tube like toothpaste. Instead of opening a whole tin of anchovies when you need a little for a Caesar salad, you can squeeze out just the right amount of paste. I use it instead of salt in Deviled Eggs, Egg Salad, on Pizza and in a variety of sauces and dips.

❁ Smoked Fish - Although smoked salmon (lox) is undoubtedly the queen of smoked fish, there are a whole array of smoked fish available on the market. Thinly sliced, they can be served in a sandwich, on a salad or lightly steamed for a main course.

❁ Imitation Crab is a recent innovation. Fish, usually pollock, is made to taste and look like crab. Sold either as flaked or pressed into "legs", it is a boon to cooks. The price is more affordable than real crab, the cholesterol content is much lower, it's readily available, inexpensive and it lends itself to a variety of quick preparations. Imitation lobster and scallops, prepared the same way, are now also available and can be used to substitute for the real thing in many recipes.

❁ Sardines are highly nutritious, excellent backpack food, mixed with cream cheese and lemon juice they make a fine spread for crackers or bread. Sardines can be used as an added ingredient in a cheese ball made with cottage cheese and walnuts.



### Cooking Fish and Seafood

The biggest mistake in seafood cookery is overcooking. Fish is very fragile. Cook it only until it becomes opaque; do not wait until it flakes.

Shellfish tends to turn tough and rubbery when it's overcooked. Heat and cook it until it's barely done. As with all cooking, I recommend adding salt only after the flesh is set or about halfway through the cooking time. Seafood may not even need any added salt at all since their flesh is naturally salty. Because seafood overcooks so easily, it is generally cooked quickly and served with either warm butter for dipping and lemon juice or in a sauce.

Easy cold sauces for fish and seafood are:



sour cream, sugar, lemon juice and fresh chopped dill



yogurt, honey, Dijon mustard, capers



mayonnaise with a little prepared mustard



chili sauce with a touch of prepared horseradish



salsa

Hot sauces to complement fish and seafood are:



Hollandaise



Tomato sauce



Teriyaki sauce



Curry



Spices that naturally compliment seafood are pepper, dill, lemon, rosemary, basil, oregano, tarragon, ginger, lemon peel, sage, garlic, horseradish, onions, capers and fennel.



Nuts, such as almonds and walnuts can garnish and complement the flavors of fish. Nuts may be sprinkled on, used in a stuffing or be part of the sauce.



Vegetables that complement fish and seafood are: fennel, leek, chard, spinach, peppers, green onions, avocado, sorrel, eggplant and mushrooms.



Fruits to try with fish and seafood are: grapes, pineapple, grapefruit, lime and

oranges.



❁ **Baking:** Whole fish can be an attractive show piece when baked. Lightly oil, season and bake the fish uncovered at 450° F, about 10 minutes/inch or until opaque. Fish may be stuffed with seafood, lemon slices, bread stuffing or nuts. The fish may be baked standing, just spread the stomach cavity slightly to make it stand, or lay it on it's side, in a shallow baking pan. Choose an attractive pan that can double as a serving dish and save yourself the trouble of trying to transfer the whole fish without breaking it. For an attractive effect, make slits in the sides and insert lemon wedges, tomatoes or bell pepper slices. You may marinate your fish before baking, but more for seasoning than for tenderizing. For a milder flavor try marinating your fish in milk.

❁ **Pan Frying:** Pan fry fish steaks in oil on medium high with just a little seasoning until crisp on both sides. Use batter or bread crumbs on thin slices and on small fish. Thick fish steaks need no coating. Use the rule of 10 minutes of frying on each side/inch of thickness. Do Cajun blackened fish on high heat. Oysters, scallops and shrimp with or without a coating take very little time to fry in a pan with delicious results.

❁ **Stir Frying:** Stir frying lends itself to seafood preparation because it's a quick cooking method and the danger of overcooking is minimized.

Shrimp, squid, oysters, scallops or any firm fish is great in an oriental stir fry.

❁ **Poaching:** This is a classic fish preparation method. Poaching may be done in milk, water, wine, lemon juice, fish stock or bouillon. To poach fish bring the liquid to a boil, add the fish, reduce the heat to simmer and cover. The fish must be removed from the liquid as soon as it's done. Fish poachers often have a basket insert to lift the fish. You can rig something up using a steamer basket, colander, or tie the fish in a piece of cheesecloth.

Whole live lobsters and crabs are usually poached in rapidly boiling water for 15-20 minutes.

❁ **Microwaving:** Microwaving is a natural for cooking fish. The result is tasty, while the added oil or butter can be reduced or even eliminated for those on severe diets. Fish slices or steaks should be seasoned and arranged in a single layer in a shallow dish with the thickest part of the flesh towards the outside. Cover and microwave 3-5 minutes on high or until it just turns opaque. Check frequently to avoid overcooking. Let it "rest" covered for another 3 minutes before serving.

*The easiest way to poach a whole fish is in the microwave in a covered dish or in a plastic bag designed for the purpose. Remember to undercook the fish, because the microwave keeps it cooking for a little while after it's turned off.*

❁ **Broiling:** Use fish that is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches thick, brush with oil and seasoning, drizzle with lemon juice. As an alternative to deep frying, breaded or battered seafood sprayed or drizzled with a very small amount of oil can be broiled to produce a very good product. Kabobs of shrimp and/or scallops broiled can be used as appetizers or main course.

This can be done Chinese style where the seasoning is put on the plate holding the seafood that is being steamed.

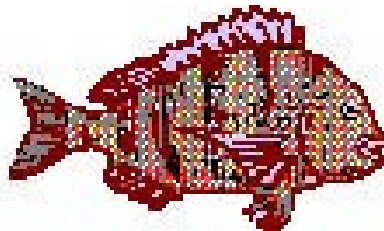
❁ **En Papillote:** Cooked in a package of parchment or foil. This is basically a steaming method. The package is filled with seafood and with partially cooked vegetables, a few drops of liquid, oil or butter and seasoning is added and the package is sealed. The package is then baked at 400° F 8-10 min. For cooking a package on the barbecue, use whole fish or steaks, season with herbs and spices, lemon juice and/or white wine, butter or oil. Wrap tightly in foil (shiny side inside) with double folded edges. Grill 15-20 minutes/inch.

❁ **Deep Fat Frying:** Again, because seafood easily overcooks, this must be done on high heat and very quickly.

❁ **Barbecuing:** Thick fish steaks, whole fish or kabobs of shrimp and scallops can be cooked on a lightly oiled grill or in a cage designed to hold fish or burgers.

❁ **Planking:** This method of cooking the fish on a wooden board, usually cedar, is becoming a popular way of barbecuing fish.











❁ **Smoking:** Top of the stove smoking is a very new and trendy preparation method. Use firm fish for smoking and serve it with a tangy dipping sauce.







## ***Filleting Fish***

Filleting takes a bit of practice, but it's well worth learning, because whole fish is so much cheaper and the additional bonus is ingredients for a good fish stock from the discards that can be used in the sauce or frozen for future use.

### **Filleting Raw Whole Fish:**

-  place fish on a large board
-  hold up one of the fins at the stomach cavity and slide a sharp thin knife between the skin and the flesh
-  carefully to avoid digging into the flesh, slide the knife to separate the skin from the flesh.
-  pull up the flap of skin and using the knife gently separate the rest of the skin from the flesh
-  cut skin away from the backbone
-  slice along the backbone
-  gently, but firmly run a knife along the line that marks the vertebrae from head to tail, cutting through to the bone
-  using a gentle pushing motion of the knife slice the flesh off the bone in both directions
-  turn fish over and repeat the process on the other side. This will give you four large fillets of fish. If you were gentle and careful, the fillets will be bone free or relatively so
-  collect skin, bones and fins and save for boiling up for fish stock

### **Filleting Cooked Fish:**

-  place fish on a large board or platter.
-  gently pull off the top skin and using a knife cut off the fins
-  gently run a knife along the line that runs from head to tail marking the vertebrae
-  using a gentle pushing motion of the knife slide meat off the bone in

both directions and arrange it on the serving platter

❁ lift off the skeleton and the second half is ready to serve

❁ collect skin, bones and fins and save for boiling up for fish stock

❁ pour the sauce of your choice over the filleted fish





## Meat and Poultry

Although meat consumption has been drastically reduced in the western world in recent years, meat and poultry are still the number one source of protein, the most expensive part of the food budget and the focal point of most meals. It is impossible to completely cover the subject of meat and poultry in this space without overwhelming and confusing the reader. So I will keep to the most important points and again urge you to expand your knowledge by asking questions and getting further information from marketing boards, government agencies and specialized cookbooks to fit with your sphere of interest.

Let's look at the animal as a whole: Muscle that does hard work is tough and sinewy, that's the foreleg and shoulder. The hind leg is medium tender and the most tender cuts come from the rib area.

❑ *Tough cuts are used in moist cooking methods: soups, stews, braising and pot roast. Incidentally, bone and sinew add much to the flavor of these dishes and to the soup or gravy that they are cooking in. You may want to trim the fat, if necessary, but do not pitch out the bone or gristle before cooking. Add it to the soup or stew then toss it after all the good flavor and nutrients have been leached out.*

❑ *Medium tender cuts: can be used for grilling, if careful control of moistness is maintained. These are usually lean cuts and dry out easily.*

❑ *Tender cuts: Can be roasted, fried, broiled or barbecued. These cuts need little else than a few spices and a very hot skillet or grill to produce a flavorful entree.*

The age of the animal, feed used and, particularly with beef, hanging or aging all contribute to the tenderness or toughness of the meat or poultry.

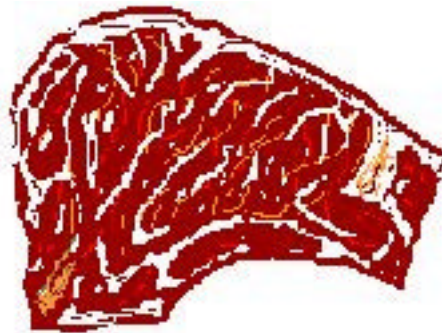
Marbling, or strands of fat between the meat, will give a more tender product, however marbling means a higher fat content. Consumers must balance their low fat needs with their cooking skills, as well as their expectation of the end product. No small feat in today's society.

Care must be taken with very lean cuts. Often it is necessary to add oil to the surface or to the marinade to have these cuts turn out moist. My personal preference is to buy lightly marbled, but not totally lean, meat and after cooking remove as much of the fat from the gravy, soup or stew as possible. Roasts and grilled meat will naturally drip the fat into the pan, to be removed. Fried steaks and chops can be prepared in a non-stick pan or better yet, should be grilled or broiled.

### **Beef:**

Beef is the most popular meat in North America and the least understood.

Tough cuts are chuck, shoulder, brisket, short ribs, plate, flank steak and shank. They are suitable for stewing and braising. Medium tender cuts such as rump, round, sirloin tip, blade and cross rib should be marinated and/or cooked slowly. The tenderest cuts are porterhouse, T-bone, wing, rib eye, tenderloin, strip loin, sirloin and rib. These cuts can be roasted, broiled, grilled or barbecued at high heat with little preparation.



### **To lean or not too lean is the toughest question?**

Ground beef contains a variety of cuts depending on the store and the particular batch, but usually it's the tougher cuts and trimmings that go into ground beef. When you buy extra lean prepared from a tough cut, your hamburger will be dry and chewy. However, if used for something like [meat sauce](#), the fat savings are real and the leanness will not alter the quality of the product. For stuffings, burgers and meatballs a medium fat content will give you a better product. Alternatively, you may want to experiment with using lean ground beef and adding grated raw vegetables such as onions, potatoes, or carrots to loosen the mixture. Adding stale bread soaked in milk or water will also make a ground beef mixture more tender and moist. Since the danger of bacteria is very real, the composition, cleanliness and freshness depends so much on the store, I would really recommend, especially in the summer, to buy a roast such as sirloin tip (very lean) or chuck (medium lean), scrape it, cube it and chop it in your food processor to be absolutely sure of the quality.

Doing this has the great advantage of using a single cut of meat from one animal, not likely to happen in the supermarket preparation room, and thus having a consistent quality that cooks to the same consistency in the given recipe.

This consideration is also important in cutting your own stewing meat. The store-bought cubes often vary in toughness. You can easily end up with a stew where some of the meat is falling apart while other pieces are still quite chewy.

### **Veal:**

Veal is not very well understood in North America. Real veal should be very pale, almost like chicken breast. If it isn't, they are trying to sell you baby beef for veal. Veal is tasty, low in fat and has a high water content, therefore it shrinks

considerably in cooking.

*If price and availability is a problem, tender cuts of pork, chicken or turkey breast can be successfully substituted in recipes calling for veal.*

## **Pork:**

Pork has had a bad rap lately, but pork producers, ever sensitive to the market have responded with leaner meat. Pork always has some marbling even if it isn't visible. For this reason nearly all cuts of pork can be roasted without drying out. It bastes itself. Although some cuts maybe quite fatty, the versatility of pork should not be ignored. If you are concerned about the fat, choose leg or loin and trim away all the visible fat. Pork is a good inexpensive substitute for veal in many recipes. Because of the danger of trichinosis pork must be cooked thoroughly. When roasting pork, be certain to use a meat thermometer to make sure the temperature in the centre has reached 170° F.

## **Mutton:**

Mutton refers to fully-grown sheep and is seldom seen in North American markets. The mutton flavor is mainly in the fat. Trimming away all excess fat will make the flavor milder, so will scalding it with hot water to which a little vinegar is added. The meat is tough and lends itself to slow moist cooking as in pot roasts and stews. Always serve it on preheated plates because mutton fat congeals very quickly and makes the food unappetizing. Mutton is suitable for stewing (Irish stew), braising, roasting and is favored in Middle Eastern cooking.

## **Lamb:**

Lamb is usually quite lean and tender. Legs are less fatty than chops or breast. Lamb can be roasted, stewed, braised, barbecued. It is the original meat of choice in kabobs and pilafs. Do not overcook lamb; use a meat thermometer for roasting lamb. Rosemary, tarragon, mint, as well as curry, are the usual spices used with lamb. As with mutton, always serve lamb on preheated plates, because the fat congeals very quickly. Lamb can be substituted in recipes calling for veal, chicken or pork.



## Poultry or Fowl

Always select unblemished birds with compact (short and wide) bodies.

### Chicken:

Chicken is inexpensive, versatile and generally quick to prepare. No wonder it is the most popular fowl the world over.

Chickens are usually classified according to size and age:

■ Broilers or Fryers are young and weigh 3-5 pounds. They are mild flavored, cook quickly, but often lack the depth of taste for stewing. They are well suited for frying, broiling and grilling.

■ Roasters are 4-9 pounds and are slightly older. These birds are suitable for roasting or cut into pieces for stewing.

■ Capons are castrated males weighing 8-10 pounds. They tend to be a little fatty, but make excellent roasts.

■ Stewing hen or stewing fowl are old laying hens, cheap, flavorful, good for making soup, but often the meat is so tough as to be inedible, unless processed into a pate.

*Every cook has an anecdote to tell about buying inexpensive stewing hen, as a novice, and cooking it to death for hours without producing a palatable meal.*

### Turkey:

Popularity of this bird has increased because it is low in fat and substitutes well in chicken, pork, beef or veal recipes. However, self-basting and butterball turkeys are injected with a variety of fats. I feel that it is better to buy (cheaper too!) an unadulterated turkey and brush it with a bit of oil or cover the breast with a few thin slices of bacon than to pay extra for the unknown amount and quality of fat added to special turkeys to make them more moist. Turkey is relatively inexpensive if bought whole and fresh. Rolled, boneless breast and ground turkey are more expensive, because of the labor and waste. It isn't hard to cut up a whole turkey. Use the boneless breast in any veal recipe, use the legs as is or remove the flesh from the bone and chop or grind for any recipe calling for beef.

### Cornish or Guinea Hens:

are usually prepared in the same way as a small roaster. They are very tender and are done very quickly.

### Goose and duck:

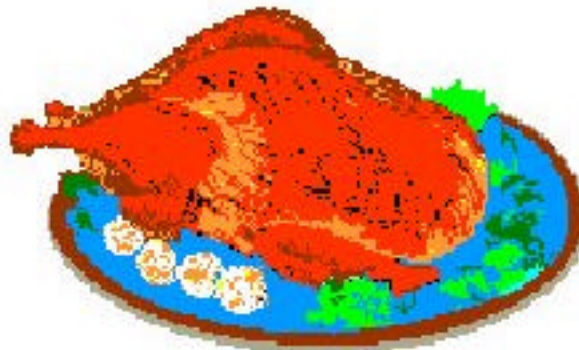
can be quite fatty and care must be taken to remove all the unnecessary

and easy-to-find fat between the skin and the meat. To prepare for roasting, score the breast skin in a cross-hatch pattern with a sharp knife taking care to cut only the top layer of the skin, not all the way to the meat. This will help in eliminating the fat from the skin and in making the skin crisp. Place the fowl on a roasting rack in the pan or remove the collected fat from the roaster occasionally. Whichever method you choose, do not let the bird lay in inches of fat. It will reabsorb some of that fat and result in a fatty tasting meal.

### **Pheasant:**

used to be a game bird, but in recent years has been raised very successfully and consequently is available now at some supermarkets. It is a very lean bird, therefore care must be taken not to dry it out during cooking.

Geese, ducks and pheasants are all dark meat and do well when marinated in or basted with red wine.



### **Venison, game and game birds:**

The meat of wild animals is generally lean and somewhat tough. It makes flavorful stews and pot roasts, especially if basted or cooked in red wine.

If you wish to reduce the gamy flavor, trim all the visible fat and soak the meat in 2-3 changes of buttermilk or cold water to which a small amount of vinegar has been added. Marinating this way in the refrigerator for 24-48 hours before cooking will reduce the strong wild taste. You may need to add oils or fats to moisten the meat and keep it from drying out.

*Placing thin strips of bacon on the breast of game birds for roasting will ensure moistness and will look attractive at serving. Always stuff game birds. The stuffing will help keep the meat moist. Cook game slowly to make it tender.*

## Organ meats or variety meats:

Affluent North America largely disdains these meats that are so highly regarded by ethnic cooks and diners. This group includes liver, tongue, giblets, brains, heart, tripe, sweetbreads and kidneys from any of the food animals. Organ meats are generally high in vitamins A, B, C and minerals (calcium and iron). Most organ meats, but not all, are lower in fat than regular meat. Variety cuts are usually more perishable than regular meat, therefore one must be careful in selecting, buying and preparing them. Liver, brains, sweetbreads and kidneys cook quickly and turn tough easily if overcooked.

■ Liver should be blemish free, sliced evenly and fairly thick (about 1/4 inch) for frying. Green stains sometimes observed on liver are from gall (the gall bladder is located right next to the liver). The green stained area must be cut out and discarded because it can make the whole dish bitter. If the slices show a thin membrane at the edges, make a few nicks in these with a knife to ensure that the liver will not curl on frying. Liver should be fried very quickly on both sides, without salt, at medium high heat just until the juices run clear, but the inside is still pink. Otherwise it will be tough. Serve quickly and sprinkle with salt at the table.

■ Brain is delicate in flavor and texture. To clean, scald with boiling water, drain and remove the membrane. Breaded, fried, or scrambled with eggs, it is a tasty treat.

■ Sweetbreads are similar to brains in appearance, but have a firmer texture, therefore lend themselves to braising and stewing. Cleaning is accomplished by scalding briefly and removing the surrounding membrane.

■ Tongue is only rinsed before cooking. It is generally simmered in seasoned water for a long time, until tender (test skin with finger nail), cooled and skinned. It can be served cold, added to a jelly or reheated in a sauce to be served as a main course.

■ Heart is very lean and all meat. Cleaning consists of trimming off the visible fat and sinew and a rinsing. It is suitable for all stewing recipes, needs long moist cooking.

■ Tripe has a strong flavor unlike any other food. It should not be tried on those who haven't developed a taste for it. If possible choose thin honeycombed pieces. Simmer in seasoned water until tender. This takes a long time. Cool, trim off all visible fat, cut into bite size pieces or strips and add to a sauce of your choice. In the Chinese cuisine, tripe may be added to a stirfry, battered and fried or stewed. Europeans, generally, prepare it as a stew, soup or serve it in a sauce.

■ Kidney should be cut in half lengthwise and soaked in 2-3 changes of cold water to which a small amount of vinegar has been added, for 24-48 hours in the

refrigerator, before cooking. This soaking makes it taste milder. Remove all visible fat and membrane, dice and use in the recipe as directed. It is a very tender meat, similar to liver in flavor, but firmer in texture.

▣ Giblets are hearts and stomachs of chickens or other edible birds.

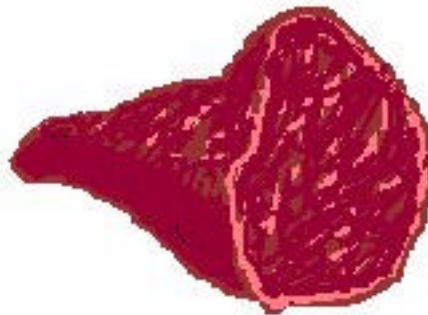
Giblets make excellent stews. Generally, giblets sold in stores have been cleaned well and need only a rinse before cooking, but they should be examined for bits of hard lining of the stomach, and the tough grayish tissue connecting the halves should be discarded.

***You Can get consistent quality and lower your cost if you cut up your own meat and poultry.***



### ***Cutting up meat:***

Cut your own steaks, stewing beef, stir-fry strips, kabob cubes or meat for grinding from boneless roasts. Sirloin tip roast is the best for this. Roasts are as much as 40% cheaper than the corresponding steak.



Start with a good sharp knife, large cutting board and well-chilled meat. Scrape the surface of the meat, but do not wash it.

To cut steaks: start from the thicker end of the roast and slice across the grain of the meat, cutting even slices of the thickness of your choice. Trim off the pieces that are only loosely connected to the meat and use them for stewing or for ground beef. Cut paper-thin strips off the narrow end for stir-frying, Indonesian sate or Stroganoff. Freeze the steaks and strips spread out on cookie sheets, remove by giving the sheet a slight twist and store your individually frozen steaks in a zip lock bag so that you can take out as many or as few as needed.

The strips can be frozen in thin layers and also stored in plastic bags. Thin frozen pieces can be fried without thawing or left to thaw in a marinade.

Stewing or kabob cubes can be cut from the steaks.



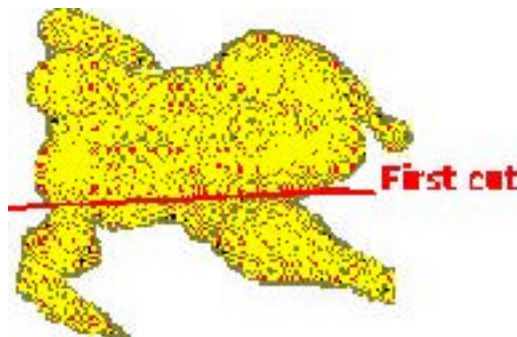
Pork, lamb or veal roasts can be cut up in the same way.



## Cutting up a chicken:

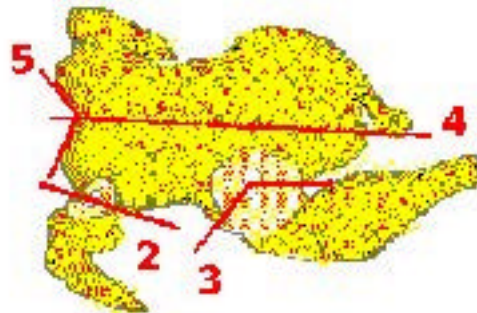
Because chickens are carriers of salmonella bacteria, you must make sure that you keep your kitchen and utensils from being contaminated while working with raw chicken. You must start with a very good sharp knife!

1. Rinse and drain the chicken and lay it on its back on a dishwasher-safe board. Make a cut from wing to tail along the lower edge of the breast on both sides.



2. Lift and pull up the wing and away from the body. Cut down to the bone under the wing, parallel to the breast. Holding the thickest part of the wing with one hand and the breast with the other, snap back the wing until the joint shows. Twist and cut the tendons holding the bones to finish carving out the wing. Repeat on the other side.

3. Lift and pull a leg out and away from the body. Slice down to the bone parallel to the breast. Holding the thigh with one hand and the breast with the other, snap back the thigh until the joint shows, twist and cut the tendons holding the bones to finish carving out the thigh. Repeat for other leg.



4. Now you have the breast with back attached. In the centre of the breast you can feel a bone protruding. Run your knife along both sides of this bone using a sawing motion and staying as close to the bone as possible until you



reach the bone perpendicular to it. Similarly cut along the wishbone, the V-shaped bone at the top of the breast. Use your fingers to ease the meat off the breast bone using your knife occasionally to assist in scraping the meat off the bone.

5. At this point you can skin the parts and remove all visible fat, if you wish.

6. Now you have:

◆ The breastbone with back attached. With the wing tips, neck and giblets added, this can be made into excellent stock or broth just by boiling them with a few herbs and spices.

◆ Two legs that can be cut apart, into thigh and drumstick, by making a slit at the inside of the joint and snapping it back to expose the joint as described previously.

◆ Two wings that can be cut apart into 3 pieces, by making a slit at the joint and snapping it back as described. Two fleshy parts for using in any wing recipe and the wing tips to be added to the stock.

◆ Two boneless breasts that would cost you a small fortune if bought separately.

◆ The trimmed-off skin which can be rendered for a delicious, albeit, high cholesterol snack, of cracklings.



*Freeze the chicken parts on cookie sheets. These pieces can be cooked without thawing or placed directly into a marinade to thaw.*



*If you can spare the time, do 3-4 frying chickens at a time when they are on sale and you can really save money.*



*Other fowl such as turkey can be disjointed in the same way.*



# Vegetables

I don't need to sing the praises of vegetables as a healthy and necessary part of nutritious cooking. However, it is worthwhile to point out that the variety of vegetables available has dramatically increased in recent years. With this interest in vegetables, preparation methods have changed and new techniques have been developed. Vegetables used to be boiled, steamed or on occasion fried and served as a side dish beside the normal "meat-n-potatoes". Today's food style dictates combining several vegies into a dish which might even take center stage. Vegetables add color, flavor and texture to food.

Vegetables are a natural when recipes are altered to reduce fat and increase fiber. Just as a rule of thumb, your old favorite recipes can become new, low fat and exciting if you decrease the meat component to half of what the recipe calls for and substitute with the same quantity of an appropriate vegetable. This is easily done in casseroles, such as lasagna, as well as in soups and stews. With roasts and other all-meat dishes, see if you can create a vegetable side dish so exciting that it steals the show from the meat.

While boiling is still an acceptable method, it tends to be dull and will not encourage the anti-vegetable faction in your family to increase its vegetable intake. For this reason, steaming, sautéing, stir-frying as well as deep frying have gained popularity in recent years. Creative mixtures of two or more vegetables seasoned with a variety of herbs and spices, have brought the lowly vegetable from uninteresting and at times hated side dishes into the limelight to vie for prominence with the meat course.

## Choosing Vegetables

I highly recommend buying vegetables in season, not just because it's more economical, but because out-of-season vegetables may have traveled from the other end of the world, have been stored under artificial preserving conditions, or were raised in hot houses with the consequence that neither the flavor nor the nutritional value is as good as it should be.

Vegetables should be firm, crisp looking, free of blemishes and discolorations. Buy only as much as you will use within 2-3 days.

If however, for some reason you find yourself with some wilted vegetables dying on the counter, cook up a soup from them. If the quantity is not enough, extend it with a cooking onion, some carrots or potatoes. Season it creatively and you may have created a new "family favorite".



Frozen vegetables should be frozen hard and feel loose, not lumped in the bag. Lumpy means that during storage or transport, the vegetables were allowed to thaw and were refrozen. It also means that you will have a hard time taking out a small amount for use when you wish.



Canned vegetables are handy to have around. They need no further cooking. Rinse canned vegetables with cold water to remove the preservatives and salt that are responsible for that "canned taste". Warm them with or without butter, add a warm sauce like Hollandaise or use them in a vegetable salad.

### **Cleaning Vegetables**

Vegetables should be washed quickly in lukewarm water. Soak only leafy vegetables like lettuce to plump them up if they are wilted. Washing vegetables removes both dirt and chemical residues. Many nutrients are located in the skin. Leave the skin on whenever possible



However, if the vegetable has been waxed it must be peeled.



## **Vegetable Groups**

Because similar vegetables are cleaned, treated and prepared in a similar way, and can be freely substituted to accommodate availability and preference, I decided to group them together for some general comments about cleaning, use and method of cooking.



**Roots:** Root vegetables have to be chosen with care, because when old and woody, no amount of cooking or clever recipe can make them pleasant. However, they still have a lot of flavor and can be simmered to make a vegetable stock. Cleaning generally means peeling, or if the root is very young scraping, and a good wash. Root vegetables usually contain a lot of starch which becomes caramelized when sautéed or stir-fried, enhancing their flavor. These are the slowest cooking vegetables and therefore are added to stews, soups and stir-fries early in the cooking process or are chopped fine to allow them to be done at the same time as their faster cooking counterparts.

Examples in this category are:

- parsnip
- carrot
- beet
- turnip
- kohlrabi

- celeriac



**Fibrous:** Most of the vegetables in this category benefit from sautéing before being incorporated into a recipe, because a much more interesting flavor develops at the higher heat of frying than with steaming, simmering or boiling. Although I found no proof, I am convinced from my observations, that sautéing makes these vegetables much more digestible too.

Examples in this category are:

- onion
- leek
- pepper
- celery
- fennel
- mushroom
- green and wax beans



**Leafy:** Leafy vegetables usually have a lot of soil adhering to them. I found that soaking them in lukewarm water loosens the dirt better and faster than very cold water. Remove soaked leaves by scooping them out with your hand or with a slotted spoon without disturbing the grains of soil that have settled on the bottom of the bowl. Repeat soaking and scooping until no residue remains in the bottom of the bowl. These tender greens generally lose a great deal of volume in cooking, so don't be surprised if a great mound of leaves results in a very small product. A vitamin C tablet or a small amount of lemon juice added to the cooking water of intensely green vegetables like broccoli, Brussels sprouts or spinach will preserve the color for a more attractive presentation.

Examples in this category are:

- spinach
- chard
- lettuce

- broccoli
- kale
- beet
- greens
- endives
- cauliflower
- Brussels sprouts
- cabbages
- sorrel



**Fragile:** This is a group of vegetables that are not that similar to each other, but because they have a high water content, they cook fairly rapidly and can turn mushy if care is not taken.

Examples in this category are:

- tomatoes
- potatoes
- yams
- sweet potatoes
- peas
- pumpkins
- squashes
- asparagus

### **Cooking Vegetables**

In vegetable cooking, just like with meat, salt draws out the juices, therefore in most cases, do not add salt until the vegetable is at least half cooked. The exceptions to this rule are cabbage, eggplant and cucumber.



Sautéed vegetables often develop a flavor deeper and richer than their raw or boiled form. Vegetables in this category are: onions, peppers of all sorts,

mushrooms, root vegetables like carrots, parsnip and summer squashes like zucchini. The sautéing is started in hot fat. High enough heat must be maintained to fry at a slow sizzle, but never let juices collect. Increase the heat if necessary. If the juices are allowed to cook the vegetables, the flavor will be more like that of boiled and will lack the rich depth that sautéing gives them.

✚ Stir-fried vegetables are done at a high temperature in a small amount of oil with vegetables chopped to medium size, on the diagonal if they are very fibrous such as celery and green onions. The vegetables are added starting with the tougher ones first followed by the more tender ones, so that the tough ones cook a bit before the tender ones are added and the latter will not become mushy, but all will be cooked and crisp.

✚ Steamed vegetables retain more flavor and vitamins than their boiled counterparts. Steaming can be achieved using a steamer basket over boiling water or by using just a few teaspoons of water in a covered dish in the microwave. Root vegetables and potatoes need to be covered in water in the microwave.

✚ Fried vegies and fritters make great appetizers, tasty main dishes or interesting side dishes. A number of vegetables become star attractions when dipped in a batter or breaded and fried. Among these are zucchini, mushrooms and egg plant. Fritters of vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli, corn or peas can become the focus of a meal and may eliminate the need for meat altogether.

✚ Pancakes made with grated potatoes, onion, zucchini, corn or even carrots can form the main course of a good vegetarian meal.

✚ Pickled vegetables of all sorts can add pizzazz to a festive table either as an appetizer, condiment, salad ingredient or garnish. Pickling need not be restricted to cucumbers. Asparagus, carrots, legumes of all kinds, beets, green or yellow beans, cauliflower, broccoli, celeriac, Brussels sprouts, onion, garlic, peppers and mushrooms either alone or in combinations are especially suitable for pickling. Spices used in pickling vegetables are usually peppercorns, dill, mustard seeds, horseradish, lemon rind, bay leaves, garlic, caraway seeds, tarragon, cloves, coriander and basil.

*If you want to give pickled vegetables a try, start with small quantities and experiment with flavor combinations.*



The general method for pickling vegetables is:

1. Clean the vegetables thoroughly, cut into desired size and shape.

2. Prepare the vegetables:

✚ Root vegetables and legumes: Steam or boil vegetables until nearly tender, but somewhat undercooked. Canned beets and carrots may be used as well as canned legumes.

✚ Fragile vegetables: Bring a large pot of water to a roaring boil on high heat, add vegetables. Let the water come back to a boil and let it boil for 2 more minutes. Using a slotted spoon quickly fish out the vegetables and plunge them into a bowl of ice water containing the juice of a lemon, and let it cool. This procedure is called blanching.

3. Arrange spices and vegetables attractively in jars.

4. Prepare a solution of salt, water and vinegar and if desired some sugar in a small saucepan. This solution should be quite tart, more acidic than a lemonade, but not so harsh as to burn the tongue.

5. Bring the vinegar mixture to a boil and pour it over the vegetables to cover them in the jar. Use a thin skewer to loosen any air bubbles. Add more vinegar mixture if needed to cover the ingredients, seal and store in the refrigerator for at least 2 weeks before using. These preparations can be stored for 6-10 weeks refrigerated.

*Pickles stored in the refrigerator can be placed in any jar with a tight fitting, non-metallic lid and need no processing. If you wish to make large quantities to store in the cupboard you need to use proper sealers and have to process the jars.*



### Artichoke, Globe:

This favorite of Mediterranean cooking is excellent with Hollandaise Sauce, dipped in butter, pickled, in salads or stuffed. To prepare fresh artichokes: slice off the stem and using scissors cut about an inch off the top of the leaves. Boil or steam until tender and the leaves pull off easily (about 25 minutes). Drain and, using a spoon, scoop out the centre fuzzy "choke". Serve it whole with hot butter, lemon juice or a sauce for dipping the leaves. You can also stuff artichokes or pull off the leaves to obtain the artichoke hearts. Artichoke hearts are available fresh, pickled, canned or frozen. They may be added to salads, marinated or served in a sauce.

### Artichoke, Jerusalem:

This root vegetable is similar to potatoes and has a slightly sweet flavor. It is excellent raw in salads or steamed lightly until just done and served in a sauce. It is a wonderful substitute for potatoes because it's low in calories, but very filling.

### Asparagus:

This delicate vegetable has become very popular in recent years. It is often quite pricey, but a small amount goes a long way. For tenderness choose thin spears with tightly folded tips. While in North America we think of asparagus as green, European asparagus is white and has a more delicate flavor.

Wash thoroughly to remove sand and soil. Snap off the woody end. Fresh asparagus tends to snap off easily just at the point where the tender stalk meets the woody stem. This is a delicate vegetable that is easily rendered mushy. Care must be taken not to overcook it.

The traditional method is to tie the stalks together with twine and stand this bundle up in a narrow, tall pot or in a coffee percolator in about 2 inches of water and boil covered for 15-20 minutes.

*I find microwaving to be less fussy. I use a long covered casserole dish and place the spears in the bottom with only the water that adheres to them from the washing. Cover and microwave for 6-7 minutes on high. Pour off any water that may have collected on the bottom.*

Steamed asparagus may be served with a dab of butter, with a sauce like Hollandaise or with toasted bread crumbs.

Asparagus makes an excellent soup with cream and/or cheese. Keep the seasoning light so that the excellent, but delicate flavor is not masked.

Canned asparagus tends to be slightly overcooked, but has the advantage of needing only draining, rinsing in cold water and a slight reheat before serving



it with a sauce or butter. A can of asparagus is particularly handy for making vegetable salads or as a garnish for cold meats. It also works very well in soup recipes. You may even cheat in pureed soups by using all or in part the lower priced pieces rather than the spears.

*Pickled fresh asparagus as a condiment, garnish or appetizer is favored by the gourmet crowd.*



#### **Beans, fresh:**

A favorite veggie of many, fresh beans (green or wax) can be combined with many flavors or served just with a dab of butter. Pearl onions, fruits, nuts and all sorts of herbs are great in complementing beans. When buying fresh, look for crisp pods that snap easily.

To clean, trim the ends by snapping them off. For best flavor avoid overcooking. The beans should be crisp yet tender. Canned and frozen beans perform well in a number of recipes.



#### **Beans, shelled:**

This group includes fresh lima and broad beans and their frozen counterparts. These fresh young beans are used shelled in soups and stews or can be prepared just as shelled peas.



#### **Beets:**

Easy to grow, easy to cook, flavorful and of pleasing color, beets are a staple in Slavic cooking as a side dish, pickled or made into borscht (a soup). Beets will store well for weeks refrigerated or in a root cellar. The flavor depends largely on the soil they are grown in, therefore smell the beets before buying them. If they have an unattractive musty odor that will come through in the taste even after cooking.

Caraway seeds, horseradish, lemon, dill sugar, sour cream and cloves are the usual seasonings associated with beets.

Tender beet leaves work well as a substitute in any spinach or chard recipe.



#### **Broccoli:**

Distant relative of the cabbage, broccoli is a favorite winter vegetable the world over. Choose broccoli that has very tight florets and is a deep green with a purple hue. Because of its assertive flavor this vegetable benefits from very simple preparation. Rinse broccoli well and cut off the florets with about an inch of stem left on. The remaining stem can be peeled and cubed or julienned and saved in the freezer to use in soups.

Steam this vegetable, but be careful not to overcook it. Steaming may be accomplished in the microwave in a covered dish with only the water that adheres to the broccoli when washed. You may simply add butter and serve, or use a Hollandaise or cheese sauce to top it off.

Seasonings are usually kept very simple, black pepper, salt, chopped fresh parsley and a sprinkling of nutmeg if desired. Broccoli is excellent raw in a salad or with a dip, pickled, made into a cream soup and versatile as a casserole ingredient.



### **Brussels Sprouts:**

Choose tight, small dark green buds. Remove a slice from the base and discard any opened or yellowed leaves. Rinse and steam or boil. Be careful not to overcook Brussels sprouts. Serve with butter or a sauce of your choice. Caraway seeds, black pepper, garlic, lemon juice, toasted bread crumbs can provide complementary flavors in serving.



### **Cabbage:**

This most versatile leafy vegetable has its origins in Asia. Several varieties are available:

- Green cabbage is most common and is used in slaws, salads, boiled, stuffed, braised, fermented as in sauerkraut and pickled. Green cabbage is a European staple; Slavic, German and Hungarian cuisine use it extensively.
- Red cabbage is usually used sautéed and served as a sweet and sour side dish, German style, as a condiment to roast pork, goose, ham and pork hocks.
- Savoy Cabbage is frilly looking and deep green. It has a much more delicate flavor than green cabbage and tastes more like Brussels sprouts.

Seasonings most commonly used with cabbages are garlic, apples, wine, caraway seed, lemon, tomato and curry.



### **Carrots:**

Probably the most common and least expensive vegetable, the carrot has been neglected in haute cuisine. Used mainly in soups and stews, as well as raw in salads and for dipping, this vegetable can be easily dressed up for the dinner table with judicious seasonings. Flavors that complement carrots are onions, ginger, marjoram, savory, basil, dill, parsley, mint, black pepper and brown sugar.

### Cauliflower:

Choose cauliflower that is very white, has no rusty or black spots and has tight florets. Take a slice off the stem end and cut away all the green leaf stalks and rinse well. You may break the head into florets or cook it whole. For company, cooking the head of a cauliflower whole and garnishing it with a sauce and parsley can give it an appealing touch. Cauliflower can be cooked and used in the same way as broccoli.

### Celeriac:

Do not be put off by how ugly this root vegetable looks. If you like the flavor of celery and the texture of carrots, try this vegetable.

Use it in soups and stews or pickle it.

### Celery :

In North America celery is cultivated for its fleshy stalk. In Europe the fleshy root or celeriac is more common and the leaves are used for flavoring. Celery is indispensable in soups and stews, raw in salads, for appetizers, as a garnish for cocktails and for dipping. Although seldom served as a stand-alone side dish it is almost always part of a stir-fry. Cleaned and chopped celery freezes well for later use in soups and stews and stir-fries.

### Chard:

Swiss Chard and Beet Greens are closely related in texture and flavor. Preparation of the young tender leaves is like that of spinach. The deep green of the leaves and contrasting red veins of the stem make for a very attractive presentation.

### Corn:

This vegetable is the most important contribution of the Americas to world diet. Products made from this important crop are corn flour, corn meal, corn starch and oil.

Corn on the cob is always a favorite. Fresh corn on the cob can be boiled, roasted, barbecued or steamed in the microwave.

Corn is also readily available canned and frozen to use at any time of the year as a side dish, in fritters, salads and as part of a variety of vegetable dishes.

Corn is complemented by: tomatoes, peppers, cheese, milk and lima beans. Baby corn adds versatility to vegetable and seafood salads.

### Eggplant (also known as Aubergine):

Several varieties are available. Eggplant is important in Middle Eastern and Oriental cooking, as well as in a number of Mediterranean dishes. Eggplants when sliced and salted sweat out some juices, making them drier and thus more suitable for deep frying or broiling. The juices are drained away and the vegetable is usually patted dry, before being coated with a batter or breading. Other methods of cooking do not require this pre-salting procedure. Try breaded eggplants as a main course with tartar sauce.

Eggplants may be used peeled or with the skin on. They are very versatile in casseroles, fried, stuffed, baked, stewed as in ratatouille, in fritters and in salads. Many flavors combine well with eggplants: onions, garlic, olives, tomatoes, green peppers, pimentos, basil, marjoram, oregano, savory, black pepper and yogurt.

### Endives:

This is a slightly bitter vegetable used boiled, steamed, stuffed or braised. Served hot as a side dish or cold in salads.

### Fiddleheads:

Fiddleheads are fern fronds. This delicate vegetable requires a minimum of cooking and seasoning. A light steaming or braising and a light lemon, pepper and butter coating is all it needs.

### Fennel:

Fennel looks like an onion with dill fronds sticking out of the stem. The flavor is slightly like anise. It's excellent raw in salads or lightly steamed with butter served to complement fish and seafood.

### Kale:

This is a leafy cabbage like plant that is cooked and used like spinach.

### Kohlrabi:

Although kohlrabi looks like a root, its bulb actually grows above the ground. It has a mild cabbage-like flavor. To clean, pare off the skin. Care must be taken to buy young tender bulbs or it can be very woody. Tender kohlrabi can be eaten raw or added to salads. It can be steamed, braised, boiled or stuffed. It makes a wonderful soup either by itself or in combination with other vegetables. Hungarians always add a chunk of kohlrabi to their chicken soup for flavor. Excellent steamed then served in a yogurt or sour cream dill sauce.

### Leek:

Looks like a huge green onion. It has a mild onion flavor. Good in soup or steamed with fish. Care must be taken when cleaning it. Soil tends to hide and cling between the leaves. Although the green part is rather tough, it can be chopped fine and used as a flavoring in soups.

My favorite way of using leek is to add it and cubed potatoes to a broth boiled up from roast turkey bones. Adjust the seasoning and add a dollop of sour cream to each plate of soup just before serving.

### Mushrooms:

Mushrooms are edible fungi. High in vitamins and minerals, low in calories, rubbery in texture, in many recipes they are used as a meat substitute. Several varieties are available.

Fresh, frozen, canned and dried mushrooms can be used in endless combinations and permutations.

- Fresh mushrooms should be briefly washed, never soaked, in lukewarm water. Scrape off the clinging dirt, rinse and drain on a towel. Remove a thin slice from the end of the stem. Choice of size depends on the preparation. Small mushrooms look better pickled or sautéed whole, larger mushrooms have more flavor for soups or stews and are more suitable for stuffing. Always choose clean and dry looking mushrooms with uniform cap color.
- Canned mushrooms are great to have around to give a pick up to leftovers and add to salads or sauces. Many varieties are sold canned or dried, particularly in Oriental shops, that are not available or are prohibitively priced when bought fresh. Dried mushrooms should be soaked in warm water until softened, then chopped and used like fresh. The water may be saved and added as stock to soups and stews.

### Onions:

This bulb is a vegetable, as well as a seasoning. The uses of onions are really too numerous to mention. Onions as a flavoring complement an innumerable number of dishes from many soups, to roasts and stir-fries. Raw, they give a zing to salads, dips and spreads. Creamed, fried, baked or sautéed, they can be used as an interesting vegetable course.

Choose firm, unblemished bulbs without sprouts emerging at the stem end. Although the sprouts pose no danger, and near spring time they are sometimes unavoidable, it indicates that the plant is ready to grow and many of the nutrients went to produce the sprout and also that the flesh is no longer as firm as it

should be.

Although there are literally zillions of bizarre tricks mentioned in books on how to stop from crying while chopping onions, I am skeptical about most of them.



There are, however, some points to remember:

- Chilled onions are less likely to make you cry.
- You do not have to lean into the direct path of the fumes. Keep your distance.
- You can do the job in stages, peel and chill the onions, then chop, walk away for a few minutes if your eyes are smarting and return to finish.
- Wear your glasses or sunglasses to cut down the direct stream of fumes.
- Think positively and make up your mind that you will not cry.

To chop or mince onions peel off the skin, split it from root end to stem leaving a bit of the stem uncut, open and lay flat on board. Working on one half at a time, cut slits as close to each other as possible from stem to root, slice off the root end and discard, cut slices parallel to the root as small as you can. Repeat with other half, discard stem.

**The finer you chop the onions the thicker your sauce will be!**

*Always sauté onions well, frying them at a high enough heat so that the sulphur compounds are caramelized. If onions are allowed to steam in their own juices, the flavor will be inferior and the resulting food, I observed, can cause indigestion. Onions for sautéing should be chopped as fine and as evenly-sized as possible to ensure that all the bits are cooked through. For stirfrying use green onions cut at a slant, or if you must use cooking onions, cut rings or thin strips.*

**Please no great chunks of indigestibles!**

Members of the onion family:

- Red or Purple onions are mild flavored and decorative for salads and sandwiches.
- Bermuda and Spanish Onions are sweet tasting for serving raw on burgers.
- Pearl Onions are very small, good in a cream sauce, in stews and pickled.

- Shallots are small yellow skinned onions, with a flavor between garlic and onion, good in salads and sauces, mainly used in French cooking.
- Green onions, Spring onions or Scallions are baby onions. Their flavor gets stronger with increased size. Green onions are most versatile. They are excellent raw, chopped in salads, on baked potatoes, as a garnish for soups and salads or stir-fried Chinese style.



#### **Parsnip:**

This root vegetable looks like a white carrot. Small quantities add intense parsley-like flavor to soups and stews. Sometimes served creamed or fried. Parsnip is an acquired taste. Try it in bean salad.



#### **Peas:**

This is probably the most popular and most abused vegetable in North America. You have only to look at the pale, soggy, often canned offering next to the meat at many restaurants to realize that peas deserve more respect.

Of course fresh peas in the shell are the ultimate, but in my household they are so popular that they have never made it to the pot yet. However, I have boiled the shells to make a wonderful stock to use when making pea soup from the frozen variety.

*Frozen peas are a must in the freezer. A handful added to a soup, even a canned consomme, immediately gives an impression of something special. Steamed to a point of just done, but still firm they can be served with a dab of butter and sprinkling of parsley, in a white sauce or covered with Hollandaise.*

Canned peas are handy to have around to add to vegetable salads, as a base for cream soups or as a garnish.

Please note canned peas are often high in sodium because they are sized by floating them in a brine before processing.

Other fresh peas of note are:

- Snow peas are very flat and slightly limp
- Sugar snap is a cross between snow and shelling peas, rounder and firmer.

Both of the above can be steamed or stir-fried without shelling.



#### **Peppers:**

Peppers are very high in Vitamin C and can be enjoyed raw in sandwiches or salads, sautéed, in a ratatouille, stuffed or used as a seasoning in a variety of dishes. Pepper types are too numerous to list from sweet and mild to extremely

hot. Often the type to be used is clearly specified in ethnic recipes. To reduce the heat of a hot pepper take a slice off the hip of the pepper close to the stem. Twist to remove stem and seed head in one piece, scrape out the veins with a knife, then cut to desired shape and size.



*Be careful not to touch seeds or veins of hot peppers. Do not touch your eyes or other tender parts of your body when working with hot peppers. Wash your hands with soap and lukewarm water immediately after handling hot peppers.*



#### **Potatoes:**

Potatoes are tubers that grow underground. The foliage is poisonous and poisons can develop in the tubers if they are exposed to light. Store potatoes in a cool, dark place.

Never use potatoes that have turned green.

Potatoes are a most versatile nutritious vegetable, high in vitamins B, C and G and contain no more calories than an apple. It's what you put on them that is fattening. The skin contains many nutrients, so in keeping with current trends, do not peel potatoes unless you must.

- Soak new potatoes in salted lukewarm water for ½ hour, scrape off the blemishes and cook without peeling.
- Potatoes boiled in their skin retain more nutrients and are easier to peel with less waste. These cooked potatoes, drained and covered, can be stored refrigerated for several days and used as required.
- When boiling any kind of potatoes, cook slowly at a simmer in a minimum of water to cover. The texture will be more even.
- Raw potatoes do not freeze well.
- Leftover mashed potatoes can be frozen and rejuvenated in the microwave, used in yeast breads or as a thickener in soups and sauces.
- Potato-based pastas, such as gnocchi, made with cooked potatoes can be kept frozen successfully and boiled as required without thawing.
- Starchy potatoes are good for baking, but fall apart on boiling.
- Look for waxy skinned potatoes for a firm texture.



- To bake potatoes place them in a preheated 425° F oven for 40-60 minutes.
- Grated potatoes will not turn brown if mixed with a little yoghurt.

### Salsify or oyster plant:

This is a root vegetable. Because it discolors easily, it is best cooked in its skin then peeled and served in a cream sauce or peeled, breaded and fried.

### Sorrel:

These leaves look similar to spinach, but are slightly narrower. The color is less intensely green and turns a yellowish khaki when cooked. The flavor is very tart, reminiscent of rhubarb. Sorrel can be used fresh in salads, as a flavoring with fish or in soups and sauces. Favored in French and Hungarian cooking.

### Spinach:

This leafy favorite of Mediterranean cooking is used extensively world wide.

Use it fresh alone or in combination with other greens in salads. Sauté it as a side dish or add it as a layer in casseroles like lasagna. Spinach makes a great pastry filling in quiches or filo pastry. Spinach is very compatible with garlic, mushrooms, milk or cream, feta cheese and shallots.

### Squash:

There are many varieties available, each with its unique flavor. Squashes are versatile steamed, microwaved, sautéed, baked or as an ingredient in muffins and loaves.

### Summer Squashes:

Summer squashes are zucchini, pattypan, crook neck, straight neck, chayote. Do not peel these. When they are tender and young, use them in salads as a substitute for cucumber, alternatively, pan fry them or sauté them with peppers for a ratatouille. They can also be pickled, deep fried, stir-fried or steamed and served in a yogurt and dill sauce, tomato sauce or an herb flavored sauce. Summer squashes generally have a bland flavor and take to spicy preparations very well. Garlic, black pepper, olives, tomatoes, onions, basil, oregano and marjoram complement summer squashes. Winter Squashes are Acorn, butternut, spaghetti, banana, pumpkin, turban and hubbard. These keep well for months and can provide a reasonably priced source of vitamins and minerals even in winter. Winter squashes have a tough shell. Split them and scoop out the seeds and the mushy pulp around them before cooking.

Complementary flavors are brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves,

ginger, raisins and nuts.

### Sweet Potatoes and Yams:

These two vegetables are often confused, yet they are not the same plant, but look and taste similar. They can also be used interchangeably in recipes. Yams are tropical, while sweet potatoes grow in temperate zones. They can be used in salads, stews, soups, pancakes, casseroles or served as a side dish instead of potatoes.

Complement sweet potato dishes with brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger, raisins or oranges.

### Tomatoes:

Tomatoes are the most extensively used vegetable in nearly all cultures, raw as a salad ingredient, cooked in soups and sauces, stuffed, grilled, baked, broiled, candied, sautéed, stewed, in casseroles and as a base for condiments.

There are innumerable canned tomato products on the market for your convenience. They are a boon to the creative cook, so get to know them well.

Dried tomatoes, sun dried as well as dehydrated, are becoming very popular because of their intense tomato flavor.

Working with tomatoes:



To skin tomatoes for preserving or stuffing, scald in boiling water for 1 minute, drain and plunge into cold water to cool. The skin will peel off easily.



For stuffing the top is cut off and the seeds are scraped out.



Tomatoes can be frozen whole and added to recipes without thawing.

Season tomatoes with oregano, basil, thyme, garlic, onions, black pepper, bay leaves or anchovy paste.

### Turnips and Rutabagas:

These vegetables are usually sold waxed and must be peeled. They can be served in a variety of ways: steamed and mashed, scalloped, glazed or stuffed and baked.

### Water Chestnuts:

**This oriental vegetable is fast becoming a favorite in salads and stir-fries. It is quite bland, but has an appealing crunchy texture that adds a nice contrast to the other ingredients in a dish.**



# **Grains and Pasta**

I really had trouble naming this chapter. Fiber sounds unappetizing. Starch sounds fattening. Cereal sounds like snap, crackle and pop.

## **Grains**

The grain is the seed of the cereal plant and it contains the best the plant could produce to insure nutrition of the seedling and thus the continuation of the species. Whole grains are usually high in fiber as well as in complex carbohydrates (alias starch) and are the source of a number of vitamins and minerals, if the grains are not refined to the point where these are lost. They also contain proteins (gluten) and a small amount of fat in the form of unsaturated oils. In other words, the foods produced from grains are good for you.

To take advantage of all this goodness, think of using grains creatively. Side dishes need not be restricted to plain rice or mashed potatoes. Pasta and a variety of grains have been added to the cooking repertoire by many cooks with culinary success as well as nutritional gain.

### **Wheat**

The most important cereal in western civilization is wheat.

There are different types of wheats:

- Durum wheat is high in gluten and is used for milling semolina to make pastas.
- Hard wheat is high in gluten, therefore the flour made from it is usually used for bread making.
- Soft wheat is low in gluten and is used for making pastry and cake flour.

Gluten is a protein. As the name suggests, it is the gooey part of the flour. In the kernel it's the adhesive between the starchy particles. The more gluten there is in the flour the more elastic the product. Kneading enhances the manifestation of gluten by increasing its elasticity. It is clear that in pasta making and bread baking, increased amounts of gluten are an advantage in creating the desired texture and holding the pasta together in boiling. It is equally clear that those qualities are not desired in making delicate cakes, muffins or pastries. Flours made from cereals other than wheat contain little or no gluten.

### **Wheat Flours**

Although strictly speaking anything milled fine is a flour, in the western world flour generally refers to finely ground wheat .

A kernel of wheat is made up of the central starchy endosperm, the germ which is the bud of the future wheat plant and this is covered by the skin or bran. The bran and the germ are removed for milling all purpose flour to improve its chemistry for baking. After the milling the flour may be enriched with minerals and vitamins lost in the milling process.

- All purpose flour was created to provide the home baker with a flour suitable for most of the home cooking and baking requirement.

*All purpose flour is a milled mixture of hard and soft wheat endosperm with all the bran removed. Because in the process of milling all the bran and wheat germ are removed, usually vitamin B is added to the flour to replace the lost nutrients and the flour is then termed "enriched". The exact blend of wheat types varies from brand to brand and the moisture content may vary from mill to mill, or as a consequence of the climate of your area. Accordingly, recipes may have to be adjusted slightly to get the best quality in your baking. Because of the variations in manufacturing, it is best to find a brand you like and stick with it.*

*All purpose flour can be bleached or unbleached. There is very little difference in the nutritional value between the two, however unbleached has not gone through the chemical process of whitening, therefore it can be called somewhat less processed. Because, as the name suggests, it is blended to produce good results for all types of recipes, it may not produce the best result for any particular one. If you are seriously into a specific kind of baking I urge you to experiment to find the right flour for your purpose.*

- Whole wheat - The entire kernel is ground to produce the flour. Consequently the nutrition of the germ and the high fibre value of the bran is included, however the baking quality may suffer. Whole wheat flour is high in protein, but the bran breaks the gluten strands resulting in a heavier dough. If you wish to use whole-wheat flour you have to adjust your recipes by reducing the flour, to get good results. Since whole-wheat flour contains the wheat germ which is high in oils, it can easily become rancid. Store this flour in the refrigerator or freezer.

- Graham flour is a very finely ground whole-wheat flour.

- Bread flour is also known as strong flour. It is milled from hard wheat with high gluten content. The gluten acts as an elastic balloon holding the gases that form during the fermentation of the yeast. This produces chewier European style bread. Until recently this type of flour was seldom available to the public; it was only sold to bakeries.

- Instant Blending Flour is the same as regular flour, but larger grained. It is useful in making pastas, stretchy filo type dough and as a thickener for

sauces, soups and gravies.

- Self-raising flour is regular soft wheat flour with salt and baking powder added before packaging.

*Bread Crumbs and Croutons are useful in many recipes and really need little explanation. However, I want to add some words of caution. Many of these products come packaged from the manufacturers and can be rancid, because the original bread contained shortening and/or milk.*

#### Other Wheat Products

- Wheat germ is the dormant embryo of the future wheat plant. It tastes nutty and is rich in oils and vitamin B. Wheat germ should be frozen or refrigerated because the oils can go rancid very quickly.
- Bran is the fibrous coating of wheat. Because of its high fiber content it is favored as a breakfast cereal and often added to muffins.
- Farina is also known as Cream of Wheat®, wheatlets and wheat hearts. It is well known as a creamy breakfast porridge. Farina looks like a pale cornmeal. These hard granules of endosperm are sifted out when hard wheat is milled.

This is a very useful ingredient to have around the kitchen. Farina absorbs a large quantity of moisture without altering the taste of the food. Therefore it can be put to good use by sprinkling it on pie crust, strudel, pate crust and wherever the juices could make the crust soggy. I also use it to make "crustless" quiches and pies, dumplings for soup and a browned side dish to serve with stews.

- Semolina is similar to farina, but is milled exclusively from durum wheat and is used almost exclusively in pasta making. Couscous is a product made from coarse semolina. It is very quick cooking and is an excellent substitute for rice.
- Wheat Berries are hulled wheat kernels. They require long soaking and long cooking. Wheat berries are used in making kutya, a very important Christmas dish in Slavic countries.
- Cracked Wheat is cracked whole-wheat kernels. It is used in breads, casseroles, pilafs, salads and as a hot cereal.
- Bulgur is cracked wheat, hulled and steamed or parboiled. It is sold dry. Serve as you would rice or make Tabouleh, a Middle Eastern Salad.



## **Other Grains and Grain Products**

◆ Rye is hardier than wheat and grows easier in adverse climates like those experienced in Scandinavia and parts of Russia. Rye flour is dark and because of its low gluten makes a heavy bread. Often, rye flour is mixed with wheat flour to give a lighter color and better textured bread.

◆ Barley is a grain used in soups, pilafs, casseroles and as a substitute for rice. It's a good source of fiber.

- Pot Barley has its outer layer of bran and germ removed.
- Pearl Barley is even further refined and cooks even faster.

◆ Kasha is steamed roasted buckwheat groats. A staple in Slavic and Jewish cooking.

◆ Millet is a seed of small round kernels. It has a nutty flavor and can be used instead of rice as a side dish.

◆ Quinoa is a small round seed from South America, sweet and soft. Use like rice.

◆ Rice is the most widely used grain in the world. It is the staple food of many countries because it's so adaptable.

- Brown rice is the whole grain with the bran left on. It requires a longer cooking time, but provides more flavor, roughage and nutrients than white, processed rice.
- Long grain rice is long and slender and cooks to a fluffy consistency.
- Short grain or Italian rice is shorter and roundish. It is sticky and creamy when cooked.
- Converted rice is parboiled before the husk is milled off. It is nutritionally superior to white rice, because the B vitamins are forced into the kernels before the bran is eliminated.
- Wild rice is not really a rice, but the seed of a tall aquatic grass. Prepare it like you would brown rice.

◆ Corn products are very useful in a variety of cooking and baking projects:

- Corn meal is a coarse milled product of either white or yellow corn. Because it absorbs moisture readily, it's used as a coating on breads and in batters. Corn meal is the main ingredient of polenta, mamaliga, Johnny cake and pone. Polenta is a porridge made of corn meal and used as a base for a variety of refried side dishes, casserole layers, stuffing, breakfast cereal or desserts.
- Grits are made from corn that has been treated with lye to remove the skin; it is also called hominy. The texture is similar to corn meal, but the flavor is somewhat different. Usually white corn is used to make grits.
- Corn starch is a very fine flour used mainly as a thickener in sauces and puddings.

***Flours and grains should be stored sealed and dry so that moisture and "off" flavors are not absorbed.***

### **General instructions for cooking grains:**

- Quick-cooking grains, like rice are generally added to twice the volume of boiling liquid and are cooked at a simmer for about 25-30 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed.
- Slow cooking grains like millet, bulgur, brown rice and wild rice are added to two times their volume of salted, and sometimes seasoned boiling water, the heat is reduced to simmer and cooked covered until all liquid is absorbed, or about 30-45 minutes.
- The procedure is the same for buckwheat, but the water quantity is three times that of the grain.



## **Pasta**

The most versatile budget saver on the market is pasta. Pasta is a good source of iron and B vitamins, low in salt and sugar. Nutritionists approve of pasta for its complex carbohydrate, high fiber content and applaud that increased pasta consumption decreases the use of meat and thus our fat intake. Pasta is also the greatest budget stretcher. While most Italian pasta is made with durum semolina, other nationalities make noodles with eggs added to ensure firmness.

Thanks to the popularity of pasta:

- Fresh Italian pasta such as fettuccine, tortellini and linguini are readily available in the coolers.



➤ Turning to the dry noodle shelves the variety is even greater and, as if by magic, the different shapes and textures give a different quality to your favorite spaghetti sauce recipe, soup or pasta salad. The possibilities are almost limitless.

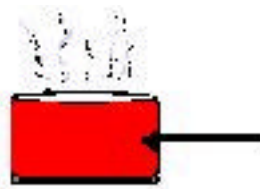
➤ We Hungarians use toppings on noodles that are really strange to the uninitiated, such as fried grated cabbage, grated walnuts or ground poppy seeds sprinkled with sugar, potatoes flavored with onions and paprika, cottage cheese with sour cream topped with crisp fried bacon or just plain ordinary jam.

➤ The Chinese do wonderful things with steamed noodles, using soy sauce, ginger, stirfried meats and vegetables not to mention the impressive "bird's nest" some restaurants create by frying the noodles pressed between two metal strainers.

➤ Slavic cooking is famous for stuffing pasta dough with an extraordinary variety of fillings. Thanks to the demands of a large Slavic population in Western Canada, labor intensive perogies, ready to boil or fry, are available in the freezer sections of most grocery stores. Topped with sour cream, fried onions, crumbled fried bacon or all three, they provide a delicious super-fast meal at a reasonable price.

**Cook pasta in plenty of water.**

Use a wide Dutch oven, rather than a skinny, tall stock pot. Pasta needs a large surface to float on. Cook in rapidly boiling water, adding the pasta in small quantities so that the water is not cooled too much, but is kept at the boiling point. Add salt and a tablespoon of oil to the water. The oil will prevent the pasta from sticking together when drained. Stir once, but do not stir pasta after you have made sure that the strands are not sticking to the pot or to each other. Strain in a colander, not with a slotted spoon. Do not overcook pasta, strain it when it is just chewy, al dente.



**Quick pasta meal ideas:**

➤ Buttered garlic pasta with parsley to serve with braised meat.

➤ Quick macaroni and cheese - add a little milk to cooked macaroni and heat it on medium, add shredded cheddar, heat through, but do not boil, season with pepper, salt and a touch of sage. Garnish with fresh chives, chopped black olives

and/or chopped fresh Italian tomatoes.

➤ Your favorite shape and color topped with home made Tomato Sauce.

➤ Add canned tuna, salmon or shrimp to cooked pasta, moisten the mixture with a dab of mayonnaise or yogurt, then garnish it with chopped olives, capers or green onions.

➤ Mix pasta with a Tetrazinni Style Mushroom Sauce.

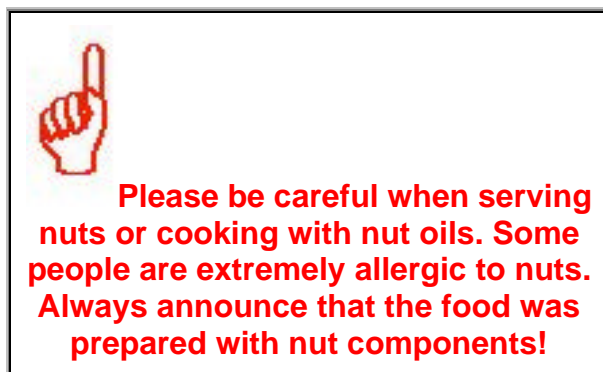
➤ Add a dab of pesto to your favorite colored noodle and serve with plenty of Parmesan cheese and some diced fresh tomatoes that you've microwaved briefly just to warm them up. A very satisfying quick meal.



# Nuts, Legumes and Fruits

I did a lot of soul searching until I decided to put these three subjects together. The main reason is that nuts, seeds and legumes are nutritionally similar and are very important to the increasingly popular vegetarian diet. Another reason they belong in one chapter is because some nuts are legumes, and fruits are often combined with nuts in recipes.

Nuts, seeds and legumes are the nutrients stored by the plant to nourish the plant embryo during germination, until the roots develop sufficiently to feed the seedling. Consequently, to ensure the survival of the species the mother plant stores the best nutrients in the seed. All seeds are an excellent source of protein, vitamins and minerals. They are usually quite high in fat, but it is chiefly in the form of unsaturated oils.



Using nuts in cooking:

- ❄ Almonds are the most versatile. They go well with chicken, veal, fish, beans and many sweets. They are also handy as a garnish.
- ❄ Hazelnut or filberts combine well with a number ingredients, but are especially good in fruit breads.
- ❄ Walnuts and pecans are the highest in oil content of all the nuts and can be used interchangeably in recipes. Pecans are more expensive, but do not go stale as easily as walnuts do. Walnuts that are bitter and biting are stale. Smell them before you buy. Reject any that have a sour or bitter odor. Added to a salad, rice dish or in a stuffing walnuts can be sensational, if fresh.
- ❄ Pistachios added to a lowly meat loaf, a bread stuffing or a pate can glamorize it.
- ❄ Peanuts are the least expensive of the nuts, with all the nutritional goodness of their higher priced cousins. They can generally be used as a substitute for any of the other nuts called for in recipes. Peanuts are often added to other nuts in

commercial cooking and baking as an extender, thus reducing the cost of the ingredients.

❄️ Cashews make a good snack or are used interchangeably with peanuts in oriental cooking.

❄️ Chestnuts are more than just roasted chestnuts on city streets. Europeans prize the puree made of them for fancy cakes and poultry stuffings. Chestnuts also go well with Brussels sprouts, spinach and a variety of other vegetables.

*To roast chestnuts, make a slit on the convex part and roast at 350°F until the slit opens. Let it cool slightly and remove the shell and the inner brown skin. Eat as a snack or slice and chop to add to your recipe.*

*To make chestnut puree, boil the roasted chestnuts until tender and remove all of the brown inner skin, mash with a fork and add to your stuffing or flavor with sugar and rum to use in desserts and pastry.*

❄️ Coconuts are the seed of the palm tree. Coconut is used in chutneys, in a variety of desserts and as a garnish. Coconut milk is a staple cooking ingredient in many tropical countries. Oil pressed from coconut is palm oil and is highly saturated. It is used to give icings a sheen.

*To clean a coconut:*

*Pierce the "eyes" of the nut with a skewer and drain the liquid into a container. This liquid can then be used as coconut milk in recipes calling for it. Bake the coconut shell at 400° F for 15 minutes, then break the shell with a hammer and remove the white flesh from the shell by picking it out with the point of a knife. Peel off the brown membrane with a peeler and grate the white flesh.*

❄️ Seeds such as pine nuts , sunflower, poppy and pumpkin seeds, as well as sesame seeds, contain much the same nutrients as nuts and legumes and are great for adding texture, flavor and nutrition to a variety of foods.

**General methods for nuts:**

- To remove the skin from nuts pour boiling water on them to scald or blanch them. Let them soak for a brief period and peel off the skin.
- To toast seeds and nuts, spread them in a thin layer on cookie sheets and bake at 250° F for 1 hour turning them occasionally with an egg lifter during that period. They can also be toasted in a sauce pan at medium heat stirring constantly or in the microwave. Toasting brings out a richer flavor. Seasonings may be added during toasting to produce a variety of flavored nuts for snacking.
- Nut butters can be made easily in a food processor by adding 2

tablespoons of cooking oil to each cup of nuts and whirling the mixture to a paste. If it turns out too thick, add a little more oil. These butters have the advantage of being purely nuts and oil, however without the stabilizers and homogenizers they will eventually separate. Salt can be omitted or regulated easily when the butter is made at home.

- Chopping nuts can be done with a sharp knife or 2-3 pulses in the food processor.
- When the recipe calls for ground or grated nuts, use a hand grater or the grating attachment of a food processor.



## Dry Legumes

Legumes are nature's most perfect food. They contain 6 of the 8 essential amino acids, are high in soluble fiber, protein, complex carbohydrates and low in fats. Legumes can be stored for years without losing substantial nutrient value and lend themselves to a great variety of preparation methods. Small wonder they are the mainstay of a vegetarian diet.

❄ When buying legumes, look for bright color and uniform size. Make sure they are free of foreign matter and not broken or cracked.

Wash legumes well in a bowlful of cold water. Scoop them out without disturbing the grit in the bottom of the bowl and rinse again.

❄ Beans and chick peas in general should be soaked overnight in cold water, but no harm is done if they are not. The cooking time will be just that much longer. Soaked beans need 1½-2 hours of simmering. Lentils and peas are quicker cooking, 30-50 minutes, consequently they are not usually soaked.

Beans: There are a great variety of beans on the market.

❄ Kidney beans (red or white which are also called cannelloni) are usually prepared stewed, baked, in soups or salads.

❄ Pinto Beans are mealy, mottled red, good for soups. They are also used in Mexican dishes as refried beans and dips.

❄ Lima Beans are used in soups, stews and salads.

❄ Navy Beans are small white beans cooked in soups, stews. Baked Beans and Minestrone Soup are the best known dishes made with these.

❄ Great Northern White Beans are medium sized white kidney shaped beans, used in stews, cassoulets and salads.

❄ Black Beans or Turtle Beans are common in Mexican and Latin American dishes.

❄ Broad Beans need to be soaked. They have a strong flavor and are usually used pureed. They need extra long cooking, about 2- 2 ½ hours.

❄ Red beans are oriental. They are sweet and are used to make a Chinese dessert soup or a paste filling for buns.

❄ Soy Beans are bland, therefore they are best used with flavorful ingredients. They need long cooking, 3-4 hours. Soy bean and tofu, a soy product are an excellent meat substitute in vegetarian stews and soups.

❄ Lentils: are cooked in soups, salads, stews, sweet and sour preparations and are often combined with grains. There are usually two kinds available the small red and the larger brown lentil. Cooking time is 30-40 mins.

❄ Peas:

❄ Whole peas have a tough skin like beans and need long cooking times.

❄ Split peas come in two varieties yellow or green and are used for making soups or purees.

❄ Black-eyed peas are favored in Southern and Caribbean cooking combined with rice and in salads.

❄ Chick Peas, also known as Garbanzo beans, need to be cooked 2-3 hours. They are great for marinated salads and in hummus, a Middle Eastern dip.



## Fruits

We all know the value of fruits in desserts, but thanks to the many ethnic influences, fruits are increasingly used in savory cooking as a base for sauces, salad dressings or in stewed or braised meat preparations.

Fresh fruits are cheapest at harvest time. Canned, preserved, frozen and dried fruits are picked at the height of the season and processed near the grower. Consequently they may be cheaper than you can ever buy them fresh, if you are

located far from the growing area.

Dried fruits are useful to have in the cupboard to use in cooking and baking or to pack for hiking and camping. They contain all the vitamins and minerals of the original fruit. Dry raisins, currants, dates, figs, apricots, papaya, pineapple, apple, pear and prunes are readily available.

Use dried fruits in baking, in cereals, in salads, add them to rice, sweet potatoes and make sauces to serve with meats or desserts.

Berries are particularly good in savory sauces imparting sweetness and tartness at the same time.

Try adding fresh fruits to stews. It's guaranteed to start a conversation!



Olives are considered a fruit. They are the indispensable ingredient in Mediterranean cooking. Available in various sizes, pitted or unpitted, often stuffed with nuts, pimentos or onions. Black olives are tree ripened; green ones are picked green. Olives complement a great variety of foods and make an attractive garnish. An open jar of olives may be kept refrigerated for a long time. Oils pressed from olives are highly regarded in cooking and salad dressings.



# Seasonings

Skillful use of seasonings is what sets good cooks apart. You have to understand your flavorings and their characteristics to become a creative cook. This is where your sense of smell and taste has to be fully awake to note the performance of your ingredients for future reference. You have to be flexible to adjust the given recipes to your own taste, available ingredients and the preferences of your family.



## **SALT:**

So much is being said about salt these days that it is difficult not to be repetitious. The fact is that we tend to oversalt. This results in a high sodium intake (which is bad for you), the masking of the natural flavors of food and at times it produces unwanted variation in the flavor and texture of the food. --- Let me explain. ----

The cells of the meat or vegetable you are cooking contain a small amount of salt and lots of water. Salt has an affinity for water. When you cover a piece of raw food with salt, the water from the cells wants to migrate to the salt and the juices are drawn out. Scientifically, this is called osmosis. These juices are gone forever and the meat is dry or the vegetable is shrivelled. For this reason, you want to create a seal on the meat or vegetable surface, somewhat like shrink wrap.

Quickly cooking the surface of the meat or vegetable will coagulate the proteins and form just such a seal. Therefore, in most instances do not salt the food until it is half-way to being fully cooked. For stews and some soups, of course, you want the flavorful juices in the liquid, therefore you add the salt at the beginning. Liver leaks juices so easily that it's best to add the salt after serving, at the table.

### ***Salt Facts:***

- Salt is often added as a preservative to prepared foods, because low salt or salt-free items spoil faster.
- When considering the cooking and dietary effects of salt one must remember that a number of seasonings contain salt. Examples of these are garlic salt, celery salt, seasoned salts and bouillon cubes. When you use these you are using mostly salt and have overpaid for the minute amount of seasonings the salt contains. Read labels. You can mix your own seasonings easily from scratch and add the salt at the appropriate time.



- Only about a third of our salt intake comes from salt added at home, the rest comes from processed foods.
- Salt is quite unnecessary in sweet preparations.
- A little sugar or honey added to salad dressings allows you to reduce the amount of salt and oil needed.

### **Vinegar:**

Vinegar originally was made from wine that had gone sour. Today the ordinary white vinegar is synthetically made, resulting in a flavorless, consistent and inexpensive product.

### **Types of vinegar:**

- Distilled white or ordinary vinegar is made from ethyl alcohol. It has no flavor of its own other than the acidity.
- Pickling vinegar is the concentrated version of white vinegar. It is useful for pickling, cleaning and cooking; just remember to use less of it.
- Cider vinegar is made from fermented apple juice and has a distinct flavor.
- Malt vinegar is made from malted barley and may contain other cereal matter. A must for fish and chips.
- Wine vinegar can be red or white depending on the wine, sherry or champagne it's made from. The price, quality, and flavor vary with the kind of wine used.
- Rice vinegar, as the name suggests, is made from rice wine or sake. It has a delicate flavor and is used extensively in oriental cooking.
- Balsamic vinegar was originally made only around Modena, Italy from sweet grapes, fermented slowly (10-70 years) in a series of wood casks made of oak, juniper, chestnut and other hard woods. The flavor comes mainly from these woods. Now most balsamic vinegar is now made by industrial methods using herbs and wood chips.
- Flavored vinegars are very popular. They usually owe their flavor to fruits and/or spices. They are very easy to make at home and can add a unique touch to your recipes.

There are many uses of vinegar:

- Add vinegar to the water to wash pesticides off fruits and vegetables.

- Vinegar can be added to oversalted foods with a little sugar to reduce the problem.
- Wrap cheese in a cloth saturated with vinegar to keep it from going moldy.
- Add a tablespoon of white vinegar to vegetables when they are done, but have to be reheated or kept warm. It will keep them from overcooking.
- Soak raw kidneys and venison in vinegar and water overnight to make them taste milder.



## **Sauces and Condiments:**

### **Hot Sauces:**

Although Tabasco® is the best known, there are many kinds produced in the American South and even more on the Caribbean Islands. Hot sauces are made from the pulp of cayenne peppers and are flavored with salt and vinegar.

### **Soy sauce:**

Soy sauce is made from salted, cooked, fermented soybean, wheat, salt, sugar and yeast. This complex fermentation process can take up to two years. Soy sauce is an essential ingredient in "Oriental" cooking. This flavoring is very salty so hold the salt!

### **Mustard:**

Prepared mustards are useful ingredients in the kitchen. Whether you use ordinary hot dog mustard or a gourmet variety, mustard can add zip and tang to ordinary sauces, gravies and salad dressings.

### **Horseradish:**

Horseradish can be used as a seasoning as well as a condiment. It will give a sharp tang to seafood sauce, cream cheese or any thickened sauce. Wasabi is the very hot Japanese horseradish.

### **Flavored Oils:**

There is a new trend in using herb and spice flavored oils. They are useful in quick preparations and look attractive on the kitchen shelf, but I must caution you not to make these oils at home or buy them at fairs. Flavored oils can easily be contaminated with the bacteria that causes botulism. Reputable manufacturers use preservatives and proper canning techniques to overcome this problem. Oils containing fresh cloves of garlic are particularly prone to growing this bacteria. So leave this job to the experts.



## Herbs and Spices

The words herbs and spices are often used interchangeably.

Strictly speaking:



herbs are the aromatic leaves or flowers of temperate plants



spices are aromatic seeds, buds, roots, fruit or flowers of tropical plants.

Many herbs and spices started as medicines for various ailments and made their way into the culinary arts later. Many of them have anti-microbial properties, useful in preserving or cleansing the foods to which they are added.

Historically, spices were used to preserve food or to mask the "off" flavor of slightly rancid or spoiled ingredients. Many spices have a romantic past. They initiated explorations, wars were fought over them and murder was committed to procure them. The history of spices makes for spicy reading. Because many of the spices came from far away colonies, they were extremely expensive. Using spices became the snobbish pretension of the rich. Some recipes still reflect this attitude of showing off your affluence by the number of exotic spices used in a recipe.

I have several arguments against using too many spices:



If the recipe calls for  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of a mild herb or spice in a dish that will make 2 cups or more, you might as well leave it out because you will most likely not taste the difference.



Too many different spices confuse the palate and mask the true flavor of your fresh ingredients.



Assembling a cupboard full of spices is expensive and chances are the spice will be stale by the time you come to use it again.



I suspect those recipes that use 5-6 spices are still an attempt at showing off and are used to cloak a simple recipe to make it "Gourmet".

*Having said all that, I must also say, herbs and spices are important to add that special character to Foods. This is especially true when preparing ethnic dishes. Cooking methods are usually similar or are the same. It is the seasonings that identify a special locale of origin.*

### ***How to build a spice and herb repertoire:***

- List the tried and true spices and herbs your family definitely likes. When following a recipe increase the quantity of those ingredients that you know they'll like.
- When you want to add a new spice to your repertoire, find a side dish or a sauce to serve on the side, that uses liberal quantities of that spice. Watch the reaction.

Using a side dish as a taste tester means, no one will go hungry if they don't like the flavor and you don't end up tossing out an expensive main course.

### ***For example:***



Try sprinkling steamed broccoli with ground nutmeg.



Mix yogurt, a touch of sugar and a generous amount of dill weed for a sauce to serve with fish or as a vegies dip.



Make a white sauce with a little chicken stock using the new herb or spice and serve it in a gravy boat beside your roast or boiled potatoes.

If any of these attempts result in a hit, start using that spice in other dishes.

Spices and herbs are so dependent on individual tastes and the ethnic origin of the food being prepared, that the following list of their attributes is but an attempt to guide you in their use. By all means experiment, who knows you may discover an all new flavor.

### ***Herb and Spice Facts:***



Herbs and spices should be kept sealed, cool and dry. With time and heat they gradually lose their aromatic oils.



Fresh spices have the best flavor. Alternatively, if you suspect that your herb or spice is no longer fresh, use just a little more than the recipe says.



Whole herbs and spices lose their aroma slower than crushed or ground ones. If possible, buy them whole and grind or crush them as you need them.



Spice "experts" try to tell you to replace all your herbs and spices after a given number of months. This is ridiculous. Many spices will keep their original properties for years and the cost of replacing them is prohibitive. Strictly speaking herbs and spices do not spoil, but can lose their zip after a while. Smell

your herbs and spices before using, to see if they lost their aroma and therefore their taste. Buy small quantities of the spices you seldom use or keep a small amount on the shelf and freeze the rest.



Dry herbs are 3-4 times stronger than fresh herbs. Adjust the quantities accordingly.



The finer you chop fresh herbs the more flavor you'll get out of them.



Crush dry herbs in the palm of your hand or in a mortar with pestle for added flavor.



Add delicate herbs halfway through the cooking process, or even later, to preserve their flavor.



Fresh herbs freeze easily. Wash, drain and chop them to the desired size. Freeze them in small wide neck jars (mustard or jam jars will do) and "carve" out a chunk as needed. The only herb that cannot be treated this way is basil. It turns black. Chop washed basil and freeze it, in ice cube trays, covered with water in which a tablet of vitamin C has been dissolved.



You can have excellent chopped frozen parsley without lifting a knife. Wash and pinch leaves off the stem. Blot off excess water and freeze them in a zip lock bag. Squeeze out excess air. When frozen roll it bag and all with a rolling pin. Freeze and repeat until the desired fineness is reached.



Most herbs from the garden can be hung upside down in a cool, dark place to dry.



You can also dry herbs in the microwave. Spread leafy herbs on a paper towel and microwave for 1-4 minutes on medium or until almost dry. Let them finish drying on the counter overnight before placing them in a jar.



Curry and chili and other strong spices dominate food, milder ones enhance the flavor.



Use a tea egg or a piece of cheesecloth to hold spices during cooking and remove it at the end, if you don't like to see them floating in your food.

## Common Herbs and Spices

Herbs and spices are often the "secret ingredient" that sets the dish apart from the usual to become great. These are often in very small quantities that make them hard to detect, but if you do learn to detect them, you're onto great things.

✔ Allspice looks like pea size dark berries. The taste is a blend of cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg. It is used in spice cakes and cookies, fruit pies, pickles and corned beef.

✔ Anise is a small seed with an intense licorice flavor. It is used in cookies, liqueurs and cakes.

✔ Basil is an herb with a sweet aromatic taste. Basil is essential in Italian cooking, goes especially well with tomatoes and a variety of other vegetables. It is often used in combination with oregano and rosemary.

✔ Bay Leaf is usually bought whole as large dried leaves with barbed points along the edges. It is used in flavoring sweet-and-sour dishes, meats, potatoes, beans, pickles and tomato sauces. Look for dark green, blemish-free leaves. Remove bay leaves after cooking, because it can catch in the throat of the diner.

✔ Borage is a leafy herb with a cucumber taste. It is used in salads, added to green beans, fruit drinks and teas.

✔ Capers are the unopened bud of a shrub that grows wild all over the Mediterranean. Capers go particularly well with fish and are a nice addition to many salads.

✔ Caraway Seeds are a nutty flavored relative of anise and dill. Use in breads, cabbage dishes and soups.

✔ Cardamom is a fragrant seed. It is indispensable in traditional Indian cooking. Used in spice cakes, cookies, curries, apple and pumpkin pies, sweet potatoes and some pickles.

✔ Cayenne or Ground Red Pepper is a very hot powder. Use this spice cautiously. The alkaloid that gives it the hot taste doesn't wash off with water, it is only soluble in fats, the hot taste stays with you. Used in a number ethnic cuisines such as Cajun, Mexican and East Indian dishes.

- ✔ Celery Seeds are the dried seeds of celery with a concentrated celery flavor. Useful in salads, flavored vinegars, roast fowl and stuffings.
- ✔ Chervil is a delicate herb similar to parsley. Used in flavoring fish, shellfish, chicken and eggs. It is one of the ingredients in Fines Herbes, a characteristic seasoning of the French cuisine.
- ✔ Chili Powder is an ancient traditional spice mixture. A similar combination was used by the Aztecs. It is a blend of dried chilies, red peppers, oregano, cumin and garlic powder. To make it hotter some add cayenne or more ground dry chilies. Used to flavor chilies, bean dishes, soups, eggs and cheese.
- ✔ Chinese Parsley or Cilantro is the leaf of the Coriander plant. Used with rice, beans, fish, shellfish, poultry, vegetables, salsa and salads. A staple of Mexican, Latin American, Mediterranean and Asian cuisine.
- ✔ Chives are grass like in appearance. They can be onion and/or garlic flavored. Use them in salads, with eggs or sliced tomatoes, cheese, fish, on baked potatoes, as a sandwich green and as a decorative garnish.
- ✔ Cinnamon is the sweet hot bark of a tree. Used mostly in sweet dishes, cakes, cookies, with apples and plums, mulled wine and teas.
- ✔ Cloves are tack shaped brown buds. They have a strong flavor, sweet and hot. Used to flavor ham, pickles, fruit dishes, chutneys, spice cakes and cookies. Use it sparingly.
- ✔ Coriander is the nutty seed of the Cilantro plant. It is used in pickles, pungent curries, couscous and gingerbread.
- ✔ Cumin is a small hot bitter seed. It is used in curry and chili powders, vegetable dishes, beans, fish lamb, chutney and dips.
- ✔ Dill is a mild tasting aromatic herb. Seeds and leaves are available dried. The fern-like leaves are sometimes available fresh. Dill goes well with pickles, fish, vegetables, cheeses, dips, seafood, tomatoes and yogurt. It is also used to make flavored vinegars and salad dressings.
- ✔ Fennel Seeds taste like a combination of dill and anise. Usually used in fish recipes, Scandinavian cakes and cookies, vegetables, salads, salad dressings and flavored vinegars.

✔ **File Powder** is a dry ground mild woodsy herb of ground sassafras leaves. Used in Creole cooking in making gumbo. File powder is added after the food is cooked, otherwise it will go stringy and tough.

✔ **Fines Herbes** is a blend of parsley, chives, tarragon and chervil, available as a blend of crumbled dry leaves. Used extensively in French cooking with fish, poultry, eggs and cheese.

✔ **Garlic**, the smelliest of the flavorings, is a member of the lily family. Lauded for its medicinal properties, garlic has become a favorite flavoring in recent years in all types of savory cooking. Garlic is usually sliced, minced, mashed with a knife or pressed. Garlic is high in minerals and vitamin C. It is also a digestive, disinfectant and lowers blood pressure. Garlic if burned, can take on a bitter flavor. Always add garlic after the onions are fried. Roast garlic is milder flavored than raw. It can be kept refrigerated for a week or can be frozen.

✔ **Ginger** is a hot tasting, knobby root. Used to flavor cakes, cookies, chicken soup, Chinese food, vegetables, fish, meat, preserves, fruits and salad dressings. To use fresh ginger slice thin rounds and cut these into "match-sticks" or dice as desired. Chopped ginger will keep in your freezer in a glass jar for a long time and you can "carve" a bit as needed. Alternatively you can freeze the whole chunk and grate as needed without thawing.

✔ **Juniper Berries** are aromatic and hot. They are used with fish, game, beef and in pickling ham.

✔ **Lemon Balm** is an herb with lemony taste and scent. It is used with soups, salads, jellies, jams and fruits.

✔ **Lemon Grass** has straw-like leaves and a lemony flavor. Typical of Southeast Asian and Near Eastern cooking. Used with seafood, chicken soup, salsas and vinaigrette.

✔ **Lemon Rind** is the yellow skin or zest from the lemon. It has an intense lemon flavor. It is usually used to flavor sweet preparations such as cakes, fruits, cheese cakes and cookies, but will also give an interesting twist to stewed chicken or a lemony sauce for fish.

✔ **Lovage** is an herb with a fresh celery taste. Used to flavor soups, stews and salads.

✔ **Mace** is the outer covering of the nutmeg. Similar in taste, but milder than



nutmeg. It is used in spice cakes, cookies and custards. It goes well with carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and in fruit dishes.

✔ Marjoram is a relative of oregano, but has a milder taste. This is an herb used extensively in Mediterranean cooking. Complements liver, meat, poultry and tomatoes. Great in pates.

✔ Meat tenderizer is an extract of the papaya fruit. It contains the protein splitting enzyme papain, which tenderizes the meat by breaking up the strands that hold it together. Papain works best at room temperature and its action stops at cooking temperatures. Add meat tenderizer a few minutes before cooking. If you add it too early the meat may become "over tenderized" and mushy.

✔ Mint is an herb with a cool taste. It has many varieties. Best known use is as a sauce with lamb. Mint is also an essential in Middle Eastern grain dishes, goes well with salads, potatoes, iced tea, peas, jellies and fruit salads.

✔ Mustard Powder is ground mustard seed. Used in sauces, pickles and in making hot mustard.

✔ Mustard Seeds are small and globe shaped. They come in a variety of colors from beige to nearly black. Used in pickles, flavored vinegars and homemade mustards.

✔ Nutmeg is an olive sized hard nut. It has a sweet nutty, distinctive flavor. Used in cakes, cookies, vegetables, custards and in eggnog.

✔ Onion (see Vegetables)

✔ Oregano is an herb with pungent flavor. It is used in the preparation of fish, meat, salad dressings, flavored vinegars, tomato dishes and with eggplant. An essential ingredient in Mediterranean and Mexican cooking.

✔ Paprika is a powder milled from dried red peppers. Hungarian paprika is a very fine powder, while Spanish paprika is a little coarser. Both are usually mild, unless specifically stated otherwise. Paprika burns easily to black bitter granules. Unless you are intending to burn it, always remove your pan from the burner, mix in the paprika and add the liquid ingredients, before returning the pot to the stove. In Cajun blackened foods the paprika is burnt intentionally. Since the aromatic oils of paprika dissolve only in oils and fats, sprinkling paprika on dry foods and steamed vegetables will not bring out its flavor.

✓ Parsley is a mild flavored aromatic herb that goes well with soups, salads and vegetables. Add parsley to your hot food just before serving, otherwise you'll cook away its flavor.

✓ Pepper is the dried fruit of the *Piper nigrum*.

- Black pepper is the whole immature fruit picked green and allowed to dry to its characteristic black color.
- Green pepper is the same, but artificially dried or preserved to retain its color.
- White pepper is the dried mature fruit with its dark outer coat removed.
- Pink pepper is the berry from the *Schinus terebinthifolius*, a South American tree. Not a pepper at all, but very attractive in those confetti pepper bottles.

The use of pepper needs no explanation. It is universally used to flavor savory foods.

✓ Rosemary is a mild-flavored, woody-tasting herb with needlelike leaves. It is used with lamb, pork, chicken, game, in stuffings and in flavored vinegars.

✓ Saffron is a fragrant spice. It is also the most expensive spice because the orange threads are the hand picked stigmas of a special crocus. A few threads should be soaked for a few minutes in a small amount of hot water before adding them to the food. Saffron is used in rice, couscous, seafood and in sweet yeast breads. Use sparingly.

✓ Sage is an herb with a musky flavor. It is mild and pleasant especially with fowl, eggs and in poultry stuffings.

✓ Savory is a peppery herb. Summer savory is more delicate than winter savory. It is usually used with beans of all sorts, in meat loaves, meatballs and in sausages.

✓ Tarragon is an herb with a slight licorice flavor. It is used in flavored vinegars, mustards and salads. Goes well with tomatoes, chicken and fish.

✓ Thyme is a mild flavored herb, used in stuffings, patés, sea food, fish, tomatoes, beans and eggplant.

✓ **Turmeric is a pungent bright yellow powder with a bitter, astringent taste. It is used with rice, in mustards, curry powder and pickles.**

✓ **Vanilla is an ancient flavoring, used by the Aztecs who added it to chocolate. Vanilla is the unripe fruit of a plant from the orchid family. The fruit resembles a pod and is called a "bean". Used in baking, puddings, ice creams, candy and liqueurs, as well as in some cosmetics.**



## **SPICE BLENDS**

**Curry is a blend of spices and other ingredients or a dish containing them. Blends of curry vary from country to country, from family to family. So do the methods of preparation. Authentically it is freshly crushed and blended from fresh roasted ingredients in the home. Curry use dates back to 2500 B.C. in the Indus Valley. It is best to be careful with curry. Many people dislike curry, others have very rigid preferences. If you really want to learn curry cookery, get your spice merchant to suggest an authentic cookbook and study it.**

**American Standard USDA curry powder contains:**

**coriander 36% turmeric 28%, cumin 10% fenugreek 10%, white pepper 5% allspice 4%, mustard 3% red pepper 2% ginger 2%**

**There are several imported varieties available:**

- **Masala is a blend that lacks turmeric.**
- **Curry pastes are moist blends that may contain coconut, onion, fresh chili and ginger.**
- **Curry sauces are condiments sold in a bottle.**
- **Curry oil is vegetable oil steeped in curry spices, used as a condiment or to add flavor to prepared foods.**

**Cajun Spice Mixture is used for blackened fish and meat dishes:**

**1 tsp. onion powder 1 tsp. garlic powder**

**1 tsp. ginger powder 1 tsp. black pepper**

**2 tsp. cayenne pepper 2 tsp. paprika**

**1 tsp. dry thyme 1 tsp. dry oregano**

**Italian Spice Mixture usually contains the following:**

**2 tsp. dry oregano 1 tsp. onion powder**

**1 tsp. garlic powder 1 tsp. black pepper**

**1 tsp. dry basil 1 tsp. dry rosemary**

**1/2 tsp. dry sage 1/2 tsp. dry thyme**

**dash of cayenne**



# **Basic Methods**



## **Dry Cooking**

**Roasting, Broiling, Pan Broiling, Grilling, Barbecuing, Smoking, Hot Rock Cooking, Planking and Pit Cooking.**

**Dry cooking means that meat is cooked without added liquid. For this reason it is very important to seal in the juices so that the meat will not dry out. Usually tender cuts of meat are chosen for this type of preparation. Cooking starts at a high heat, to sear the outside and lock in the moisture, and if the meat is a large chunk, as in a roast or a thick pork chop, the temperature is reduced after the searing step to ensure that the meat is cooked through.**



### **Roasting:**

**For determining the approximate roasting time required, use the stove chart as your guide, if there is one printed on your stove console.**

**If you haven't got one, here is a chart for you to use:**

**Cooking time minutes/pound at 325° F or 160° C:**

- **Beef 25-30**
- **Veal 40-45**
- **Lamb 35-40**
- **Ham 30-35**
- **Pork 40-45**
- **Poultry 25-30**

**Tape this to the inside of your cupboard near the stove, to use as a reference. This is just a rough guide, but it helps in estimating the timing.**

### **General Method:**



**Place meat fat side up and fowl breast side up. Season with spices, but do not add any salt. Place the pan in the oven at 450° F uncovered. After 15 minutes reduce the heat to 325 ° F. Cover lightly so that steam can escape and cook until**

the color of the meat or fowl has changed and the drippings sizzle. This is about 1/3 to 1/2 the cooking time, so set a timer and ignore your roast until the timer rings.

➤ Some recipes call for searing or browning the meat on the top of the stove before roasting to accomplish the same sealing effect, but since it's extra work and creates additional dirty pans, not to mention being impossible to achieve with a large turkey, for instance, I prefer to seal the meat with a high initial roasting temperature and salting after the seal is formed.

➤ Now you can salt the roast. If salt is added too early, before the meat has sealed, juices are drawn out by the salt and the result is a tougher and drier roast than need be.

➤ At this point, if you are cooking an extremely lean piece of meat, venison, game bird or turkey and are worried that the meat will be too dry, you may want to place a few thin strips of bacon on top of the meat. This will prevent the meat from drying out and will also add a nice flavor and look attractive too. You can remove most of the fat at the end, when you deal with the drippings.

➤ After about the halfway point in cooking you will want to baste the roast 2 or 3 times before the cooking time is up. Use a spoon or a baster with a rubber bulb and generously bathe the roast with the liquid in the bottom of the pan. If the liquid is more than 1/2 inch (1.5 cm) deep, remove some of it and set it aside.

➤ When the roast is nearly done (you've determined this time using the time chart) use a meat thermometer to accurately measure doneness. Stick the meat thermometer into the center of the thickest part of the meat, avoiding any bone and remove the cover to finish the roasting.

➤ Remove the roast to a warm platter and cover it lightly with foil. Let the roast rest for 15-30 minutes, before carving. This allows the meat to relax, hold the juices better and be tenderer.

➤ Pour the drippings, adding any you have removed earlier, into a narrow glass, measuring cup or fat separator that has been kept in the freezer to help skim off the fat and pour the juices into a small sauce pan. Heat on medium high to reduce the volume. In the meantime, the pan may be deglazed with a small amount of liquid, such as broth, wine, water or yogurt. Add the deglazing liquid to the juices in the pan and boil vigorously until reduced to about 1/2 of its original volume. At this point you may choose to serve the liquid as is, au jus, in a gravy boat as a dipping sauce or thicken it to a gravy.

➤ Contrary to popular myth a small family can have a large roast. You'll just have

to deal with the leftover sliced meat creatively. You can reheat it in a variety of sauces like:

- gravy mushroom
- mustard tomato

➤ Cold roasts sliced and added to a salad can elevate the latter to main course status.

➤ You can also reheat slices of roast in ratatouille or incorporate it into a casserole.

### **Broiling:**

This method is suitable for steaks, chops and chicken parts. It should be done close to the heat source, about 2 inches from the burner. However, if the meat is thick and you are worried about it charring before it gets cooked through, lower the rack to the next rung of the oven. Let one side cook to the desired color before turning. Salt broiled foods only after the cooking is done.

### **Pan Broiling:**

This is done on the top of the stove in a heavy ungreased pan at high heat. This method is suitable for well-marbled cuts of meat.

### **Barbecuing or Grilling:**

The food is cooked over direct heat on a rack or grill. This is the oldest cooking method known to man. Strictly speaking, today's method is not always a truly dry cooking technique. The use of marinades and sauces would classify it closer to braising. Sauces containing sugar will burn, so they must be brushed on near the end of the cooking, to glaze, but not char.

Kabobs or cooking on a skewer is always a great favorite. A variety of meats and vegetables are placed on the skewers and they are broiled on the hot fire. The only thing to watch for is that the items must cook at the same rate. If this is not possible parboil the longer cooking items beforehand. For a truly dramatic presentation, vary colors and textures on the skewer.

### **Hot Rock Cooking:**

This revival of an ancient cooking method is popular, because it encourages participation in the cooking at the table. A flat rock is heated in the oven to 500° F and the diners are provided with raw or marinated strips of meat, fish, seafood and veggies to cook on the hot slab. Dipping sauces are served on the side. The items to be cooked have to be cut very thin.

### **Planking:**

**This technique is fast becoming very popular. Fish, usually salmon, is placed on a plank of cedar wood and it is cooked on the wood over a very slow fire.**

#### **Pit Cooking:**

**This is usually done at larger events with very large pieces of meat like a hind quarter of beef or a whole pig. A deep pit is dug, lined with stones and a wood fire is set in it. When the flames die down, the seasoned meat is placed over the embers and the pit is covered with more stones. Several hours later, usually the next day, the pit is uncovered and the succulent meat is ready to serve.**

#### **Smoking:**

**This technique is fast becoming fashionable, because it produces a quick, tasty fat free main course. Smoking is suited for quick cooking meats or seafood. Meat such as chicken breast should be cut into thin strips. The items to be smoked can be marinated prior to smoking.**

#### **General Method for Smoking:**

**Create a 4x4 inch dish from a double layer of foil wrap or use a small disposable tart plate. Place 3 tbsp. rice, the contents of 2 tea bags, sprigs of dry thyme, sage, rosemary, pine needles or whatever you like and have handy, into the dish. You may also add 2 tbsp. brown sugar if desired. Place the dish into a large pot, wok or Dutch oven with a tight fitting lid. Heat on high setting, covered, until it starts to smoke. In the mean time, arrange meat or seafood on an oiled metal steamer basket lower the basket into the pot cover and reduce the heat to medium. Cook for 5-7 minutes without removing the lid. Remove the pot from the burner and let it sit covered for another 5 minutes. Serve immediately. Great with a sweetish fruity or yogurt sauce on a bed of rice.**





# Frying

## Deep Frying, Pan Frying, Sautéing, Stir-frying and Rendering Fats

The word frying in itself has had a bad rap in recent years. It conjures up all the negatives of high fat, artery clogging cholesterol and heart disease. However, frying is an important technique in creating pleasing flavors and textures. The better we understand frying the more cleverly we can avoid using too much fat and keep cholesterol in check without compromising flavor, texture or presentation.



The reason fried foods taste so good is because they are cooked at a heat much higher than the steam that other cooking methods employ. This high heat causes a seal to form very quickly on the surface of the unchopped meat or vegetable, effectively sealing in the juices, but also blocking the very fat from penetrating. Therefore, for least fat absorption, you should start frying on a high heat to form that seal quickly, then reduce the heat so that the trapped moisture within the food steams the food to the desired doneness.



*When the food is done it should be lifted with a slotted spoon, allowing most of the oil to drip off, then placed on several layers of paper towels to blot off all the excess fat or oil that adheres to the surface of the food before serving.*

The fat should be hot, but never smoking. Smoking fat signals the breakdown of the fat molecules. Each type of fat or oil has its smoke point temperature, which should be considered in choosing the kind of fat for frying. Olive oil has the lowest smoke point, therefore it is unsuitable for deep frying or stir-frying at high temperatures. Peanut, corn, canola, soybean and sunflower oil have high smoke points, meaning they are stable at high temperatures.

*Never add your food to the fat until the fat has become hot enough to sear the outside of the food. At lower temperatures the grease will penetrate the food and will give it a fatty taste and may ruin the texture, as well. To test the heating fat, drop a cube of bread into it when you think it's nearly hot enough. Tiny bubbles should form on the outside of the bread and it should*

*fry with a vigorous continuous sizzle. Train your ear to identify just the right temperature.*



### **Deep Frying:**

A number of foods are prepared using this method. French fries, donuts, onion rings, mushrooms and zucchini join the long line-up of meats and seafood that can be prepared using the deep frying technique.

### **Method:**

- Usually the meat or vegetable is breaded or dipped in a batter to create a crisp coating. Different batters absorb more or less fat. It is worthwhile to find a batter recipe that suits your taste.

*My personal favorite is egg white mixed with cornstarch (about 3 tbsp. of cornstarch to one egg white) mixed to a consistency that will coat the item well. This gives a crisp crust which is a good barrier to keep too much oil from penetrating the food.*

Batters containing egg yolks, milk or water tend to absorb more oil than those containing whites only.

- I recommend using high quality vegetable oils as the cooking fat for deep frying. They have a neutral flavor, low moisture content, no cholesterol, contain mostly unsaturated molecules and their good performance at high temperatures makes them the best choice for this cooking technique. Olive oil is an exception. It breaks down close to the normal frying temperature, therefore it's not suitable for deep frying.
- It helps to have a thermostatically controlled deep fryer or electric frying pan, but it isn't essential if you are careful. Whether you are using a pot on the stove or a deep fryer, remember that hot fat is at 300-400° F. Any splatter can burn you badly and can cause a fire in an instant if spilled on a hot element.

*Never leave the pot unattended and make sure the electric cord is safely tucked away so that the pot or pan cannot be accidentally yanked off the counter.*

- Choose a pot that is large and deep: a Dutch oven will do nicely. Add enough oil so that it's deep enough that the food can freely float on top of the oil. Never fill the pot more than half full with oil. While having a basket to fit the pot is useful, a large flat metal slotted spoon to scoop out the food will do.
- The trick to deep frying is to have the temperature of the oil as high as possible without burning the food. This usually means 375-425°F. A chunk

of bread will fry to a nice brown color in about one minute at 375°F. For thick cuts of meat and large chicken pieces, the lower end of this temperature range is preferred, otherwise the meat will not cook through. For vegetables a slightly higher temperature can be used, while quick cooking batters and doughs can be done on the highest of this temperature range.

- Fry only enough food in a batch so that all the pieces can float freely and the oil is not cooled much when the food is added. It is best to have the foods at room temperature. Since this is not always practical, add fewer pieces if the food is cold or frozen. Use your chunk of bread as a gauge. If it takes more than a minute for the cube to start frying again after the food has been added, the oil has cooled too much. Your food will not be crisp and the absorbed fat will make it taste greasy.
- Lower the food gently into the pan with the basket, slotted spoon or tongs to avoid splashing. When lifting out the cooked items, let the excess oil drip back into the pot, then place the food on several layers of paper towel to blot off the excess fat.

The oil used for frying can be saved and reused unless it has picked up odors (like fish) or flavors (like garlic) that will impart an unwanted taste to the next dish. Strain the oil through a coffee filter and store it refrigerated in a sealed jar for the next time. If the oil has turned very dark, discard it, because it has broken down. Start with a fresh batch.

### **Pan Frying:**

This is probably the most popular cooking technique, because of its speed and convenience. Chops, steaks, liver, hamburger patties and chicken pieces quickly turn into a tasty meal.

The meat may be floured, breaded or just left plain with a sprinkle of spices, but salt is not added until both sides are seared. Steaks, chops and other sliced meat that will be pan fried should never be salted before cooking. Use tongs or an egg lifter to turn them, never a fork. Both salt and piercing with the fork will allow juices to leak out and the meat will be dry. Meat should be seared on high heat to lock in the juices.

### **General Recipe for Pan Frying:**

Start frying meat slices or chicken pieces at a high heat, in a minimum of oil, until the meat turns whitish, turn and fry on the other side, reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook until golden brown on both sides. Add salt, turn, cook a little longer, turn again. Use a splatter screen to cover the skillet to keep yourself and the stove free of grease spots. To test if the meat is cooked through, pierce the thickest piece in the center. If the juices run clear, not bloody, the meat has cooked through.

- Liver is the food that is most often ruined in pan frying. Choose slices with even thickness and do not overcook, the center should be still pink, but not runny. Liver should be lightly sprinkled with seasoned flour before pan frying to minimize the splattering. Never salt liver until it's served!
- The pan may be deglazed after the frying and the liquid used as a dip or in making a gravy or a sauce.

### Sautéing:

This is a quick frying method on medium high heat in a small amount of fat. The food is chopped small and is kept in constant motion by shaking the pan or pushing the food around or turning with a spatula (not stirring!). This technique is often used as the first step to creating other dishes, such as sautéing onions and vegetables or preparing a meat sauce. When used as a main preparation method it is basically a variation on pan frying.

*The heat must be kept high enough so that the ingredients are frying, not steaming in their leaked juices.*



Remember frying, that is sautéing, is done at 375-425°F; steaming happens at 212°F no matter what the setting is on the element. Water will never be hotter than that. The chemical changes in the food are quite different at those two vastly different temperatures.

### Stir-frying:

This oriental method has gained immense popularity in recent years. Anything goes as far as protein ingredients and vegetables are concerned: finely sliced meat, chunks of fish, seafood, tofu and a myriad of vegetables, ordinary or exotic, combine to form a quick delicious meal. You do not have to have a wok; a large high-rimmed frying pan will do nicely.

### Method:

- The technique resembles sautéing, but the chunks of vegetables are larger. Start with a small amount of oil heated to high heat so that the first piece of food added sizzles.
- To ensure that all ingredients are cooked to perfection either start with the longest cooking ingredients and add them in order of tenderness or cut the longest cooking items very small and make the more tender chunks progressively larger.

Stir-frying should leave the vegetables crunchy, but the meat should be well

cooked. When the ingredients are cooked add a little sugar, and a generous slosh of soy sauce. Bring to a boil and serve.

- A thickener like corn starch, dissolved in water or stock, may be added for a more substantial sauce. Other oriental sauces may be used instead of soy sauce. The usual seasonings in oriental stir fry are ginger, scallions, garlic and pepper.
- If you observe the fare in your neighborhood Chinese restaurant you will note that the vegetables vary with the season to take advantage of the availability and to keep the cost from varying. You may create your own combinations taking into account the occasion, food preferences, your creativity and whims.

### Rendering Fats:

Whether you are frying bacon or rendering the fat from the skin of a chicken the procedure produces the same result, liquid fat and a crisp crackling or bacon slice.

Bacon is best done in the microwave, in fact I often suspect that the microwave was designed to produce the perfect greaseless fried bacon with a minimum of fuss. Place a double layer of paper towel on a microwave-safe plate, arrange the slices in a single layer cover with a paper towel and microwave on high 1 minute per slice. No clean up, no splatter, just super bacon. For this reason I cannot understand why many restaurants still serve soggy, grease laden bacon with their eggs.

### *To render fat from poultry or pork:*

cut the skin and fat into approximately 1 inch squares or smaller if preferred. Wash well in cold water, drain and place in a pot that is twice as large as the amount of fat and skin. Start cooking on medium heat, lifting the pieces with a fork occasionally and pressing them against the side of the pan to squeeze out the fat. When the bits start to fry in the fat, and all the water has evaporated, lift the bits with a fork occasionally, but otherwise let them just fry until the cracklings are nice and brown. Lift out the cracklings with a slotted spoon and place them on several layers of paper towel. Cover with another paper towel and press with a plate on top. Let it cool and use in any recipe calling for cracklings, as a garnish on a luncheon salad or just as a snack. The fat can be stored refrigerated in a screw top jar for months and may be used in future cooking, if you wish.



# **Moist Cooking**

## ***Stewing, Braising, Poaching, Casserole and Soup Making.***

These are all slow simmering moist cooking methods used in a variety of ways to create flavorful dishes with a variety of spices and seasonings. Tougher cuts of meat are usually used in these dishes, not only for economy, but also because they have a better flavor than the expensive tender cuts. The food is always kept below the boiling point of the liquid. Often other techniques like searing, sautéing and thickening are used at some point in the preparation.

### **Stewing:**

Usually the recipe will start with sautéing onions, peppers, mushrooms or other vegetables. The meat is cooked in a small amount of slowly simmering liquid. Some people sear the meat first; my preference is to start the meat and liquid together, bring it to a boil very briefly, reduce the heat and let it simmer slowly to tenderness. The liquid should be just enough to cover the meat and the temperature should be kept to a minimum to cook very slowly for best flavor. Searing will seal the meat to prevent it from drying out, but will also prevent the liquid and spices from penetrating the meat. The flavorful and thick sauce formed by the blend of meat juices and vegetables is the major attraction of a good stew. Stewing can be done on top of the stove, in the oven or in a crock pot.

When we talk about a stew we usually visualize a beef stew, but all kinds of meat, fowl or seafood will lend themselves to stewing. Generally the tougher cuts of meat or tougher birds will give the most satisfactory results, because this method of preparation brings out all the flavors and juices from the meat. Depending on the country of origin, the combination of seasonings and the whim of the recipe author, a stewed dish may masquerade under various names.

Although we usually think of meat as the base for a stew, vegetables such as potatoes or any number of legumes, can be used to create a tasty stew. Fruits used as an ingredient in meat or vegetarian stews can add an interesting effect.

### **Basic Stewing Method:**

- 1. Sauté onions and other fibrous vegetables.**
- 2. Add meat (fish, fowl or legumes).**
- 3. Season with salt and spices.**
- 4. Add cooking liquid. This may be water, stock, wine or a tomato product.**
- 5. Cook on low heat, simmering until the meat is nearly tender.**
- 6. Add diced vegetables and finish cooking until the vegetables are done.**

**7. Thicken if required.**

**8. Serve piping hot.**

**This process may be all done on the top of the stove, started on top and finished in the oven (275° F) or cooked in a slow cooker.**

#### **Braising:**

**The meat is seared in hot fat or broiled, a small amount of liquid is added and the meat is allowed to cook very slowly. More liquid may be added during the cooking if it was absorbed or evaporated, but the meat is never covered in liquid. Any type of meat can be braised, but most often we think of pot roasts or tougher cuts of steaks as being braised. The searing will create a seal that prevents flavorful juices from escaping into the liquid. The liquid in braising may be water, stock, wine, tomato juice or the moisture from added vegetables such as cabbage. The liquid at the end of the cooking period may be served as is or thickened with a number of things.**

#### **Basic Braising Method:**

- 1. Sear meat ( fowl or fish) in a small amount of fat or broil on all sides on high heat. Remove to a platter.**
- 2. Add desired vegetables to the pan and sauté in a small amount of cooking fat until the vegetables are wilted.**
- 3. Remove vegetables, add a small amount of liquid and seasonings to the pan.**
- 4. Bring to a boil and deglaze the pan by scraping the burned bits from the sides.**
- 5. Return the meat to the boiling liquid, reduce the heat to simmer.**
- 6. Add the vegetables and simmer covered until the meat is tender.**
- 7. Thicken if desired.**

**Side dishes chosen for braised and stewed meats should be picked with care so that the nutritious and flavorful juices can be mopped up. Boiled potatoes, pasta or rice serve this purpose well.**

**Braised and stewed dishes lend themselves to diets because the vegetables added can be increased and the meat decreased to produce a lower calorie, lower fat, but flavorful and satisfying dish. Of course you still have to be careful to choose lean meat and use a minimum of fat for the searing and sautéing.**

#### **Poaching:**

**Usually we think of eggs when we mention poaching, but poaching means**

slow simmering in a seasoned liquid. Fish, seafood and tender fowl like chicken can be poached. Usually the poached item is then served either hot or cold, in a sauce.

#### **Soups:**



**Hearty soups or chowders are really a stew with extra liquid added.**



**Clear soups are made with meat added to rapidly boiling water, skimmed and strained. Large bones will turn the soup cloudy and can only be clarified using a complex method of acidifying with tomato juice and clearing with egg whites.**



**Creamed soups are usually made of vegetables. The vegetables are steamed, stock is added, the mixture is pureed in a blender, thickened and simmered on low heat.**

**Cream, sour cream, cheese and/or yogurt is added near the end of the cooking period.**

#### **Casseroles:**

**There ought to be an ode written to casseroles. They not only serve a large group easily, but they can be made ahead. Casseroles can be used to convert leftovers into a scrumptious meal. They are generally cheap, easy to prepare and can be garnished to appeal to the most discriminating company.**

**This family of recipes is the most creative vehicle for the cook. Just about anything goes.**

**A casserole is composed of layers of:**



**Starchy food**



**One or more vegies**



**Sauce**



**Optional ingredients**



**Seasoning, herbs and spices.**





## **Garnish**

### ***Choosing the ingredients:***



The starchy foods are generally rice , potatoes or pasta. However why stop there? Have you thought of couscous, kasha or beans?



The vegies can be anything from lowly cooking onions to imported truffles and almost any of the cornucopia of fresh and frozen vegetables that are available seasonally and year around. This is where you can really create!

Substitute freely and add a vegies or two to create your own unique flavor.

If you are on a diet, the easiest way to lower calories is to increase the quantity and variety of vegies in your casserole.



The sauce may be something as simple as canned soup, sour cream or yogurt (my favorite), tomato sauce (canned or homemade) or something as sophisticated as Hollandaise or Béchamel.



The optional ingredients may be:

- meat or fish, leftovers, fresh or canned
- hard boiled eggs
- sausage
- one or more cheeses such as cottage cheese, mozzarella or cheddar

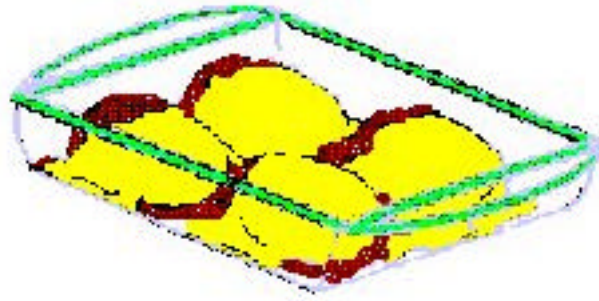


Seasoning gives the widest opportunity for imprinting your own style. They may be sprinkled on the layers or incorporated into the sauce. You may want to choose an ethnic theme and use all the spices of that style of cooking (like Mexican or Italian) or select spices that complement the main ingredient (like sage with chicken, dill or fennel with fish or marjoram with liver).



The garnish may be the naturally appealing browned crust that forms when the top layer is melted cheese or a crunchy topping made with bread crumbs or crackers. You may want to dress up a cheese topping with sliced fresh tomatoes and/or green peppers, sprinkle a crumb topping with paprika or chives or decorate your creation with lemon slices, fresh parsley

or sliced black olives just before serving. In garnishing, a pleasing color contrast is as important as are compatible flavors.



# Salads

Creativity can be at its ultimate in making salads. Any combination of fresh, cooked or canned ingredients will do. Wander around your produce section and buy what's most appealing and reasonably priced. Even if you are not money-conscious, the price will give you an indication of whether the item is in season. Buying out-of-season could mean that the produce was picked green and stored for a long time or travelled a great distance. It is not as likely to have full flavor and may have lost much of its vitamins, even though it might look very good. Although most of us think of lettuce when salad is mentioned, don't limit yourself to the usual. There are very few rules in making salads.



## Salad Categories:



**Fresh Green Salads** can serve as an appetizer before the meal or as a side dish with the meal. They may contain any combination of fresh greens, fruits and nuts and are served with a dressing.



**Jellied Salads** are usually served as a buffet table item or as an appetizer. Ingredients are usually cooked vegetables and/or fruits and are layered in a gel. The gel may be made from scratch using gelatin and a clear stock like consommé or it may be a packaged fruit-flavored gelatin dessert. These salads are usually made in a mold and are unmolded onto a platter.



**Meal Salads** are meant to be a meal in themselves with a roll or crusty bread. They can be an extended version of the green salad, but contain some hot or cold protein ingredient such as seafood, chicken, sliced meat or hard-boiled eggs.



**Marinated Salads** are usually assembled well ahead of serving time so that the dressing/marinade will have an opportunity to penetrate the ingredients. While some of these salads are made of fresh ingredients, some of them are assembled from cooked or blanched components.



**Starchy Salads**, such as potato, pasta or rice salad, can substitute for the usual starchy side dishes.



**Sandwich Spread Salads** are used as sandwich filling or as a stuffing for fresh vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers or celery, and are usually made of a protein ingredient and chopped fresh vegetables.



## Dressings and Dips

Salad dressings are cold mixed sauces that are usually made with oil and tart ingredients. Thicker dressings and dips are kept in suspension with some kind of emulsifier.

There are some definite advantages to making your own salad dressings. You can control the quality and amount of ingredients, lower or eliminate the amount of fat, preservatives and additives and lower your cost. Homemade dressings are cheap! All you need is a small wide neck bottle. The disadvantage is that without the added preservatives, many homemade dressings even when they are kept refrigerated will spoil faster than the commercial product.



Tart ingredients may be citrus juices or vinegars. For vinegar you can choose ordinary white vinegar, wine, cider, malt, balsamic or flavored vinegars to vary the effect.



Oils may be present in small quantities to "smooth out" the harsher tart ingredients or may be the major component of the dressing. Use a good quality cooking oil or olive oil.



Sweeteners, sugar or honey, can reduce the need for all or much of the oil. They tend to "smooth out" the acid just like oil does.



Water also functions to "smooth out" the bite of the vinegar. Some recipes, especially those used for marinated salads call for some water.



Emulsifiers keep salad dressings in suspension. Your homemade dressing will never be quite as homogenous as the store-bought, because you will not be adding all kinds of chemicals to achieve that effect. You will have to shake your dressing vigorously to resuspend it before use.

For instance in making mayonnaise raw egg yolks are added to keep the oil from floating to the top. You can use a little commercial mayonnaise to stabilize your home made dressing. Similarly, catsup also stabilizes. Dairy products such as yogurt, cream cheese and sour cream will keep vinegars and fruit juices in suspension. For really low calorie substitution you can try pureed vegetables such as mashed potatoes or carrots. For thick dressings with low oil add cooked cornstarch, arrowroot, breadcrumbs or gelatin. Some spices, notably mustard powder or prepared mustard will have an emulsifying effect.



Seasonings can be chives, basil, parsley, prepared mustard, black pepper or fresh dill leaves. Horseradish can be added to dips and sauces to give them a zip.

Mayonnaise is the most complex dressing to make, but with modern equipment like food processors or blenders and a little patience, it can be mastered.

*The use of salad dressings is not restricted to salads:*

- Low-fat sauces can be made with salsas or yogurt to be used as dips or dressings.
- A little salad dressing over steamed fresh vegetables can replace the usual butter and produce an interesting dish.

Dressings can be homemade, store bought or store bought and personalized with your own seasonings.



Thick dressings are usually mayonnaise based. They are suitable for starchy salads or sandwich spreads. They contain little moisture and will hold the salad ingredients together well.



Store-bought, yogurt, buttermilk, sour cream or cream cheese based and cooked dressings are slightly thinner, but are still on the thick side.

Home made dressings in this category can be made with store-bought mayonnaise and added ingredients, such as tomato paste for a Russian dressing, blue cheese for Roquefort, or mustard and sugar for a tangy dressing.



Vinaigrette Dressings contain oil and vinegar with a small amount of sugar, as well as herbs and spices of the cook's choosing. If the oil is kept to a minimum, this dressing can be light and tasty. Wine and fruit juices, especially citrus, may be substituted for all or part of the vinegar to add an unusual touch. Specialty vinegars can elevate this simple dressing to gourmet heights. Soy sauce and ginger, added to a vinaigrette will produce an oriental dressing.

As a rule of thumb: The tougher the main green ingredient the thicker the dressing can be. Thick mayonnaise-based dressing can be used with firm greens such as cabbage, Romaine or Iceberg lettuce. More tender greens benefit from lighter, more liquidy dressings, such as vinaigrette or Ranch. Spinach, butter lettuce and alfalfa sprouts are examples of tender greens.

*As I said before, any combination of fresh or cooked ingredients can be used to make a salad. However, the following ingredients are the most common.*

## **Salad Greens**

### **Lettuce:**



**Iceberg is very firm and sweet.**



**Romaine is quite firm, sharp in flavor, but can be tough if it has many heavy green leaves.**



**Curly endive is leafy, slightly bitter, good for accent when mixed with other ingredients.**



**Bib, Butter, Red or Boston lettuces are soft, mild, have a loose head and are best with mild, low oil or oil-free dressings.**



**Leaf lettuce has no head and it is delicate in flavor. Use as you would bib lettuce.**

**The least laborious way to clean and keep lettuce is to take a thin slice off the core, remove damaged outer leaves, then soak it in ample cold water for 20 minutes. Let it drain upside-down, give it a shake, and refrigerate it until needed in a plastic bag. This method will keep your salad lettuce ready and crisp. Romaine and iceberg will keep for over a week, however the more tender lettuces should be used quickly.**

**There are two schools of thought on how to get lettuce into bite size pieces. One is to chop with a very sharp knife, the other is to tear it into bits. I prefer the tearing method, both because it seems to taste better and because it is faster. No need to dirty a board and knife. Using a knife is reputed to make the lettuce edges turn brown faster. I can't comment on that because I only tear up as much as I need and do it at the last possible minute before serving.**

**Whichever method you use, make sure that the bits are small enough to eat easily. There is nothing more annoying than wrestling with a large piece of lettuce to cram into your mouth all the while worrying about the dressing making a mess of your shirt.**

### **Cabbage:**

**Usually inexpensive and readily available. Choose small firm heads and cut out the larger veins if they are tough. Slice fine or grate for coleslaw or as an addition to other salads.**

**Coleslaw is usually made with sliced green cabbage and mayonnaise. While we usually think of red or green cabbage, other members of the cabbage family worth trying are: Chinese cabbage, bok choy, broccoli, cauliflower or**

**Savoy cabbage.**

### **Cucumbers:**

**What would a mixed salad be without cucumbers?**

Cucumbers are used in stir-fries, stuffed, pickled and, of course, are a favorite salad ingredient. The skin is edible and contains valuable nutrients. Usually two kinds of cucumbers are available; regular and the "snake like" English cucumber. Regular cucumbers are often heavily waxed necessitating peeling. English cucumbers have fewer seeds and are not waxed, therefore they are usually more economical in spite of the higher starting price. My favorite time of the year is in fall when over-large (4-6 inch long) pickling cucumbers are on sale. These make the best salads either on their own in a garlic, yogurt dressing or combined with peppers, onions and tomatoes in a marinated salad.

### **Other Salad Ingredients:**

- **Avocado is excellent diced in salads or mashed in dips and spreads. Avocado is ripe when it feels soft to gentle pressure. If it is hard, it can be ripened on the counter in a few days.**
- **Radishes come in many shapes and sizes. We usually have access to red, white icicle, black winter and the Chinese lo bok (Daikon). These tender root vegetables add great flavor to all salads. Lo bok, the giant white radish is sometimes cooked. Serve it sliced thin and salted, in a sour cream dill sauce or add it to mixed salads.**

### ***Some salad tips:***

❄ **Marinated salads or those made with a vinaigrette are safer for picnics than those with mayonnaise based dressings.**

❄ **When making a tossed salad, combine and toss ingredients, but hold the tomatoes and gently fold them into the salad as a last move before serving. Tomatoes crush easily.**

❄ **When a recipe calls for water, sugar and something acidic like lemon juice or vinegar, it is easier to dissolve the sugar in the water first then add the acidic ingredients.**

❄ **Rinse canned vegetables with cold water to remove the canned taste.**

❄ **Always drain salad ingredients well so that they won't make your dressing watery.**



### ***Interesting Salad Combinations to Try:***

- ❄ Pasta, strips of salami, coarsely grated zucchini, chopped green onions, shredded cheese, vinaigrette dressing with basil, garlic and chopped pickled peppers.
- ❄ Fresh cauliflower, cooked shrimp, celery, hard-cooked eggs, green onions, dill pickles, mayonnaise, dill and lemon juice.
- ❄ Cooked oriental noodles, shredded cabbage, grated ginger, green onions, soy sauce, sesame oil, vinaigrette, almonds or sesame seeds.
- ❄ Salmon, pasta, spinach, mayonnaise, pepper, olives and green onions.
- ❄ Pickled beets, pasta, mayonnaise and onions.
- ❄ Pickled beets, horseradish, water chestnuts and fresh or frozen peas with a thick dressing.
- ❄ Ginger, pineapple and ham in a vinaigrette dressing.
- ❄ Mandarin oranges and salmon with creamy dill dressing.
- ❄ Snow peas, water chestnuts, sprouts, sesame seeds and oriental vinaigrette dressing.
- ❄ Potatoes, hard boiled eggs, celery, chopped roasted peppers, feta cheese cubes, dill and mayonnaise.
- ❄ Mandarin oranges, avocado cubes, lettuce, red onion slices with Italian dressing.
- ❄ Radish slices, grated carrots, cucumbers, olives, tomatoes, green peppers and onions combined with an Italian dressing.



### **Vegetable Salads from a can:**

This is really my forte! Whenever I am faced with the prospect of company arriving at an unknown time with unknown appetite and unknown likes or dislikes, I make ahead a few of these salads to serve with cold cuts and crusty bread. Most of these salads taste the best when slightly aged. So, if I make them a day or two, early all the flavors have a chance to blend nicely. People love to sample a variety of attractive offerings and having these ready takes the pressure



off me. Any leftovers will keep in the fridge for several days to be incorporated into the family menu and nothing goes to waste.

❄ Combine different beans and chick peas with green onions and garnish with fresh or roasted peppers. Mix with an interesting vinaigrette.

❄ Combine corn, peas, mushrooms, pickled onions, chopped hot pickled peppers, olives and diced apples. Use honey-sweetened catsup as a dressing.

❄ Mixed vegetables and chopped dill pickles, bound with a thick dressing or mayonnaise.

❄ Canned asparagus is particularly handy for making salads. Combine it with mushrooms in a light vinaigrette and garnish with sliced hard-boiled eggs, pimentos or black olives.

❄ Marinate canned bamboo shoots in a vinaigrette for at least 2 days, then add fresh ginger, snow peas, sliced fresh mushrooms, water chestnuts and green onions and season with a little soy sauce.

❄ Combine canned kidney beans, preserved gooseberries, chopped green onions, mayonnaise and prepared mustard.

❄ Seafood salad may contain any or all of the following: cooked squid rings, canned crab, shrimp, oysters, clams, fresh sliced mushrooms, water chestnuts, Bind it with a mixture of mayonnaise, lemon juice and prepared mustard.

❄ Pickled Herring with boiled potatoes, pickled beets and mayonnaise.

Create your own unique combination and bind it with catsup, mayonnaise, yogurt, ranch dressing, vinaigrette, Italian dressing or whatever is handy, and give it a fancy name!

*Tuna and Salmon Salads are very versatile.*

They can be used to:

❄ stuff tomatoes, peppers or pastry shells

❄ make a luncheon salad with crisp vegetables like celery, green onions, radishes, fresh peas or mushrooms. Arrange it on a bed of lettuce or serve in a glass nested in crushed ice.

❄ serve as a buffet item, garnished with caviar (real or fake), lemon slices,

parsley, grated cheese or cooked vegetables such as green beans or asparagus.

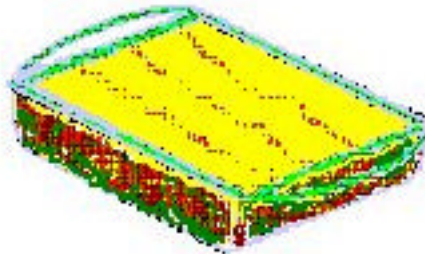
*Egg Salad, Terrines and Patés can also be dressed up in a similar fashion.*



# Sauces

There is a mystique surrounding sauces that starts with the romantic naming of the sauce, usually in French, for great chefs, geographical places or famous restaurants.

Then, the dish they are added to, is called: "*XYZ a la something-or-other*" which generally means XYZ is roasted or fried in a conventional way and served in a puddle of "something-or-other".



Sauces can transform the simplest dish into what some people term "gourmet". Some sauces may be fairly demanding to make, but there are a number of equally tasty and elegant sauces that can be just tossed together and will never fail. For the purpose of organizing the techniques I deal with cooked sauces separate from dips, dressings and spreads, but remember that they can also be used as a sauce to dress up and glamorize a plain meal.

Cooked sauces are generally prepared from a liquid that has been thickened and seasoned.

## The Liquid Ingredients:

A lot of the recipes call for stock in sauce making. While plain water can always be substituted, the addition of good quality bouillon or beef extract dissolved in water will improve the taste. Canned chicken broth or consommé is even better. However, nothing beats homemade stock for control over cost and ingredients as well as for the nutritional value. Sherry, wine or any number of fruit and vegetable juices can also be a good substitution for all or part of the liquid in a sauce.

Sour cream or yogurt will give your sauce a piquant flavor that goes well with anything from chicken to fish.

## *Terminology used in sauce making:*

⚙ Reducing means just what it says. Simmer the liquid until its volume is reduced to the desired amount by simple evaporation. Please do not season your liquid until after it's reduced. Otherwise the spices and salt may become too concentrated.

❄️ Deglazing the pan means removing the meat and adding a liquid such as stock or wine and gently rubbing the crust that the meat juices have left behind, into this liquid. This mixture is then usually reduced, flavored and thickened, if desired. I love deglazing the pan; it goes with all my convictions:

1. not a drop of flavor or nutrient goes to waste
2. the pan is scrubbed before dinner is served

A simple sauce I make by deglazing the pan after baking or pan frying ham, is to use a little water mixed with ordinary mustard for deglazing, add a touch of sugar, reduce and serve in a gravy boat. For a thicker sauce you may want to use one of the thickeners. The sugar may be substituted with a thick jam, honey or marmalade and you may add raisins or currants if you wish.

❄️ Clarified butter is often used in sauce making.

❄️ Thickening may be accomplished naturally by reducing the liquid, evaporating it, adding a tomato or other vegetable sauce or by adding a thickener.

#### Thickeners:

❄️ Roux: This is the most frequently used method of thickening soups and sauces.

2 tbsp. cooking fat

2 tbsp. all purpose flour

Heat the fat on the medium setting of your element, add the flour and brown, stirring constantly until the desired color is reached. Your recipe may call for light or dark roux depending on the flavor wanted.

When the desired color is reached, add cool liquid ingredients all at once and stir vigorously to blend it well. Simmer until the sauce is thick, stirring often. Adding cold liquid is important because adding hot will make the sauce lumpy, no matter how quickly and hard you stir. If your liquid is hot, dissolve the roux in 1/2 cup cold water, then add the hot liquid. Once the sauce is thickened with roux it will never separate, and will endure freezing and/or reheating very well.

A variation on making roux is making pan gravy and the method in which flour is sprinkled on frying meat or vegetables, fried a little longer and then cold liquid is added.

❄️ Beurre Manié or "butter and flour" paste and the use of heavy cream is what gave the French cuisine the reputation of being "rich". Beurre Manie is made by kneading together two tablespoons of butter and an equal amount of flour. It can be added near the end of the sauce preparation, into the hot liquid and just simmered until the sauce is thick. This is a quick and easy method to correct the consistency.

❄️ Egg Yolks make a very nice and smooth thickener, but the rules of preparation must be strictly observed to avoid lumps or curdles.

The yolks are beaten lightly, then mixed with a small amount of cold milk or cream, a few tablespoons of the hot liquid is incorporated with very brisk mixing.

The mixture then is added to the hot liquid with vigorous stirring. The sauce is allowed to simmer with constant stirring, but must never be brought to a boil or else you'll have scrambled eggs in a thin sauce. This is the technique used in custards, eggnog, some cream soups, Newburg and Mornay Sauces.

❄️ Corn starch and Arrow root powder have been used in oriental cooking, but recently gained favor in all kinds of recipes as a thickener because they are easy to prepare and add no further fat to the dish. The powder is mixed until smooth with a small amount of cold liquid in a cup and added to the hot food with brisk stirring. The disadvantage is that the resulting sauce is translucent which is attractive over colorful vegetables, but not suitable for sauces that are meant to coat the meat like pan gravy.

❄️ Flour can be used in the same way as corn starch or arrow root, but getting it smooth is a little harder. If all else fails or you're worried, you can always pass the water and flour mixture through a tea strainer. This mixture can also be used for correcting the texture of a sauce, soup or stew which is too thin.

❄️ Brown flour is made by lightly browning flour in a heavy skillet or in the oven at low heat until evenly browned. It should be treated like ordinary flour; it doesn't lump quite so easily, but doesn't thicken as well either.

❄️ Mashed potatoes (instant or fresh), pureed vegetables like carrots and thick jams can also be used to thicken sauces without adding fat.

❄️ Bread crumbs are a handy alternative thickener that will never fail you and need no attention. Add very fine bread crumbs to hot or cold liquid, simmer and it will do its thing.

❄️ Grains such as barley and rice will thicken soups. Pasta or dumplings added to soups "leak" starches and will make the soup thicker too.

## Sauces

I will not list all the sauces because it seems every chef of note has his name immortalized by a sauce bearing his name. However, we need to examine some of the more common sauces:

### Flour Based Sauces:

❄ White Sauce: A very light colored roux made with equal amounts of butter and flour, diluted with milk and simmered until thick. The quantity of flour may be increased if a thicker sauce is desired. Cream may substituted for the milk for an even richer sauce.

White sauce is used as cream sauce with vegetables, fish or to thicken light cream soups. Use any flavoring that will complement the dish.

❄ Velouté Sauce is made the same way as White Sauce, but stock is used instead of milk to dilute it. Usually flavored with pepper and nutmeg.

❄ Bechamel Sauce is basically the same as White Sauce, but flavored with minced onion and sometimes a touch of cloves and bay leaf.

❄ Bordelaise Sauce is also called Spanish sauce and is made with a brown roux, browned vegetables and the liquid used is red wine.

❄ Bourguignon Sauce is similar to Bordelaise, but it has more seasoning and is should always be made with Burgundy wine.

❄ Mornay Sauce is a White Sauce to which 1-2 egg yolks are added. It is flavored with Gruyère and Parmesan cheese.

❄ Brown Sauce is made the same as Velouté, using a dark roux and beef stock.

❄ Creole Sauce is a brown sauce with sauted onions, peppers and mushrooms.

❄ Pan Gravy, as the name suggests, is made from the remnants in the pan. The pan is deglazed with a liquid, the liquid is reduced and usually thickened by one of the methods mentioned above.

### Egg Based Sauces:

❄ Hollandaise Sauce: This is the trickiest sauce to make, but not impossible.

It is made with egg yolk, butter and lemon juice or vinegar. It has a delicate mayonnaise-like flavor and can glamorize any vegetable. Well worth the effort.

❄️ **Bearnaise Sauce:** Is Hollandaise flavored with a variety of herbs such as chervil, tarragon, shallots and parsley. Vinegar is used in the preparation of this sauce.

❄️ **Newburg Sauce:** This sauce is made with egg yolks, heavy cream, sherry and lobster butter. The ingredients alone are a little too sophisticated for the average home.

#### **Fruit and Vegetable Based Sauces:**

❄️ **Tomato Sauce:** There are as many ways of making tomato sauce as there are households. Some are thickened; some just concentrate the crushed tomatoes. The seasonings are also varied as is the addition of vegetables. Tomato paste may be added to some of the stock or milk in any sauce to produce a tomato sauce. Basil, oregano and bay leaf will give it the Italian touch, chopped olives or rosemary will remind you of Greece.

❄️ **Provençal Sauce:** Chopped fresh tomatoes are heated in a small amount of garlic-flavored olive oil and seasoned with pepper and fresh parsley.

❄️ **Primavera Sauce:** Is a Provençal sauce to which any number of fresh steamed vegetables are added.

❄️ **Cumberland Sauce:** Currant jelly with orange, port wine and mustard.

❄️ **Clam Sauce:** Red clam sauce is made with sautéed onions, tomatoes and clams. White clam sauce is usually made with a roux, white wine or cream and grated Parmesan.

#### ***Some creative ideas for sauce making:***

❄️ Sautéed mushrooms can be added to any type of sauce to make a mushroom sauce.

❄️ Cheese is best added grated to roux-based sauces near the end of the preparation, heated until just melted and served. Do not bring cheese sauces to a boil. Although we usually think of cheddar when making a cheese sauce there are a number of other cheeses you might try such as Gruyère, Roquefort, Parmesan or Romano or a combination of several cheeses that melt.

❄️ **Curry Sauce:** Velouté flavored with curry spices.

❄️ For seasoning sauces try: horseradish or mustard for ham, lemon, dill or fennel for fish, anchovy paste for beef or fish.

❄️ Chicken a la King is made with white sauce and sautéed mushrooms, peas, peppers, cooked chicken and carrots.

❄️ Sweet and sour sauce can be made with preserves of fruit and thickened with any of the thickeners and made tangy with vinegar or lemon juice.

❄️ Try combining meats and fruits like:

\* *Turkey in mandarin orange sauce*

\* *Ham in pineapple sauce*

\* *Pork with prunes and ginger*



It's easy to see that these ideas are just the tip of the iceberg. Every time you give your imagination free rein by using your own combination of ingredients and seasonings with the established methods, you create something new and unique.

You may even want to name your creation after yourself!





# Garnish

## **Glamour, Flair and Creativity**

**Add a little garnish, glamour, flair and creativity to your cooking! My grandmother always maintained that people eat with their eyes.**

**Appealing contrast in colors, textures and interesting garnish signal that the meal was prepared with care and that it will taste good. If you don't believe me, try reheating in the microwave some leftover packaged macaroni and cheese. When it's warm add a layer of chopped fresh tomatoes and sprinkle a little grated cheese or basil on top of that. Heat for one minute more and serve. Watch the reaction of your family!**

**Always remember, creative garnishing goes a long way to fooling people into believing they are having something very special and fancy. A few minutes spent on garnishing a dish can produce unexpected compliments on the most mundane dish.**

**The secret of garnishing is color contrast. The yellow macaroni and cheese looks delicious with the red contrast. The same goes for menu planning. Keep in mind that the color of the meat should contrast with the vegies and the side dish.**

**Why do you think many restaurants serve peas and carrots as the vegetable so much of the time? The orange and green are great contrast for brown meat and white potatoes. The fact that peas and carrots have become boring is another matter. Drama or the use of the unexpected or unusual in a creative way is also an appetizer for the diner.**

**Some years ago I was giving a large buffet dinner near Christmas where the centerpiece of the meal was a large boiled double smoked ham. The double smoking made the ham very dark, nearly black. I mixed some catsup into gelatin made double strength by dissolving it in half the amount of water called for on the packet. I poured the red liquid onto a greased flat plate to end up with a thin layer. When it gelled, I cut poinsettia petals and placed them on the ham. Green pepper slices made the stem and a sprinkling of hard-boiled egg yolk in the center completed the picture. During the evening I was told that two famous caterers were among my guests. When the dinner was served, they came over to ask about my store bought boiled ham. There were several dishes that took more work, care, technique and looked nice, but the poinsettias fooled even these professionals by making a statement of importance. By all means I don't suggest going to that kind of trouble for a simple family meal, but keeping color combinations and garnish in mind at all times will stand you in good stead.**

**The garnish may be as simple as a sprinkle of paprika, a sprig of parsley or a slice of fruit. Make sure that the flavor of the garnish complements or enhances the flavor of the dish.**

Here I have to correct myself! A friend decorated a simple salad with a sprig of dandelion flowers and what an effect! While the practical side of me prefers simple and edible, by all means follow your own taste and urges. Trust yourself.

Over-decorating is for food magazines. Keep it simple or the food might cool. Normally, an appetizing arrangement is all you need. Visualize the effect ahead of time so that you can carry out this step without thinking in a matter of seconds before serving. Keep your eyes open when dining out for presentation ideas that you can adapt to your own style.

Puddles of sauces are now very "in", as a garnish, but don't forget that a complementary texture must be considered.

Recently in an upscale restaurant, I was served a dessert, cannoli, that was a fortune cookie-like tube, filled with flavored ricotta in a puddle of chocolate sauce on a flat slippery plate. It was a very attractive presentation, but since the shell was very crisp I had difficulty in trying to cut bite size pieces without "wearing" the dessert. I was concentrating so hard on the logistics of eating this difficult concoction that I hardly noticed that it was very tasty. This dessert should have been served as a finger food with a dipping sauce or drizzled with hard chocolate. As it was, I could not enjoy it while trying to spear it without covering someone in the sauce. A tender crepe would have been great to mop up the nice chocolate sauce, but without something soft in my dessert, the sauce returned to the kitchen to be wasted in the dishwasher.

#### **Dramatic garnishes:**

- ◆ You can make slits in a roast and push in a carrot, a piece of sausage, a dill pickle or a parsnip to add flavor as well as a surprise garnish when the roast is sliced. You can arrange these in a pattern for a dramatic effect and in a large roast you can use several contrasting colors.
- ◆ The lowly meatloaf becomes a conversation piece if you place several hard-boiled eggs end to end in the center before baking. The surprise of a slice of egg in the middle of the meatloaf especially delights the children at the table.
- ◆ Ham can be wrapped in pastry or bread dough and baked in a clay baker or roasting pan to create an easy festive dish on any holiday. Smaller families can buy a small shoulder or picnic ham and wrap it in homemade or frozen dough. I serve this with a honey mustard sauce.
- ◆ Stuffed meat, poultry or fish always look interesting and are simple to make.
- ◆ Serve vegetables in their own scooped out shell or stuff shells with a

flavorful filling.

- ◆ Fresh fruit salad may be served in cantaloupe halves or in a basket carved from watermelon and decorated with a sprig of mint.
- ◆ Refrigerator croissants, filo pastry or pie crust can house a variety of things, such as spiced ground meat or ham, seafood, creamed vegetables.
- ◆ Molded things always look special. Create layers of contrasting color when making things like mousses, terrines or jellied salad.
- ◆ Cooked lasagna noodles can be rolled up with a filling using any of the following alone or in combination: ground leftover meat, herbed spinach, pimentos, pureed vegetables, ham, sautéed mushrooms. Place them in an oven-proof dish coiled side facing up (just like cinnamon buns) to reheat in the oven or microwave or place the bundles on their seam and cover with a sauce before baking. Make sure the colors are contrasting and esthetically pleasing. This dish can be an easy showpiece if you pay attention to the colors as well as the flavors.

Quick garnishing ideas:

- ◆ Top hot or cold dishes with cheese, parsley, toasted crumbs, croutons or nuts.
- ◆ Mound egg, tuna or salmon salad neatly, using an ice cream scoop or a greased custard cup as a form, place it on a bed of lettuce, sprinkle it with sliced or chopped black olives.
- ◆ Sliced pickles or "match-sticks" of sweet red peppers can be arranged on a pâté, salmon salad or terrine to make an attractive pattern.
- ◆ Finely chopped chives look attractive on top of devilled eggs.
- ◆ Red radishes, plain or made into rosettes, peeking out of cold cuts rolled into a cone will make even bologna look tempting.
- ◆ Red "buttons" of cranberries arranged on roast turkey breast will delight everyone.
- ◆ Roll various fillings (jelly roll fashion) into flour tortillas, refrigerate for several hours and slice for attractive party food.
- ◆ Stuff scooped out French bread with firm fillings like egg or crab salad, refrigerate and serve whole to be sliced at the luncheon table.

- ◆ Serve hors d'oeuvres on slices of cucumber, radish, zucchini, apple or pear instead of crackers.
- ◆ Fill the cavity of squashes with blanched cranberries moistened with a few drops of lemon juice and rolled in cinnamon sugar for a festive Christmas dinner.
- ◆ Make vegetable popovers, fritters or pancakes using canned corn, peas or mushrooms to replace potatoes as a side dish, or to serve with a sauce and rice for a vegetarian meal.
- ◆ Add chopped chives, roasted peppers, parsley or nuts to ordinary steamed rice or mashed potatoes.
- ◆ Glaze roast meat, fowl or ham with liqueur flavored brown sugar, fruit preserves or honey diluted with lemon juice just before serving.
- ◆ To dress up soups:
  - add pasta of an interesting shape or make some dumplings.
  - float croutons, plain or flavored, on top
  - sprinkle with parsley, chives, almonds, slivered peppers or cheese.

#### **Gelatin:**

For some reason jellied food always seems to be classy and elegant. Gelatin is a low calorie purified natural protein that has no substantial flavor of its own, therefore it takes on the flavors of other ingredients without competing with them.

#### ***Working with gelatin:***

To dissolve plain gelatin: sprinkle the crystals on top of hot liquid and stir gently until completely dissolved.

Aspic is clear gelled meat broth. The preparation from scratch is arduous, but a very acceptable substitute can be made by dissolving gelatin in canned clear broth or in consommé. This then can be used to bind terrines, mousses or salads.

Just about anything will do for a mold. Metal containers are easier to unmold than glass or pottery. Refrigerate and when the gelatin is firmly set, dip the bottom of the dish into hot water up to its rim and count to 30. Remove, wipe off the water, cover the top with the serving platter and holding onto the platter, and mold firmly invert it quickly. If it didn't slip out right away, rub the outside with a towel dipped in hot water and rung out, until it does.

***Try layering:***

- Cranberry jelly and jellied creamed turkey in a mold
- Jellied salmon mousse, hard-boiled egg halves and jellied spinach mousse.

A coating of aspic, applied with a pastry brush, can keep your made-ahead buffet creations, like devilled eggs, cold cuts, canapes and terrines from drying out and imparts an attractive sheen.

For individual servings of jellied patés, salads or desserts, lightly grease a 2 inch deep pan, add your mixture. Chill and when set, cut forms, such as stars, with a cookie cutter. Use an egg lifter to transfer these cut-outs to decorate your platter of cold cuts or vegetables or serve them as appetizers on individual plates.



**Table Setting:**

Keep table decorations simple so that they don't interfere with the carving, serving and passing of food.

- ◆ Colors should complement the food.
- ◆ Flower arrangements, if any, should be low enough not to impede conversation and distract from viewing the attractive food.
- ◆ Do learn one or two methods of fancy napkin-folding for decorative fun.




# Hygiene

No cookbook would be complete without a chapter to warn you of the dangers of improperly handled food. We all know that improperly handled food can cause anything from mild indigestion to severe food poisoning. Food poisoning is the result of poor technique in food handling at some point. Food can be contaminated by bacteria that are already present on the food in small quantities, but if allowed to multiply, will cause spoilage and possibly food poisoning. Parasites are usually found in pork or fish and are killed by heat. Airborne contaminants are most often yeasts and molds. While generally less dangerous, they can cause premature spoiling and waste. Chemicals used to protect foods from insects, spoilage and to prolong shelf-life can cause a variety of problems, especially in sensitive individuals.



## *Choosing fresh ingredients:*

This subject is partially covered in the description of the particular food; however, some practical considerations may be useful.


 Shop in a reputable store which has a good turnover to avoid stale or spoiled goods. If you must shop in a store that is suspect for turnover or cleanliness, choose packaged items with a long shelf life like dry or canned goods and pass over the meats and cold cuts. Choose potatoes, pasta and canned vegetables instead. You can still create, with a little imagination, a good and nourishing meal without risking a problem.

 Avoid "fresh" meat that has a dried surface.

 Watch how the meat is handled by the staff of the store.

For instance, if they deal with fresh fowl and beef or cold cuts on the same counter surface or with their bare hands without a thorough washing between, they are ignorant and/or careless in their food safety.


 Vacuum-packed foods stay fresh longer, so they are a safe bet usually, but make sure that the package has no leaks and is not bulging.

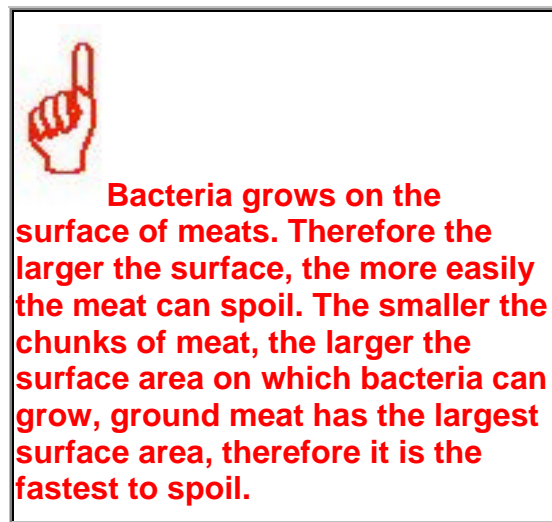
 Dented cans should be carefully examined for leaks. If the damaged can contains an acid product such as tomatoes or fruit, make sure the lining is not damaged, otherwise undesirable heavy metals may have leached into the food from the unprotected surface.

 Check "best before dates". Although many products are acceptable after

this date, it indicates how long the product has been around and whether it has lost some of its freshness, food value or flavor and whether it needs to be used quickly.

Fermented milk products like yogurt, sour cream and buttermilk do not go off right at the "best before" date if treated hygienically. They can be stored in the refrigerator much longer than indicated on the package. The flavor may become a little more sour and the solids may separate, but until you see pink or black fuzzy fungus growing on the edge of the container, usually they can be used safely.

 Do not buy highly perishable meat products on very hot days unless you pick it up as the last item, whisk it home and refrigerate it immediately. In hot weather even the slightest delay can cause bacterial growth in hamburger meat, uncured cold cuts and variety meats.



 **Storage:**

Reliance on manufactured preservation of foods have made us sloppy in food storage.

**After shopping:**



refrigerate meat, cold cuts and dairy products immediately



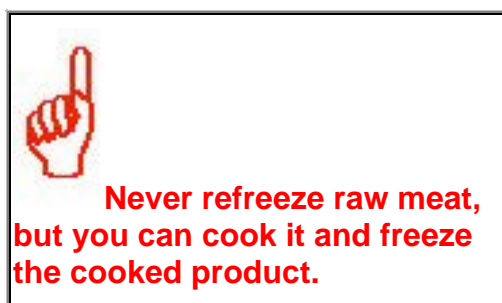
place frozen items in the freezer.

 **Freezers:**

Deep freezers differ from the freezer section of the refrigerator. The deep freezer is usually colder than the freezer compartment of a refrigerator. In single-door refrigerators with a freezer inside, the frost build-up insulates the food from the cooling coils, resulting in a higher temperature and often the food is barely

frozen. In this kind of situation food should be stored only for a week or two and the freezer defrosted frequently. If you have a 2 door self-defrost or frost-free fridge, the cooling cycle alternates with a heating cycle and it often has a fan to remove the water vapors. Foods dry easily under these conditions and because of the self defrost heating cycle, deteriorate. Food should not be kept in such a compartment longer than a month or so.

Deep freezers can keep food almost indefinitely, although some of the nutritional value may be lost. Wrap well to avoid "freezer burns" caused by drying. Mark containers clearly with a permanent marker or ballpoint pen. Indicate: contents, number of servings, date prepared and instructions for reheating, if any. For packaging recycled plastic containers, foil, freezer wrap and plastic bags may be used. Masking tape is the best for labeling because it sticks to all of the above except plastic bags and stays on in the freezer. Plastic bags can be marked in the special opaque area, tagged with a twister or a note can be slipped inside the bag. Whatever method of packaging you choose, don't expect to remember or recognize what is in your freezer without labeling, because I guarantee you won't.



It used to be the "law" that warm food should not be put into the refrigerator; however, food does not have to be cooled before refrigerating it in the newer fridges. They are designed to respond to temperature fluctuations better than before. If you have an aged fridge or need to cool cooked food for the freezer, you can fill your sink with cold water and set the pot of food into it to speed up the cooling.



## Preserving

If you wish to get into canning and preserving, I highly recommend you write to the manufacturers of pectins or preserving jars for reliable instruction booklets. Proper preserving is of the utmost importance. Poorly processed food can really cause trouble. Bacteria has ample opportunity to multiply in preserves.

Blanching, briefly placing firm raw fruits or vegetables in boiling water, will kill bacteria on the surface without cooking them and is recommended before freezing, canning or pickling.





### **Storage Tips:**

☀️ **Garlic preserved at home in oil can easily grow botulism bacteria, therefore only prepare what you'll use within a week. Manufacturers acidify their products to avoid this danger. Keep both homemade and store bought flavored oils refrigerated.**

☀️ **When storing cheese do not reuse a bag previously used for bread. Mold spores from bread can cause premature molding of the cheese. Hard cheeses can be stored for a month or more if you practice good hygiene.**

**If a hard cheese gets moldy spots on the outside, slice off the layer and use up the cheese as soon as possible. Soft cheeses should be discarded if moldy.**

☀️ **Always use fresh clean utensils, preferably from the dishwasher, to take out the amounts of jam, mayonnaise, yogurt or condiments needed. Never spread directly from the jar. Contaminants, picked up from the bread, can spoil the whole jar.**

☀️ **Cover foods after use. Uncovered food can pick up microorganisms from the air causing earlier spoilage, impart odors to other foods and lose its texture to drying.**

☀️ **Keep a flat saucer of baking soda in the back of the refrigerator and freezer to deodorize them. Change it monthly, but throw the used stuff into your dishwasher to help keep the scaling in check there.**



### ***How to tell if food is spoiled?***

**Very often you cannot tell by looking. So if in doubt, discard!**

**Some sure signs of spoilage are:**

- bad smell
- greenish hue on meats
- jellied food has a runny puddle
- mold growing on the surface
- cloudiness in normally clear food
- foamy bubbly surface

#### **Preparation:**

When we talk about cleanliness in preparation, most of us think of the real problem of salmonella in fowl. That is because, in the last few years, this problem has been widely publicized. This is a good thing because it made us aware of how easily and innocently food can be contaminated. Contamination can pose a real threat in food preparation.

There are some elementary rules on keeping things clean:



**Wash the tops of cans before opening.**



**Wash and clean fruits and vegetables before use to remove soil particles as well as insecticide and preservative chemicals.**



**Use fresh and clean utensils (knives and boards) for each step of the preparation to avoid transferring contamination from one food to the other.**



**Work rapidly with raw meat and fish and refrigerate or cook as soon as possible after handling.**



**If you are cooking something for later use, do the last 10 minutes of the cooking without lifting the lid. Cool and store the food in the refrigerator without lifting the cover. This ensures that airborne organisms don't get in during the cooling period and a slight vacuum forms which also helps prevent spoilage.**



### **Cleaning meat:**

Washing meat with water removes little, if any, of the bacteria from the meat, because it has no effect on the fat and bone particles, adhering to the meat and those are what hold the bacteria and other contaminants firmly in place. Scraping with a knife held at a 45° angle to the surface does a much better job. Use clean paper to wipe the knife between strokes. You can use the inside of the wrapping paper or paper towels. If you must wash the meat, rinse and pat it dry quickly, never soak meat.

You cannot "clean" ground meat and it is handled extensively during preparation, both in the store and in the home. For this reason, the bacterial content of ground meat is always quite high, often to the point of near dangerous.


Therefore, always serve burgers well done! If you wish to eat and serve raw or rare ground meat, make sure it is prepared under extremely stringent controls.

Pork often carries parasites which are rendered harmless if the meat is cooked through, but can be transferred to humans if the meat is under done.

**Special care must be taken when handling raw fowl:**

1 in 3 chickens is infected with salmonella. While this bacteria poses no problem when the food is cooked thoroughly, cross-contamination of food that needs little or no cooking is always a lurking danger and scrupulous attention to detail is the only defense.

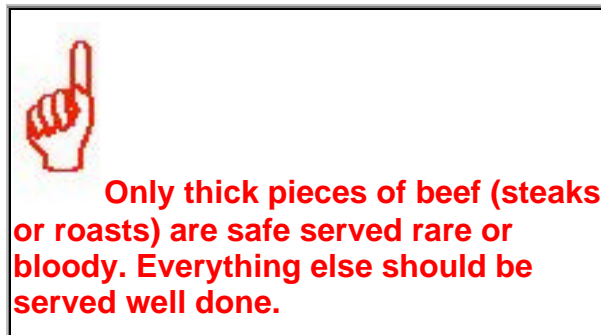
Use either a dishwasher-safe board for fowl or if using a wooden board, scrub it with bleach and dry it before using it for raw or under-cooked ingredients. Wash all utensils, dishes and counter tops thoroughly with hot soapy water after they have come in contact with raw fowl.

 A tip for safe fish: If you want to try the many recipes using raw fish, like sushi, and aren't sure whether to trust the fish, freeze it for at least 48 hours. This will kill the parasites that may have been in the fish.

### **Cooking:**

Ground meat, fowl and pork should be cooked thoroughly, that is until the juices no longer run pink. For the inexperienced cook this may mean frequent piercing of the meat with a fork, which could easily result in the meat drying out.

It is easier to use a meat thermometer. Insert it when you think the meat is nearly done, in the centre of the thickest piece of meat, be sure it is not in so deep as to be touching the pan or the barbecue grill. A fast response meat thermometer will give you a good indication when the meat is done. If you have made a mistake and find bloody pieces of chicken or pork at the table, about a minute of microwaving at high per piece of meat will rectify the situation without delaying the meal too much.






### Serving:




"Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold" - is the rule often cited.

This rule is easy to keep at a reasonably sized dinner party or even a family barbecue, but at larger affairs where several people are involved in the preparation, transportation and logistics, the rules are often overlooked or the responsibility to ensure that the food is safe is not clearly delegated to a particular individual, and everyone thinks the others will take care of it.

Although individual situations vary, a few rules of planning may help:

-  plan "safe" foods that do not spoil easily.
-  appoint one individual to oversee cleanliness, refrigeration and preparation logistics to make sure the food doesn't "hang around" half-warm or half-cold. This is especially important on warm days when the temperature rapidly escalates bacterial growth.
-  If in doubt, don't serve it.

"Safer" foods for summer picnics, packed lunches and hiking:

-  hard boiled eggs in the shell
-  very dry cured meats like jerky, dry smoked salamis and sausages
-  peanut butter



hard cheese



yogurt



canned meat or fish to be opened only when needed



vinaigrette or individual packs of salad dressing



## Clean-up

Clean up as you go. Rinse gooey, soak burnt, keep surfaces wiped, back splash too.

**Wash everything in the dishwasher that can possibly be put in the dishwasher.**

The high water temperature and the strong detergent clean and disinfect things in the way hand-washing, no matter how stringent, will never do. A dishwasher will also reduce the chance of cross-infecting family members with colds and flu.

Poorly-washed containers and utensils carry flavors and microorganisms to other foods.

Do not store acidic foods such as tomato sauce in metal containers, transfer the food as soon as possible after cooking to glass, plastic or pottery vessels for storage. Acids will react with the metal, imparting an "off" flavor and add undesirable leached metals to your food.

## *Useful Cleaning Tips:*



Cast iron and milled steel pans rust easily. Wash them with soapy water before and after use, dry thoroughly, and wipe the cooking surface with oil before putting them away.



Use crumpled foil to clean grills: it will also work for pots and pans if you run out of scouring pads.

 To remove scale from jars and pots, fill them with hot water, add a little white vinegar, and leave it to dissolve the deposit.

 Use salt to scrub stains from tea cups and glasses.

 Use the spent half of a lemon to deodorize just about anything (pots, pans, wooden utensils). Finally throw it in the garbage disposal to deodorize that too.


 To deodorize plastic containers add used coffee grounds, fill with hot water and let stand 2-4 hours, wash and drip dry.

 To deodorize or clean spice mills and coffee grinders, grind 2 tablespoons of coarse salt and/or a few broken bits of dry bread.

 Never pour cold water into a hot pan. The pan will warp.

 Oil skewers before using them. The meat will not stick and clean-up will be easier.

 Rinse the sauce pan with cold water before heating milk in it to prevent sticking.

 Wipe the inside of roasters and casseroles, including the inside of the cover, with a thin film of oil or spray before adding food. This will prevent sticking or burnt on food and will make cleaning much easier.



## **Cooking for Special Diets**

Some people, whether by choice or for reasons of health, are on special diets.

I hope reading this work has given you a lot of ideas already on how to adjust your recipes to accommodate those needs.

Although there are many special diet cookbooks on the market, I urge you to alter your old favorites and new gleanings to suit those restrictions rather than trying to build an all new repertoire. It will be easier on you as well as on the dieter.

If you think about it, those specialized recipe books came into being when someone altered their old favorites to satisfy the needs of their special diet. There are very few truly new recipes. Most recipes are a variation on an existing one. So don't go into a tailspin when a guest announces that they are vegetarian, diabetic, lactose-sensitive or on a gluten free diet. Think through the limitations that these needs place on you and rise to the challenge. You'll feel good about yourself, and your guest will appreciate it.

To avoid embarrassment or disaster, always ask your guests if they have any special sensitivities or are on a special diet when you issue an invitation. If you are planning a large party where such personalized attention is impossible, be sure there are plenty of choices for individuals who have restrictions.



### **Vegetarian Cooking:**

I don't pretend to be an expert on this subject. I do know that in order to fine tune their nutritional needs, vegetarians have to have a certain amount of high protein vegetables, which are usually nuts and legumes. To get the essential amino acids missing from ordinary legumes they must supplement them with dairy products or soy beans. With that frame of reference, I have indicated a number of tasty "regular" recipes that can either be altered easily to become meatless or are free of meat.

As to how to achieve balanced nutrition in menu planning for a vegetarian I will not attempt to broach that subject. If the vegetarian is an occasional guest just prepare a variety of meatless dishes and let them choose. If the vegetarian is a family member, you'll have to study the nutritional rules far beyond the scope of my work to do a good job.

### **Diabetics:**

This problem is better understood than most. Sufferers must omit sugar

and are limited in the amount of carbohydrates they may consume. For diabetic family members, learn and study all you can to be able to offer the best nutrition possible within the confines of the diet.

### **Milk Allergies:**

As good as milk and milk products are for nutrition, a large segment of the population has some form of milk sensitivity. Those who are allergic to the milk protein need to find alternatives to milk in the form of soy products or use milk from a species other than cows. Goat and sheep milk and cheeses are becoming more readily available to offer alternatives to those who need them. Often wine, broth and vegetable or fruit juices can be used to substitute for milk in recipes.

### **Lactase Deficiency or Lactose Intolerance:**

This section will be disproportionately detailed, because it's the diet that is most familiar to me, and I am on something of a crusade to educate people about it.

A large segment of the population is not capable of digesting milk sugars. This is not an allergy, it's an enzyme deficiency.

This is a metabolic disorder in which the person lacks the necessary enzyme, lactase, to split the double molecule of milk sugar lactose into its single sugar components. The resulting single sugars would normally be readily absorbed into the blood stream through the intestinal wall, but lactose just sits there. Sufferers vary in their sensitivity, depending on the level of their enzyme activity. The most severe cases can't tolerate lactose at all and experience severe symptoms even after eating a slice of ordinary bread made with the usual amount of milk. These people, for obvious reasons, must avoid milk, products made with milk and be constantly vigilant for the unexpected presence of lactose in other foods. This is a tall order for even the most able sleuth.

Unfortunately, lately nearly all processed meat products, such as wieners, bologna, salamis and sausages contain added powdered milk. Recently, a manufacturer of grated Parmesan was found to have added lactose to its product to stretch the quantity and "improve the texture". For reasons I cannot understand, some manufacturers of candy and chocolate have taken to using lactose as a sweetener.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers use it as a "filler" in a number of preparations such as birth control and motion sickness pills. These hidden "lactose traps" make the control of this dietary problem very difficult to achieve.

Lactase-deficient individuals can use lactose-free milk (regular milk treated to break down the lactose) and eat all the unadulterated fermented milk products they want. The microorganisms, during fermentation "predigests" the offending milk sugar, lactose and turn it into lactic acid and its relatives, which cause no problem.



**Rennet and/or acids cause clotting of the milk without fermentation. Consequently, cheeses prepared purely by these methods, without prior fermentation, are not suitable for people with lactose intolerance. Often rennet is added after fermentation, after the lactose is broken down by the microorganisms, to produce the desired texture. These cheeses are lactose-free. Dry curd cottage cheese, made from soured milk is lactose-free. Commercial cream cheeses are unreliable. They often contain added milk solids of unknown lactose content. I buy cultured sour cream and concentrate it in a filtering device to produce cream cheese required in some recipes.**

#### **Gluten Free:**

**This diet is for individuals who cannot digest gluten, a natural protein found mainly in wheat. Major alterations are needed to the western diet to accomplish this. Of course, omitting bread and pastry is obvious. Roux has to be replaced with rice flour or cornstarch. Don't forget to omit or alter anything made with bread crumbs, pastas and such easily overlooked items as cooked salad dressings made with flour.**

#### **Food Allergies:**

**These are responses of the immune system that can vary from mild rashes to life threatening reactions. Shellfish and nuts are the worst offenders. I can't emphasize enough the need to be aware of this. The danger is the greatest at the buffet table where the guest doesn't have an opportunity to ask the hostess about preparation. I have made it a habit to garnish fish and seafood with slices of lemon to warn those who need to know. I also resist the current fashion of using nut oils, and I decorate anything containing nuts with a few whole nuts as a warning.**



# Terminology

This list was prepared to aid you in reading recipes and dining out. It is far from being a complete dictionary of the culinary arts.

- Al Dente is an Italian expression meaning firm to the bite. This expression is usually used to describe pasta that is cooked just to the point where it's still firm, but not mushy.
- Amandine is something made with almonds.
- Au gratin means browned under a broiler or a dish prepared with a sauce and crumbs on top then baked in the oven.
- Au jus is French meaning it is served in its own juice.
- Au Vin is something that is braised in wine.
- Barbeque (also spelled as: BBQ or barbecue) means to cook over intense heat.
- Baste is to bathe baking or roasting foods with a seasoned liquid or pan dripping to flavor it and to keep it moist.
- Batter is a thick mixture of flour, water and/or milk used to coat pieces of food before deep frying.
- Bearnaise is an egg-based sauce flavored with a variety of herbs such as onion, chervil, tarragon, shallots and parsley.
- Beurre Manie is equal amounts of soft butter and flour mixed and added in small amounts as a thickener to soups and sauces
- Bind is to add something moist to hold dry ingredients together.
- Bisque is a thick, strained, creamed soup.
- Blanch means to drop foods into boiling water for a very short period of time in order to sterilize their surface and/or to loosen their skin.
- Blend refers to gently combining two or more ingredients.
- Boil means to bring water to the highest temperature possible. It can also refer to food cooked at that temperature.

- **Bouillabaisse** literally translated means "boil-stop." It's fish soup which is brought to a boil and served within minutes in order to avoid overcooking the fish.
- **Bouillon** is French for "broth" or "stock". You can buy bouillon cubes or a powdered mix that makes bouillon, use canned chicken broth or make your own.
- **Bouquet Garni** is a small bundle of herbs wrapped in cheesecloth added to soups and stews.
- **Braising** is to cook slowly in a minimum of liquid. Meat is usually seared before being braised. The cooking liquid generally contains a tenderizer such as mustard, wine or lemon juice.
- **Breading** is to coat food with bread crumbs before pan- or deep-frying.
- **Broiling or Grilling** is to apply dry heat to one side at a time to a thin piece of meat.
- **Broth** is a seasoned basic soup made from bones and/or meat with some vegetables. Often used to dilute sauces or as a base for other soups.
- **Cassoulet** is a traditional Southern French dish of meat and beans, heavy on the garlic, red wine and herbs.
- **Chowder** is a milk-based soup that always contains potatoes in addition to the other ingredients.
- **Clarified Butter** is butter that has been heated to the point where the solids collect in the bottom of the pan and the clear oil of the butter can be poured off.
- **Consommé** is French for "clear soup" and is usually made from a strained beef broth.
- **Coq au Vin** is chicken braised in wine.
- **Couscous** is pasta like product made from coarse semolina.
- **Cracklings** are the browned bits of skin and meat that is left when fat is rendered.
- **Curried** refers to a dish that has been flavored with curry spices.
- **Deglaze** is to simmer stock or wine in the bottom of a pan in which meat

has cooked, in order to scrape and dissolve the crust and to make a sauce or gravy.

- Demi-glace is a concentrated veal stock often used for deglazing.
- Dot is to scatter small bits of something over the surface of a dish.
- Dredge is to coat the food with flour or some other dry ingredient.
- Drippings is a collective term that refers to juices, fat and bits of browned meat left in the pan after roasting or sautéing.
- En Papillote means cooked in a package. The package might be a pastry, foil or parchment paper.
- Fillet is to remove fish from the bone. The resulting boneless piece of fish is also called a fillet.
- Fold is a very gentle blending of light and heavy ingredients, in such a way that the texture of the light ingredient is not disturbed. This is usually done by gently lifting the bottom to top.
- Fricassee is stewed meat served in a sauce of its own gravy.
- Gazpacho is a cold Spanish soup of celery, peppers, onions, garlic in a tart bouillon and tomato juice base.
- Gratin is food baked with cheese as a topping.
- goulash (also gulasch or goulasch) is a name given by non-Hungarians to members of the family of dishes Hungarians call Paprikas or Pörkölt. Onions are sautéed, paprika is added and the food is simmered in this sauce.
- Gulyas is a Hungarian soup prepared with onions, paprika and meat with potatoes and handmade pasta added. Usually seasoned with caraway seeds.
- Hollandaise is an egg based sauce made with butter and flavored with lemon juice or vinegar.
- Liaison is a French word that refers to thickening agents, such as a roux, egg yolk, corn starch or arrow root mixture.
- Maison means "house" in French and refers to the dish being prepared in a style that is the specialty of the house.

■ **Marinade** comes from the Spanish word "Marinada", meaning to pickle. Usually refers to a seasoned liquid in which the food is soaked to improve its flavor and to tenderize it.

■ **Paella** is a Spanish rice dish containing chicken, shrimp and clams.

■ **Paté** is a spreadable paste usually made of ground, seasoned meat or liver.

■ **Phyllo** or **Filo** is a tissue-paper-thin stretched pastry dough used in layers for making strudels, Greek pita, Turkish Burek or Baklava.

■ **Poaching** is a cooking method where the food is simmered in a hot liquid.

■ **Primavera** is Italian, meaning "spring". This usually refers to pasta with fresh vegetables in a creamy sauce. The vegetables may vary with the season and do not necessarily consist of spring vegetables.

■ **Provençal** refers to a main course dish made in the style of Provence, using garlic, olive oil and tomatoes.

■ **Puff Pastry** is a flaky pastry of many layers, created by repeated rolling and folding. It is sometimes called Mille Feuilles.

■ **Puree** is to press a food through a sieve or process it in a blender for a very smooth consistency.

■ **Quiche** is a pie filled with a savory custard.

■ **Ragout** is a thick, rich, seasoned stew.

■ **Reduce** is to concentrate a liquid by boiling some of the water away.

■ **Render** is to melt the fat out from skin and meat.

■ **Roasting** is a dry cooking method without added liquid or fats.

■ **Roulades** are thin slices of meat rolled up. Sometimes the meat is filled before being rolled up.

■ **Roux** is a liaison or thickener made by frying flour in an equal amount of fat over low heat. It is used to thicken soups and sauces.

■ **Salsa** means "sauce" in Spanish. In North America we call a chunky, fresh condiment by that name. Most salsas, but not all, are tomato based.

- **Sautéing** is to quickly brown meat or vegetables in a small amount of fat at a medium to high heat. The ingredients are added dry and the temperature kept high enough so that the juices are instantly evaporated.
- **Scald** is to heat milk to near boiling.
- **Scalloped** refers to food baked in a casserole with a sauce.
- **Score** is to cut lines into the surface of food. Usually done to ducks and geese to encourage the rendering of fats resulting in a crispy skin.
- **Searing** food is to cook it very fast at a high temperature in order to seal in the juices.
- **Sift** is to pass dry ingredients through a fine sieve to remove lumps and lighten the texture by incorporating air.
- **Simmer** is to cook at a temperature just below boiling.
- **Skim** is to remove fat or scum floating on the top of a liquid.
- **Steep** is to cover something, usually spices, herbs or tea with boiling liquid until its flavors and color infuse the liquid.
- **Stewing** is to simmer food in a small amount of liquid until it is tender.
- **Stock** is a long-simmered flavored broth with vegetables added.
- **Stroganoff** is a beef stew made with mushrooms and sour cream.
- **Terrine** refers to the mold in which paté is formed or baked, but now generally used as an interchangeable term for paté.
- **Toast** is to brown by baking.
- **Tortilla** is a flat unleavened Mexican pancake made from corn meal.
- **Truss** is to tie the legs of poultry together.
- **Vinaigrette** is a spiced oil and vinegar sauce, usually used as a salad dressing.
- **Whipping** is to incorporate air into a liquid ingredient to expand its volume. This is accomplished by beating vigorously with a whisk or electric beater.

▣ Zest is to remove fine strips of the outer skin of citrus fruits. These strips are also called zest.



## **Part II**

### **Recipe Book:**

# **The Recipe Collection**

As I explained in the introduction, the recipes were chosen to illustrate the methods and use of ingredients. Quantities and ingredients in some instances were adjusted to fit with today's life-styles and food-fashion.

Naturally, my own Hungarian background is imprinted on the choices and variations. The variations given in each recipe are designed to make you think of the many ways you can alter the recipes to suit your taste, the occasion, available ingredients and the dietary needs or preferences of your family and guests.

The recipes are arranged in alphabetical order. Each recipe may belong to several categories.

Vegetarian Suggestions is a list of the recipes that contain information on how to alter or use that recipe in creating a meat-free dish.

#### **Abbreviations and conversions:**

**c cup 250 milliliters**

**tb tablespoon 15 milliliters**

**ts teaspoon 5 milliliters**

**lb pound 454 grams**

**oz ounce 28 grams**

**in inch 2.5 centimeters**

**sm small 250° F = 120°C**

**md medium 350° F = 175°C**

**lg large 375° F = 192°C**

**sl slice 400° F = 205°C**

**pkg package 425° F = 218°C**

**cl clove 450° F = 230°C**

**st stalk or rib**



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## **Baked Beans**

**Categories: Casseroles, Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 lb beans, dry navy beans**

**1 md onion, diced**

**1 green pepper, diced (optional)**

**2 tb cooking oil**

**¼ c barley**

**2 tb brown sugar**

**1 ts salt**

**1 c water or stock**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**Soak the beans for at least two hours or overnight. Mix all ingredients together and bake in a covered casserole dish at 250°F for 8-10 hours or overnight.**

**This can also be done in a crock pot.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Any dried beans can be used, such as kidney beans, pinto beans or chick peas.**
- 2. You can add a ham bone for flavoring or sliced sausage.**
- 3. Thyme, garlic and black pepper may be added for variation of flavor.**
- 4. All or part of the water may be substituted with a thin tomato sauce.**
- 5. Dried fruits such as raisins, prunes or apricots will produce an interesting variation.**
- 6. Bake a few whole washed raw eggs in the mixture for a tasty treat. You can peel them and serve them with the beans when the dish is cooked. The flavors penetrate the egg.**



## **Baked Fish Fillets**

**Categories: Fish and seafood**

**1 lb fish fillets**

**2 tb butter**

**1 tb parsley, minced**

**1 tb lemon juice**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**This recipe works well for just about any kind of fish.**

**Place fish in a flat ovenproof dish. Melt the butter and add all the other ingredients. Brush the butter mixture on the fish and microwave 6-7 minutes on high or bake at 400°F in a conventional oven for 25-30 minutes or just until the fish flakes when tested with a fork. This is a simple preparation that can set off a more elaborate side dish.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Use chives or dill instead of parsley.**
- 2. Cover the fillets with thin slices of fresh tomatoes before baking and use basil in the butter mixture.**
- 3. Although fillets are specified, salmon steaks would do well in this recipe with the timing adjusted for the thicker steaks.**
- 4. For something spicier, add a pinch of cayenne to the butter mixture.**



## **Barbecued Trout**

**Categories: Fish and seafood**

**4 sm trout**

**½ c butter or margarine, melted**

**2 tb lemon juice**

**2 tb chives or green onions, chopped fine**

**2 tb parsley**

**½ ts basil, dry**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**Season fish cavity with salt and pepper. Mix remaining ingredients and brush fish on both sides. Place on well oiled grill 3-4 inches from the coals or flame.**

Barbecue for 2 minutes on each side brushing the fish liberally with the spiced butter. Keep turning it until the flesh is opaque and flaky, a total of about 10 minutes.

**Variations:**

1. Thick salmon steaks can be substituted for the trout with equal success.
2. If you wish a touch of cayenne, a pinch of tarragon or chervil can be added to the butter.
3. Flavored Oil with the addition of lemon juice can substitute for the butter and spices.
4. While nothing replaces barbecuing, this dish can be done very successfully on a broiler rack in the oven



### **Basic Dressing Or Stuffing**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**3 c dry bread or buns**

**2 c water**

**3 tb oil**

**1 md onion, chopped**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**½ c celery, chopped**

**½ c mushrooms, sliced**

**1 lg egg**

**½ ts salt**

**2 ts savory or sage**

The bread should be completely dry. You can use a variety of breads or buns that you've collected or buy plain croutons or use corn bread. Do not use sour dough. While most people cut off the crust I prefer to leave it on for texture. Break the bread into roughly 1 inch pieces or use unseasoned croutons.

This recipe is light on salt. You may want to taste it before adding the egg, and adjust the seasoning.

In a large bowl, add water to the bread pieces. Mix and set aside. In the meantime, heat the oil in a large skillet on medium high, add the onions and black pepper. Sauté until the onions are transparent. Add the celery and mushrooms and continue to sauté until the mushrooms are wilted. Be sure the heat is high enough that the vegetable liquids are not steaming the ingredients, but they are frying.

Squeeze out all the water from the bread. The best way to do this is to pour the bread into a colander and place a saucer on the top. Press on the saucer, mix and repeat until all the water is removed. Return to the bread to the large bowl, add the fried vegetables, salt and seasonings. Toss to mix. Add the lightly beaten egg and the sage or savory. Fill the cavity of the bird lightly; do not pack hard.

This recipe is enough for a small turkey or a large chicken. You may multiply it by any factor necessary to get the right amount.

Any leftover dressing may be baked brushed with oil in a greased pan, in individual muffin cups or formed into balls and placed beside the roasting fowl.

#### Variations:

1. Green peppers, chopped parsnip, diced apples or sliced leek can be added to or substituted in the sautéed vegetable mixture.
2. For a meatier version, finely chopped giblets, scraped liver or ground meat sautéed in a bit of oil can be added to the stuffing.
3. A cup of chopped spinach, water cress or parsley will give you an attractive green color and alter the flavor.
4. Adding a cup of nuts will perk up the taste as well as the texture. Choose toasted pine nuts, pistachios, peanuts, walnuts or roasted chestnuts. Chop them coarsely and fold them in. Hazelnuts will lend it a particularly interesting flavor and texture.
5. For additional seasoning, a touch of garlic, thyme, tarragon, nutmeg, paprika, dill or powdered cumin could be considered.
6. Dried fruits, such as apricots, raisins or prunes can also customize your creation.
7. For a vegetarian main course, form dressing into a loaf (like French bread), brush generously with oil into which 1 teaspoon of paprika has been dissolved and bake in a greased pan at 350°F until lightly browned and crusted, about 1 hour. Or form patties to fry and serve as a meat substitute.



## **Basic Gulasch Recipe**

**Categories: Meat**

- 1 lg cooking onion, finely minced**
- 1 green pepper, chopped (optional)**
- 1 tb shortening or cooking oil**
- 1 lb boneless meat cubed (1 inch)**
- 2 ts paprika, Hungarian sweet**
- pinch cayenne or red pepper (optional)**
- salt to taste-**

**Heat oil or shortening, add onions and peppers, and saute on medium heat until the onions are transparent. Make sure the heat is high enough that the onions are gently frying and not steaming in their own juice. Remove the pot from the stove, add the paprika, mix well. Add the meat and salt. Coat the meat thoroughly with the onion-paprika mixture and simmer covered until the meat is tender. The meat juices generally are adequate; however, if necessary, you can add a little water or stock to keep the gulasch from burning.**

**The slower the cooking the better the flavor; thus this dish lends itself to crock-pot cooking very well.**

**For large gatherings, you can safely multiply this recipe. Prepare the onion-paprika on the stove in a suitable quantity, then pour it over the meat in a large roasting pan and let it cook covered in the oven at 250°F for about 1 hour per pound of meat or over a very slow fire on the barbecue.**

**For this recipe the cheaper, more flavorful, less tender cuts of meat are preferred and any bone available should be added, even if it is discarded before serving.**

**You may use: beef, pork, veal, lamb, mutton, rabbit, tripe or venison for the meat component.**

**Gulasch is usually served with tiny dumplings (spaetzle), but boiled potatoes or cooked pasta will do.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Chicken Paprikas is made the same way, using cut up frying chicken, but a small amount of water has to be added before the simmering process. Add ½ cup sour cream just before serving or place the sour cream on the table and let everyone help themselves.**
- 2. For a superb pilaf, add ½ cup of white rice and ½ cup of hot water to the**

goulash when the meat is nearly done. Continue simmering covered for 15 minutes.

3. For Szekeley Goulash, add ½ cup rinsed and drained sauerkraut to the nearly done Pork Goulash and simmer until the meat is tender. Serve with sour cream mixed in or on the side.

4. For Goulash Soup prepare a recipe with beef. Add 4 cups of water, 3 medium potatoes cubed, 1 teaspoon caraway seeds, adjust the salt and cook until the potatoes are fork tender.



### **Basic Vegetable Soup**

**Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 tb shortening or margarine**

**4 c diced vegetables (up to 6 cups)**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**¼ c flour, all purpose**

**8 c water**

**2 lb bones (chicken, beef or veal)**

**-salt to taste-**

**1 ts marjoram, dry leaves**

**1 cl garlic, minced**

**2 tb parsley, fresh minced**

Heat the shortening on medium high in a large pot. Add the vegetables, 2 cups at a time allowing the heat to recover before adding the next portion. Sprinkle with pepper and saute until the vegetables are lightly cooked. Sprinkle on the flour, mix, cook for 2 minutes and add the cold water, bones, herbs and salt. Mix, bring to a boil then simmer, uncovered, until the vegetables are tender. Add boiled rice, pasta or barley to the portion you will use immediately.

This is a large recipe. You can either have it for several days or freeze some for later use.

**The Vegetables:** These can be all of one kind such as mushrooms, leeks, broccoli, asparagus, peas, green beans, cauliflower, or a mixture that may include onions, parsnips, green peppers, carrots, turnips or potatoes. The vegetables may be fresh or frozen. Avoid quick-cooking vegetables like zucchini and

tomatoes or add them near the end of the cooking time.

**Variations:**

1. You may use roast leftovers, turkey bones, bouillon cubes, plain stock or water instead of the bones.
2. If using just one vegetable, choose the herb that best complements it instead of the marjoram.
3. You can add leftover meat or sausage to make this soup more substantial
4. Fresh tomatoes diced and added 5 minutes before the end of cooking will improve the color and texture.
5. Vegetarian Version: Omit bones and use vegetable stock for all or part of the water.



**Beef In Red Wine With Grapes**

**Categories: Meat, Stews**

**1½ lb lean beef in ½ inch cubes**

**3 tb oil**

**1 md onion, sliced fine**

**1 lg carrot, diced**

**2 st celery, chopped**

**6 lg mushrooms, sliced**

**-black pepper, to taste-**

**1 lg tomato, skinned and chopped**

**2 bay leaves**

**½ ts thyme (dry)**

**1 cl garlic, minced**

**1 c red wine**

**-salt, to taste-**

**2 tb arrowroot or corn starch dissolved in**



**¼ c water**

**1 c seedless grapes**

**This is the Beef Bourguignonne of the Millennium. Gone is the arduous preparation, the copious amounts of fat in the form of lardon and beurre manie, but the flavor remains. The grapes give it an exotic touch.**

**Heat the oil in a Dutch oven at medium high, add the onions and cook until the oil is sizzling again. Add the carrots, celery, mushrooms, one ingredient at a time, always waiting for the oil to reheat between additions. Cook until the mushrooms are limp. Add the meat and stir until all sides have turned a lighter color. Add the tomato, the seasonings and the wine. Give it one stir, cover, reduce heat to minimum and let the whole thing simmer for at least 2 hours.**

**Check for doneness of the meat with a fork. It should be very soft. Add arrowroot mixture and continue to cook until slightly thickened. Add grapes and cook for 5 more minutes.**

**Serve with pasta, couscous, dumplings or anything else that mops up the delicious juices.**

**Variations:**

- 1. This is light on garlic, but you may increase it to suit your preference.**
- 2. Chopped green peppers can replace one of the vegetables.**
- 3. For a Mediterranean touch, replace grapes with whole black olives that have been boiled in water.**
- 4. The seasoning may include basil, oregano, paprika, ginger or tarragon.**
- 5. Although it says beef, you can use lamb, turkey thighs or anything else as long as you adjust the cooking time.**
- 6. The wine may be substituted with un-sweetened grape juice acidified with a bit of lemon juice, or with stock.**

**Your imagination is the limit**



## **Beef Stew**

**Categories: Meat, Stews**

**2 lb lean beef in 1 inch cubes**

**3 tb oil**

**1 md onion, minced**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**4 lg carrots, sliced chunky**

**4 st celery, sliced chunky**

**1 ts thyme, dry**

**1 ts sage, dry, crushed**

**1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed**

**1 ts salt**

**1½ c water or stock**

**½ c Brown Coloring**

**1 ts Worcestershire sauce**

**In a Dutch oven, heat oil and add the onions and black pepper. Sauté until you can hear the sizzling again. Add carrots and repeat. When it's sizzling add the celery. Sauté until the onions are transparent and limp.**

**Add the cubes of beef and coat them well with the vegetable mixture in the pan. Add the herbs, salt, the water and the Brown Coloring (see recipe). Reduce the heat to a slow simmer, cover and cook for 2 hours or until the meat is so tender that it can be cut with a fork. During the cooking, check it occasionally and add a little water if necessary**

#### **Variations:**

**1. This has a natural gravy. If you wish it to be thicker you can blend 2 tablespoons of flour into the vegetable mixture just before adding the meat or add 2 tablespoons of cornstarch dissolved in 1/4 cup of water when the meat is almost tender.**

**2. 4-6 potatoes (cut chunky) with an additional ½ cup of water can be added after about 1½ hours of cooking. This will also thicken the stew.**

**3. Garlic, cayenne, bay leaf, dry mustard, cloves or allspice may be used for additional flavor.**

**4. Mushrooms, a green pepper, green beans, corn, lima beans or some pearl onions can be added to increase the vegetable content.**

**5. Green peas (fresh or frozen) and 1 or 2 diced tomatoes can also be added, but only near the end because they will cook to a mush if added too early.**

6. You can finish this dish with dumplings if you wish. (See [Chicken and Dumplings](#) for instructions.)

7. Red wine can replace some of the water for a truly rich flavor.



### **Blue Cheese Dressing**

Categories: Casseroles, Salads and Dressings, Sauces and Dips

¼ c blue cheese, crumbled

1 c plain yogurt

2 tb vinegar, plain or flavored

-black pepper to taste-

Combine ingredients in a blender or food processor. This is an excellent, relatively low fat dressing for all types of salads. Particularly good over fresh tomatoes and avocado. It will keep in the refrigerator for 2 weeks.

Variations:

1. Use this as a sauce with savory pancakes, such as potato or zucchini.
2. Serve it as a dip for fresh vegetables.
3. Create a tasty casserole with canned salmon or tuna crumbed over the pasta of your choice and topped with blue cheese dressing. Bake this at 350°F for 30 minutes.
4. Add basil, garlic, sage or savory, if you prefer a heightened flavor.



### **Brown Coloring, Homemade**

Categories: Seasonings

½ c sugar

1 tb water

2 c hot water

In a very small sauce pan heat the sugar with 1 tablespoon of water, stirring constantly until the sugar goes to a liquid, then to a caramel color and then to a dark brown.

Remove the pan from the stove and carefully add the hot water.

The sugar may lump, but don't worry.

Return the pan to the stove and simmer stirring until all the sugar is dissolved

Cool, pour into a clean bottle and refrigerate until needed.

Use it to naturally darken and flavor stews and gravies.



### **Browned Farina With Peas**

Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 tb oil

2 c farina: wheat cereal, regular

-black pepper to taste-

½ ts salt

1½ c cold water

½ c frozen peas

In a saucepan heat oil on medium setting, add farina and black pepper. Fry stirring constantly until the farina is a nice golden brown in color. Keeping the pan far from your body, because the rush of steam can burn you, add the water and salt. Cook stirring occasionally until all the water is evaporated and the wheat kernels have separated. Add the frozen peas, stir and let it cook just until the peas are heated through. Lift the bottom layer to the top often to ensure even heating. Serve as a side dish with any stew, pot roast or any other dish with a good sauce.

Variations:

1. While any other frozen or fresh vegetables may be added, I find peas to be the tastiest.
2. You may want to add some sautéed onions or peppers for a tasty variation.
3. Sage, mint, parsley or marjoram can help you create subtle differences.
4. For something quite daring, serve it as a pasta topping, sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.

It's very good.



## **Buckwheat Kasha**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 tb butter or margarine**

**1 md onion, minced**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**1 egg, lightly beaten**

**1 c buckwheat groats (kasha)**

**2 c boiling water**

**-salt to taste-**

**In a saucepan heat butter, add onions and black pepper and sauté until onions are transparent. Mix egg and the groats. Add it to the onion mixture. Cook stirring until the egg is set and the grain looks dry.**

**Add boiling water and salt, stir, cover, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until the all of the liquid is absorbed and the grains of buckwheat are separated. Serve as a side dish to a main course that has a good sauce or gravy.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Sautéed vegetables such as mushrooms, carrots, peppers or eggplant can be added to customize color and flavor.**
- 2. Savory, thyme or sage would give this a more interesting twist.**
- 3. Add 2 cups of cooked pasta, (bows, broad noodles or elbow macaroni) for a vegetarian dish that recreates the flavor of old Russia.**



## **Cheese Sauce**

**Categories: Cheese and Eggs, Sauces and Dips**

**3 tb butter or margarine**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**3 tb flour, all purpose**

**1 bunch green onions, finely chopped**

**1 c milk, 2%**

**1 c cheese, coarsely grated**

**½ ts savory or sage**

**¼ c dry sherry or wine**

**In a saucepan melt the butter or margarine on medium heat. Add the chopped green onions and black pepper and sauté until the onions are wilted. Add the flour and continue cooking for another 2 minutes. Add the cold milk all at once and stir vigorously. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until thickened, stirring frequently. Add the sherry, seasonings and cheese; continue to cook until the cheese is just melted. Adjust the salt. Depending on the saltiness of the butter and cheese you may or may not need added salt.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Any cheese will do; ordinary cheddar, Gruyère or a blend**
- 2. You can fold into this sauce 2 cups of cooked flaked crab, firm fish, cauliflower, broccoli or green beans and call it Au Gratin.**
- 3. Serve over grilled chicken, fish or seafood for an elegant dinner.**
- 4. Mix it with cooked pasta for a dressed-up macaroni and cheese dinner.**
- 5. For those who like it hot, add chopped chilies or jalapenos to flavor.**
- 6. Try tarragon as a flavoring when using it with cauliflower. It is wonderful!**

**The variations are endless. This is a most versatile recipe!**



## **Chicken and Dumplings**

**Categories: Poultry, Stews**

**STEW:**

**1 chicken ( stewing hen or fryer); cut into pieces**

**3 st celery, sliced chunky**

**3 md carrot, sliced chunky**

**1 lg onion, chopped**

**2 bay leaves**

**-black pepper, to taste-**

**-salt, to taste-**

**4 c water**

**DUMPLINGS:**

**2 c flour, all purpose, sifted**

**½ ts salt**

**½ ts baking soda**

**1 ts baking powder**

**2 tb parsley or chives, minced**

**1 egg, lightly beaten**

**1 tb oil**

**¾ c milk or buttermilk**

**THICKENING:**

**4 tb cornstarch, dissolved in water (¼ cup)**

**If available choose a stewing hen for flavor. Disjoint the hen as though it was a frying chicken. Place chicken, vegetables and seasoning in a large Dutch oven and add water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer until the chicken is tender (30-40 minutes)**

**You may want to do this recipe to this point and refrigerate it overnight so that the excess chicken fat can easily be removed from the top. Then reheat the stew the next day and continue.**

**To prepare the dumplings: Mix dry ingredients in a bowl. Make a well in the center and add all the liquid ingredients. Blend with a fork to form a stiff dough, but do not overwork the dough. It's okay if it's a bit lumpy.**

**With a slotted spoon, remove the chicken pieces and arrange them in an oven-proof serving dish. Cover and keep warm**

**Add cornstarch mixture to the remaining liquid and simmer until thickened. Adjust the salt and seasoning if necessary. Drop heaping tablespoons of the dumpling dough into the hot sauce. Continue until all the dumplings are in the sauce. Cover and cook for 20 minutes. With a slotted spoon lift out the dumplings and arrange them attractively around the chicken. Spoon on the sauce, making sure both chicken and dumplings are generously covered. This is a large all-in-one-pot recipe suitable for a crowd.**

**Leftovers can be successfully reheated in the microwave.**

### Variations:

1. You may want to customize this with your favorite herbs such as sage, rosemary, savory or oregano. A touch of garlic can also be added.
2. Some of the water can be substituted with milk, buttermilk or white wine.
3. You can add a variety of other firm vegetables to this to increase the vegetable content. I would look to broccoli or Brussels sprouts for an attractive color presentation, bell peppers, parsnips and mushrooms for flavor. A frozen vegetable mix can do just as well.
4. You may add 2-4 tablespoons of minced chives, celery leaves or parsley to the dumpling batter for a pleasant contrast in color.



### Chicken Cacciatore

Categories: Poultry, Stews

1 chicken cut up

3 tb olive oil

1 md. onion, minced

1 bell pepper, diced

10 md mushrooms, sliced

-black pepper to taste-

-salt to taste-

2 cl garlic, minced

1 can diced or crushed tomatoes (28 oz)

1 ts oregano

2 bay leaves

I cannot guarantee this to be authentically Italian. It is my own interpretation of the popular Italian dish.

Rinse and pat the chicken pieces dry. You can use a whole cut up chicken or all legs or all breasts if you wish. Since I prefer dark meat for this dish for its flavor, I usually use chicken thighs.

Heat oil in a large skillet on medium high. When the oil is hot, place the chicken



pieces into the pan and cook on each side until the surface of the flesh turns white.

Remove the chicken to a bowl. Add the onions to the hot oil and cook until the oil is reheated to a sizzle. Add peppers and again wait until the oil sizzles. Add mushrooms and black pepper and sauté until the mushrooms are wilted. Make sure the heat is high enough that no liquid collects in the pan and the ingredients are gently frying.

Add garlic and herbs, the chicken and its juices, the canned tomatoes, stir and cover. Reduce heat to a slow simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Turn the chicken pieces and check that the sauce is thin enough so as not to burn (add a ¼ cup of water only if necessary). Cook for 10 more minutes or until the chicken is soft. Alternatively, the chicken pieces can be arranged attractively in an ovenproof serving dish and baked covered until done.

Serve with boiled pasta in your choice of shape. Be sure to offer grated Parmesan cheese on the side.

Variations:

1. Basil, cayenne or a touch of jalapeno pepper may be added for a spicier version.
2. A handful of frozen peas or a bunch of chopped parsley will give the red color an attractive contrast.
3. Sliced olives, chopped pepperoni or a tablespoon or two of cognac can dress up this dish for a gala dinner.
4. Finely chopped fresh tomatoes and a bit of wine can replace the canned tomatoes



### [Chicken In Lemon Vegetable Sauce](#)

Categories: Poultry, Stews, Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion

8 chicken pieces or whole chicken cut up

3 tb oil

1 lg onion, minced

1 bell pepper, diced

4 celery, sliced

4 md carrot, sliced

**3 cl garlic, minced**

**2 md parsnips, diced**

**3 c chicken stock or broth**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**-salt, to taste-**

**-juice of a whole lemon-**

**1 slice lemon peel**

**3 tb chopped parsley**

**2 tb cornstarch, dissolved in  $\frac{1}{4}$  c water**

**This recipe is a great way to sneak lots of vegetables into a meal. For the chicken pieces, you may want to use a whole fryer cut up or 8 pieces of what is most popular in your family, thighs, breast or legs.**

**Heat oil in a large skillet on medium high. When the oil is hot enough, place the chicken pieces into the pan and cook on each side until the surface of the flesh turns white. Remove the chicken pieces to a bowl. Add the onions to the hot oil in the pan and cook until the oil is reheated to a sizzle, add peppers and the other vegetables one by one, each time waiting for the oil to reheat before adding the next vegetable.**

**When the parsnips are slightly cooked, return the chicken and its juices to the pan with the vegetable mix; add seasoning, broth and turn the chicken until coated in the mixture.**

**Cover and simmer on low heat, turning the chicken pieces midway through the cooking process, until the chicken is tender; about 25-30 minutes.**

**You may add a little water if absolutely necessary during the cooking process.**

**Remove the chicken pieces to a serving dish and add the cornstarch to the vegetable juices. Bring this to a gentle boil, adjust the seasonings and pour over the chicken. Garnish with lemon slices and parsley; serve with rice or boiled potatoes. Serve extra lemon juice on the side for those who wish to add more.**

**Variations:**

**1. Any other firm vegetables may be added to this recipe or used as a substitute. Softer vegetables like zucchini, peas, asparagus, squash or eggplant should be added only during the last 15 minutes of cooking time or they will go to mush.**

**The amount of vegetables may be increased or decreased to suit your**

preferences.

2. Sage, marjoram, savory, tarragon and oregano can be successfully used as additional seasoning.

3. Veal, beef shank, fish and seafood and of course turkey can substitute well in this recipe. Keep in mind that the cooking time will have to be adjusted.

4. For a vegetarian variation; substitute 2 lb of sliced fresh mushrooms or cubed tofu for the chicken.



## **Chicken Soup**

**Categories: Poultry, Soups**

**1 boiling fowl, cut up**

**8 c cold water**

**3 md carrot, sliced chunky**

**2 md parsnips, sliced chunky**

**1 sm onion, whole**

**2 st celery, sliced chunky**

**6 pepper corns**

**1 tb salt**

**1 dash Brown Coloring (see recipe)**

**1 c boiled angel hair noodles**

**Place chicken and water in a large pot, add the vegetables and seasoning. Don't add the salt until about 2 hours after the start.**

**Simmer gently until the chicken is done. With a slotted spoon lift out the chicken and the vegetables and set them aside. Strain the liquid through a fine sieve, put meat and vegetables back in the broth and refrigerate until the fat on top solidifies. Skim off the fat with a slotted spoon; debone and chop cooked chicken. Adjust seasoning and adjust the color to a nice bright gold with a dash or two of homemade Brown Coloring. Reheat, add boiled noodles and serve.**

**Variations:**

**1. For seasoning, a pinch of saffron for color, bay leaf, a clove or two of**

garlic, parsley, a slice of fresh ginger root, cloves, nutmeg or mace can be used to enhance the flavor.

2. Cooked rice may be used instead of the noodles.

3. Turkey will substitute for the chicken very well.

4. Add a cup of frozen peas when reheating to increase the vegetable component.

5. Try this soup using 3-4 pounds of beef shank instead of the chicken. Out of this world.

6. Use half the recommended water to cook the soup. When done, puree the meat and vegetables with the broth, adding cream until the desired consistency is reached for a wonderful Cream of Chicken Soup.

It's best to start this soup the day before so that the extra fat can be removed.

This is a large recipe, but any extras will freeze very well.



### Chicken With Peanuts

Categories: Poultry

4 chicken breasts cubed

1 c cucumber, peeled and diced

½ c peanuts, roasted and skin removed

2 lg egg whites

¼ c cooking wine

½ c cornstarch

3 tb brown sugar

¼ c soy sauce

5 tb water

4 green onions, finely chopped

2 tb fresh ginger, minced

1 cl garlic, sliced very thin

½ c oil

**-chili paste to taste (optional)-**

**In a bowl combine the meat, egg whites, and half of the cornstarch. Toss ingredients with a spoon until the meat is well coated. In another bowl, combine the water, the rest of the cornstarch, wine, sugar, soy sauce, green onions, ginger and garlic. Set a large frying pan or wok on high heat. Pour in the oil and heat until a small drop of the egg white batter sizzles on immediate contact. Add the chicken pieces one by one and stir often until the batter takes on a light beige color. Remove the chicken bits with a slotted spoon to a paper towel lined plate. Drain off most of the oil from the pan leaving just a thin layer. Add cucumbers and stirfry them for about 2 minutes. Return the meat chunks to the pan and stir. Stir the cornstarch-soy sauce mixture and pour this over the cucumbers and chicken in the pan. Add the peanuts, chili paste; stir well, and serve on a bed of fluffy rice.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Turkey or pork may substitute for the chicken.**
- 2. If you can afford it and want to impress the guests, use cashews instead of peanuts.**



## **Chili Con Carne**

**Categories: Stews, Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 recipe [Meat Sauce](#)**

**1 can jalapeno peppers, diced (4 oz.)**

**1 tb chili powder or more to taste**

**2 tb sugar**

**1 can red kidney or pinto beans (19 oz.)**

**Add all of the ingredients, except the beans, to the [Meat Sauce](#) and simmer for 10 minutes to blend the flavors. Add beans and heat until warmed through. Serve with crusty buns and a generous salad.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Add a tablespoon or more of cocoa powder for richer color and flavor.**
- 2. For a spicier version add hot sauce and/or crushed red peppers.**
- 3. Increase the bean content to two cans using one each of pinto and kidney beans.**

4. Garnish with coarsely grated cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese.
5. For a vegetarian version, substitute [Tomato Sauce](#) for the [Meat Sauce](#).
6. Cubed tofu may be added to the vegetarian version to imitate meat.



## **Clam Sauce**

**Categories: Fish and Seafood, Sauces and Dips**

**4 tb olive oil**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**4 tb flour, all purpose**

**2 cl garlic**

**1 c water or stock**

**1 c milk or cream**

**2 cans clams (2 x 5 oz.)**

**1 tb lemon juice**

**-salt to taste-**

**Heat the oil in a large skillet on medium high. Add the flour and sprinkle it with black pepper. Continue frying gently until the flour is lightly browned. Stir in the garlic. Remove from heat and add at once the cold water or stock, clams and milk. Stir vigorously until smooth. Return the pan to the burner and reduce heat to simmer. When thickened, add lemon juice and adjust the salt.**

**You may simply use water instead of milk to dilute this sauce or you may substitute fish or vegetable stock.**

**Serve with the pasta of your choice.**

### **Variations**

- 1. Shrimp or crab can replace the clams.**
- 2. You may want to add a little grated cheese to this sauce.**
- 3. Herbs to season could be fennel, celery leaves or tarragon.**
- 4. Roasted red bell peppers diced are decorative as well as tasty in this sauce.**

5. Using clam juice to substitute for the water will give this sauce a more intense clam flavor.

6. Recipe could also be adapted to leftover chicken, turkey or meat.



## **Corn Fritters**

**Categories: Pasta, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 lg eggs**

**1½ c flour, all purpose**

**1½ c cooked corn (canned or frozen)**

**½ ts salt or to taste**

**1 c water**

**-oil for frying-**

**Heat at least 1 inch of oil in a pan or deep fryer to 400°F. Mix all other ingredients together. The batter should be thick enough to resist your spoon while mixing, but not solid. (Thicker than a muffin dough, but spoonable.) Place tablespoonfuls of batter into the hot oil and fry on both sides until golden brown. Do not overcrowd the fritters. Each fritter should have enough room to float freely. You'll have to fry this batter in several batches. Remove fritters from the oil with a slotted spoon, drain well and blot on paper towels.**

**Serve hot. It looks and tastes excellent.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Not much can be done to this plain recipe, but you can experiment with adding herbs.**
- 2. Roll the slightly cooled fritters in coarsely grated cheese for a hot appetizer**
- 3. Chopped chives, minced roasted peppers or a few tablespoons of coarsely grated carrots added to the batter will give you some interesting and colorful results.**
- 4. This is an excellent side dish or can be the main course in a vegetarian menu with a dipping sauce of dill or garlic yoghurt, exotic condiments or a creamed vegetable dish.**



## **Corn Salad**

**Categories: Salads and Dressings, Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 tb honey**

**½ c ketchup**

**2 tb pickled hot peppers, minced**

**½ c pickled onions, small**

**1 can corn, drained (12 oz.)**

**¼ c black olives, chopped**

**Mix ketchup and honey and fold in the rest of the ingredients. If possible refrigerate for at least an hour to allow flavors to blend. An excellent party, luncheon or appetizer salad.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Add chopped green onions or thawed frozen peas to give this dish more color contrast.**
- 2. Cumin, cayenne, basil, roast garlic or oregano may be added to taste to give it a zing.**
- 3. Cooked cold meat, hard-boiled eggs, fish or pine nuts can be added to turn this salad into a meal.**



## **Couscous**

**Categories: Pasta, Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**¾ c couscous**

**1 c boiling water**

**1 cube bouillon or equivalent powder**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**This recipe is so simple it's hardly worth writing, but the variations are so many that it serves as a good illustration of creative cooking. Place couscous into a serving dish. Dissolve bouillon in boiling water and pour it over the couscous.**

**Cover and let stand for at least 5 minutes. Fluff it with a fork and serve with a main dish that has a good sauce.**



### Variations:

1. Green onions, bell peppers, shallots, mushrooms or carrots lightly sautéed in olive oil can be added to the basic recipe.
2. Any number of fruits or nuts can give this plain recipe a gourmet touch. Try papaya, grapes, raisins, plums, toasted pine nuts, walnuts or sunflower seeds.
3. Steamed artichoke hearts, peas, beans or corn added to the basic recipe can add an interesting touch.
4. For flavoring use garlic, fresh parsley, dill, mint, cumin, turmeric, thyme, cilantro or marjoram keeping in mind your preferences and the flavor of the main dish.
5. A touch of lemon or lime juice will add interest and tang.
6. Although the recipe calls for couscous, rice, buckwheat or even cooked pasta would work equally well with these variations.
7. Naturally, if you have a good stock available you may want to use that instead of the water and bouillon cube.



### Crab Casserole

Categories: Casseroles, Fish and Seafood, Pasta, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 tb oil

4 c linguini, cooked

¼ lb mushrooms, sliced

-black pepper to taste-

3 tb flour

2 c milk

¼ ts tarragon, dry, crumbled

¼ c chopped parsley

½ c white wine

1 tb soy sauce

2 tb lemon juice

**½ c chopped ripe tomatoes**

**12 oz crab meat, cooked**

**-salt, to taste-**

**2 tb plain bread crumbs**

**Preheat oven to 375° F. In a small saucepan heat oil and sauté the mushrooms with black pepper at a heat high enough to keep the mushrooms frying. When the mushrooms are wilted, add the flour and continue cooking for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat and add the milk all at once, stirring vigorously to make the mixture smooth. Return the saucepan to the element set on low and cook stirring until mixture thickens. Stir in the lemon juice, white wine, seasonings and soy sauce. Add the crab, parsley and tomatoes. Lightly oil a large casserole dish. Place pasta in an even layer on the bottom of the dish. Spoon crab sauce mixture on the pasta. Sprinkle the top with bread crumbs.**

**Bake for 30 minutes or until heated through.**

**Variations:**

- 1. The crab can be substituted with artificial crab, scallops or lobster.**
- 2. Coarsely grated cheese can be added as a topping.**
- 3. Dill, coriander or cayenne can be used as additional seasoning.**
- 4. A cup of frozen peas can increase the vegetable component of this.**
- 5. This recipe can be easily adapted to use leftover meat instead of crab.**



## **Deviled Eggs**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Cheese and Eggs**

**6 lg eggs, hard-cooked**

**1 tb mayonnaise**

**1 ts prepared mustard**

**-salt to taste-**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**1 tb chives, chopped fine**

**Cut eggs in half and carefully remove the yolks to a small mixing bowl. Mash the**

yolks with a fork and blend in all the other ingredients. Mix until smooth. Use a teaspoon dipped in water to refill the cavities in the whites.

**Variations:**

1. You may use anchovy paste instead of the salt for that extra flavor.
2. Finely chopped pimentos, dill or parsley can replace the chives.
3. Garnish with slivers of black olives, green peppers or capers.



## **Dill Sauce**

**Categories: Sauces and Dips**

**2 tb butter or margarine**

**2 tb flour**

**½ c water or stock**

**3 tb fresh dill, chopped very fine**

**1 tb sugar**

**½ c sour cream**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

Heat butter on medium high and gently fry the flour until it just begins to turn color. Remove from heat and add the water all at once briskly blending it with the flour paste. Return to heat stirring constantly until thickened. Add all the other ingredients and stir until just heated through. Do not boil.

**Variations**

1. The dill may be replaced with fennel leaves, parsley or chives.
2. Lemon juice or dry sherry may be added to adjust the flavor.
3. Add chopped capers to make this sauce special to serve with fish.



## **Dressing For Marinated Salads**

**Categories: Salads and Dressings**

**¼ c sugar**

**2 c water**

**½ c white vinegar**

**Dissolve the sugar in water, add the vinegar and mix. You may want to adjust the portions to suit your own taste. It should be about as tart as a lemonade. Pour this dressing over Boston lettuce, cucumbers or tomatoes. Let the ingredients marinate in this liquid. Tomatoes need only about 10 minutes, lettuce about 30 minutes, denser vegetables like beets or beans need several hours or overnight to develop the full flavor.**

**If you wish, the vegetables may be drizzled with a bit of salad oil before adding the marinade, but it isn't necessary. The sugar tempers the acidity, making the oil superfluous.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Increase the vinegar to ¾ cup and use it as a marinade for beans, mushrooms, cabbage or beet salad.**
- 2. Flavored vinegars can give this marinade a different twist.**
- 3. When using tender greens or spinach try using raspberry or other fruit vinegars in the marinade.**
- 4. Substitute the sugar with brown sugar, honey or syrup to modify the flavor even further.**
- 5. Lemon or lime juice, any kind of flavored vinegar or acidic pickle juice can be used to replace the white vinegar.**
- 6. Reduce the amount of water to 1½ cups to get a more intense tartness and use this to marinate or pickle cooked or blanched vegetables, such as beans, mushrooms, carrots, beets, bamboo shoots or asparagus.**
- 7. For flavoring, basil, chives, tarragon or garlic may be added, depending on the character of the salad ingredients.**



## **Duchess Potatoes**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 c hot mashed potatoes**

**2 tb butter or margarine**

**½ ts salt**

**¼ ts white pepper**

**2 lg egg yolks, lightly beaten**

The mashed potatoes can be yesterday's leftovers, reheated in the microwave. Mix all ingredients together, shape into mounds, or, if you want to be fancy, pipe it into rosettes and bake on a lightly greased cookie sheet, at 450° F until lightly browned.

**Variations:**

- 1. Add a tablespoon or two of finely chopped parsley or chives for color interest.**
- 2. Add crushed or roasted garlic if the flavor goes well with the rest of the meal.**
- 3. Sage, marjoram, fennel, thyme or rosemary can be added to further personalize the flavor.**
- 4. Scooped out baked potatoes can substitute for the mashed. Increase the butter to moisten the mixture well.**

**Refill the baked potato skins and bake as above.**



## **Dumplings for Soup**

**Categories: Pasta**

**1 lg egg**

**3 tb flour**

**1 pinch salt**

**In a mug mix ingredients together. Dip a clean teaspoon into the boiling soup and take a small amount of the dough on the spoon, the size of a bean and drop it into the soup.**

**Repeat until all of the dough is used up.**

**This is a simple recipe that really dresses up a simple soup.**

**Variations:**

- 1. The flour can be replaced with 5 tablespoons of farina for a lighter dumpling.**
- 2. Any number of herbs that complement the particular soup may be added.**
- 3. The egg may be replaced with 3 tablespoons of scraped liver, for liver**

dumplings.

4. You can experiment with black pepper, chopped chives, chopped pimentos and various herbs to enhance the flavor of this preparation.



## Egg Salad

Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Cheese and Eggs

6 lg eggs, hard cooked

2 ts prepared mustard, ordinary

3 tb mayonnaise

-salt and pepper to taste-

1 sm cooking onion, finely minced

With a potato masher mash the eggs coarsely. Add all the other ingredients and blend.

Variations:

1. Anchovy paste can replace the salt for a more interesting flavor.
2. Chopped chives, minced celery, grated carrots or minced cucumbers can replace the onions.
3. Chopped olives, minced peppers or a minced dill pickle can add additional interest to this simple salad.



## Eva's Emergency Vegetable Salad

Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Salads and Dressings, Vegetables

2 c vegetables, cooked and drained

1 md pickle, minced

3 tb mayonnaise

3 ts mustard, prepared

This basic recipe is a great life saver; as a way to stretch a meal, have as lunch item for unexpected company or a party buffet. It has always been well received, yet it's one of the fastest and easiest things in my repertoire. This recipe can be

safely doubled, tripled, altered or substituted in any way you like.

Mix all ingredients. Chill for an hour or more and serve on a bed of lettuce, garnished with radishes, olives, tomatoes, pickles or what have you.

I usually use canned mixed vegetables of the kind that has more variety than just peas, carrots and corn. Remember to rinse canned vegetables generously with cold water. You can also use leftover vegetables, boiled vegetables from stock making (if you haven't boiled them to a mush) or you can steam a frozen vegetable mix.

Makes a substantial side dish to go with sandwiches, wieners, leftover meats or it can be a light snack served with dinner rolls or bread sticks.

Variations:

1. You can substitute canned mushrooms for all or part of the mixed vegetables. It makes it even better.
2. Make a great bean salad by replacing the vegetables with a variety of cooked beans. Omit the pickles and add a thinly sliced cooking onion.
3. To serve it as a seafood appetizer, add a can of drained cocktail shrimp, clams or crab and a little lemon juice.
4. For a great pasta salad, add 1 cup leftover cooked macaroni into the vegetable salad and sprinkle it with grated cheese.
5. For a lunch in a salad bowl, add 1-2 quartered hard-boiled eggs, julienne of cold cuts, chunks of leftover roast, boiled chicken or wiener slices and serve with a fresh roll or pita bread.
6. To personalize your creation try adding minced parsley, chives or dill, a diced apple, radish slices, sliced olives, pickled hot peppers, pickled celery or beets.
7. Sliced water chestnuts added make for a wonderful texture contrast.



## [Eva's Fish Casserole](#)

Categories: Casseroles, Fish and Seafood, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 lb fish fillets, fresh or frozen

4 md potatoes, cooked in their skin

1 md onion, sliced fine

1 md bell pepper, sliced fine

**1 md tomato, sliced fine**

**1 tb oil**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**1 c sour cream or yogurt**

**¼ c milk or cream**

**1 ts salt**

**Peel and slice potatoes into thin rounds. Use any firm fine grained fish for this dish. Lightly grease a large shallow casserole and layer the thin slices of potatoes in the bottom. Sprinkle with ½ the salt. Arrange fillets on top of the potatoes. Cover fillets with the onion slices, followed by bell peppers and tomatoes. In a small bowl mix paprika and oil, add remaining salt, sour cream and milk. Blend well. Drizzle this sauce over the top of the casserole and bake uncovered at 400° F for 35 minutes.**

**Variations:**

- 1. If you like it hot, thinly sliced jalapeno peppers can be added with the bell peppers.**
- 2. Dill, black pepper, basil or parsley may be used to customize the flavors.**
- 3. Slices of tofu, flaked crab meat, shrimp or scallops can substitute for the fish.**
- 4. Naturally, the fish can also be replaced with cooked meat, poultry or even sliced bologna. You'll just have to watch the salt content and adjust accordingly.**



## **Eva's Meat Loaf**

**Categories: Meat**

**1 lb ground beef, medium lean**

**1 lg egg**

**1 md onion, grated**

**1 c dry bread, broken up**

**¼ ts black pepper**

**½ ts salt or to taste**



**1 garlic, minced**

**Soak the dry bread in water until moistened and squeeze out the excess water, as well as possible. Mix all ingredients together.**

**Generously grease an ovenproof dish or pan. Form an oblong loaf from the meat mixture and place it in the middle of the pan.**

**Bake at 325° F for 60 minutes. Serve hot or cold.**

**This is a very simple, but versatile recipe with a lot of flexibility.**

**Variations:**

**1. A show stopper presentation is achieved by taking half the mixture and forming the base of the loaf, placing 3 shelled hard-boiled eggs end to end down the center, covering them with the remaining meat and patting the loaf into shape. When done, each slice of meat loaf will have a slice of hard-boiled egg in the center, giving it a wonderful contrast in color and texture.**

**2. Similarly, sautéed mushrooms, spicy sausages, pickles or even sticks of cheese can be used to "stuff" the meat loaf.**

**3. For a party buffet, the loaf can be wrapped with flaky or puff pastry and decorated with dough cut-outs. Just make sure you cut some vents for the steam to escape.**



## **Feta Cheese Cornmeal Dumplings**

**Categories: Pasta**

**½ lb feta cheese, crumbled fine**

**3 lg eggs, separated**

**1½ c corn, meal (yellow)**

**2 tb oil**

**¼ c bread crumbs, fine**

**Beat egg whites until stiff and set them aside. Blend feta and yolks. Fold cheese mixture into the beaten whites. Add the cornmeal by sprinkling a small amount on the surface of the batter, folding and repeating until all of it is incorporated. Let the mixture rest for 10-15 minutes.**

**Set a large pot of water to boil. With wet hands, make golf ball size dumplings. Gently lower the balls into the boiling water and reduce heat to a slow boil. Boil**

the dumplings for 20 minutes. In the meanwhile, in a large frying pan heat the oil on medium high, add the bread crumbs and toast them until well browned. When the dumplings are done, lift them out with a slotted spoon and drain them well. Drop them into the browned bread crumbs and shake the pan until all the dumplings are coated. Serve with sour cream or yoghurt.

#### Variations:

1. Finely chopped dill, chopped chives or minced roasted peppers may be added to the dumpling batter to customize the flavor and to add an attractive color contrast.
2. Top the dumplings with fresh chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions or crisp bacon bits in addition to the yogurt for a truly tasty dish.
3. Salsa, chili peppers or a spinach sauce would also make a great condiment for this.
4. You may substitute dry cottage cheese for the feta.



### Feta Cheese Spread

Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Cheese and Eggs

1 lb feta cheese

1 c soft unsalted butter or margarine

1 sm onion, minced very fine

1 ts paprika, Hungarian

1 tb caraway seed

I use my food processor to make this. Mince the quartered onion with 2-3 pulses. Scrape out the onion and set it aside. Crumble the feta by pulsing it 2-3 times. Add butter and cream until very smooth. Add the paprika and cream until well blended. You may have to scrape the sides once or twice during the process. Add caraway seeds and onions and pulse 2-3 times to just mix. Scrape it into a wide mouth sealable container and refrigerate it.

This spread can be stored refrigerated for up to 3 weeks.

The spread may be a little runny when it's first made, but will firm up in the refrigerator.

This is the single most popular item in my repertoire and, as you can see, one of the simplest. It is great as a sandwich spread with fresh tomatoes and green

peppers and makes a good conversation piece at a wine and cheese party when served with a variety of crackers.

Variations:

1. Dry cottage cheese may substitute for the feta. It has a milder flavor and most likely will need an addition of salt or anchovy paste.
2. Chopped fresh chives can substitute for the chopped onions.
3. For additional flavor and tang, you may want to add a teaspoon of prepared mustard to the mixture.
4. Use this recipe to stuff celery for your buffet table.



## Fresh Bean Soup

Categories: Soups, Vegetables

2 c green or yellow wax beans

4 c water or stock

2 bay leaves

-salt and pepper to taste-

½ c sour cream or yogurt

3 tb flour, all purpose

2 tb sugar

Cut the beans into 1 inch lengths. Simmer beans in the stock or water with seasonings, about 30 minutes. In a mug, mix sour cream, sugar and flour to a smooth paste. When the beans are tender, add a little of the hot liquid to the sour cream mixture and then pour the contents of the mug into the beans. Simmer until the soup is thickened, but do not boil. Serve hot or cold, with extra sour cream for those who wish to add more.

Variations:

1. A diced onion added with the beans, or parsley, chives, dill, savory or sage added later as seasoning will give this soup extra flavor.
2. Cauliflower or broccoli can be prepared the same way as the beans omitting the sugar and bay leaves and adding a pinch of nutmeg or paprika.

3. Asparagus, kohlrabi, or fresh lima beans alone or in combination can be used in this basic recipe instead of the beans.

4. Thick cream may be substituted for the sour cream for those who like a richer product.

5. Grated cheese blended in just before serving or sprinkled on as a garnish will give you yet another option.



## **Glazed Carrots**

**Categories: Vegetables**

**6 md carrots, sliced chunky**

**1 tb oil**

**3 tb brown sugar**

**¼ ts cinnamon**

**1 ts ginger, finely chopped**

**1 tb lemon juice**

**Peel carrots and cut into small chunks. Steam them in a minimum of water until just tender. Do not overcook! Drain well and blot with paper towels to dry. Heat oil in a large skillet, add the carrots and all the other ingredients and cook on medium heat, uncovered turning the vegetable with a slotted spoon until glazed, about 5 minutes.**

**Goes well with turkey, pork or beef!**

**Variations:**

**1. Chopped chives, parsley or dill added at the end will give a nice color contrast.**

**2. A touch of nutmeg, allspice, grated lemon rind or ground cloves will customize the flavor.**

**3. Turnips or parsnips could be substituted for carrots for a totally different effect.**



## Golden Salad Dressing

**Categories: Salads and Dressings, Sauces and Dips**

**½ c mayonnaise**

**3 tb mustard, prepared**

**1 tb lemon juice**

**1 tb dill, fresh chopped (optional)**

**Mix all ingredients together. This simple dressing is a most versatile basic recipe. It is very adaptable and complements a great variety of foods without being monotonous.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Use this dressing to bind egg, salmon, tuna or seafood salads.**
- 2. Use it as a dipping sauce with fried mushrooms, zucchini or seafood.**
- 3. Replace ½ of the mayonnaise with plain yogurt for a lighter version.**
- 4. Excellent as a tangy moistener in a deviled egg recipe.**
- 5. Serve it as a dressing over steamed and cooled vegetables.**
- 6. Add a spoonful or two of relish to create a mock tartar sauce.**



## Hamburger Soup

**Categories: Meat, Soups**

**1 tb oil**

**1 lb ground beef**

**1 lg onion, minced**

**2 cl garlic, pressed or crushed**

**3 tb Worcestershire sauce**

**-salt and black pepper to taste-**

**5 c water**

**1 c carrots, sliced**

**1 c celery, sliced**

**1 c potatoes, diced**

**1 c corn, fresh or frozen**

**2½ c canned tomatoes, diced**

**Heat oil and add beef breaking it up into little pieces with a wooden spoon as it fries. Add onions and garlic and cook until the onions are transparent. Add Worcestershire sauce, salt and black pepper and water. Simmer covered for 1 hour. Add vegetables and simmer covered for another 40 minutes or until the vegetables are almost cooked. Add the tomatoes and simmer for 10 more minutes.**

**Serve with plenty of crusty bread.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Cooked pasta, rice or barley may be added to make this a meal in a bowl.**
- 2. The Worcestershire sauce could be replaced with your choice of herbs. Bay leaf, basil, oregano, thyme would be particularly good in my opinion.**
- 3. Ground turkey can easily substitute for the hamburger meat.**
- 4. Finely chopped lamb or turkey could also be used instead of the ground meat, creating a different effect.**



### **Hollandaise Sauce Simplified**

**Categories: Sauces and Dips**

**½ c butter or margarine**

**2 lg egg yolks**

**1 tb lemon juice**

**2 tb dry sherry, white wine or vinegar**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**I always shied away from making Hollandaise sauce until I tried it. It is demanding of your attention, but not impossible. I have reduced the number of steps and fuss, and consequently, the clean-up too. Melt butter in the microwave (it takes about 1 minute on high.) Meanwhile, in your smallest saucepan, whisk together the yolks and other ingredients and set the pan on the lowest setting of the element. With constant whisking add the melted butter in a slow stream. Keep**

whisking, until the sauce just begins to thicken, a minute or two. Remove from the heat and continue to whisk for another 2-3 minutes. Ready to serve. If you need to keep it warm, put the pan or serving dish into a pot of hot water. Hollandaise can also be reheated carefully (heat for 1 minute, stir, heat 1 more minute etc.) on the defrost setting in the microwave the next day.

#### Variations:

1. Adding a pinch of tarragon and/or cayenne is optional.
2. To create Bernaise Sauce sauté a finely minced shallot in a tablespoon of butter in the saucepan, cool slightly then add the yolks etc., as above.
3. Finely minced pickled peppers, parsley or chopped chives will give your sauce variety.
4. These rather rich elegant sauces are so flavorful that they can be used sparingly over any number of vegetables from cauliflower to asparagus and will bring you accolades.
5. Hollandaise with dill and capers poured on top of a simple poached fish will make it palatial.



### Lamb Stew

Categories: Meat, Stews

2 lb lean lamb in 1 inch cubes

3 tb oil

1 md onion, minced

-black pepper to taste-

4 lg carrots, sliced chunky

4 st celery, sliced chunky

1 ts thyme, dry

1 bay leaf

1 ts salt

1½ c water or stock

½ c Brown Coloring

**1 ts Worcestershire sauce**

**In a Dutch oven, heat oil and add onions and black pepper. Sauté until you can hear it sizzle. Add carrots and repeat. When it's sizzling add the celery. Sauté until the onions are transparent and limp. Add lamb cubes and coat them well with the vegetable mixture in the pan. Add thyme, salt, the water and the Brown Coloring. Reduce the heat to a slow simmer, cover and cook for 1-1 ½ hours or until the meat is so tender that it can be cut with a fork. During the cooking check it occasionally and add a little water if necessary.**

**Serve with boiled potatoes or rice to mop up the wonderful gravy.**

**Variations:**

- 1. This has a natural gravy. If you wish it to be thicker you can blend 2 tablespoons of flour into the vegetable mixture, just before adding the meat or add 2 tablespoons of cornstarch dissolved in ¼ cup of water when the meat is almost tender.**
- 2. 4-6 potatoes (chunky cut) with an additional ½ cup water can be added after about 1 hour of cooking. This will also thicken the stew.**
- 3. Garlic, cayenne, cloves, oregano, rosemary or sage may be used for additional flavor.**
- 4. Mushrooms, a green pepper, turnips, green beans, corn, lima beans or some pearl onions can be added to increase the vegetable content.**
- 5. Green peas (fresh or frozen) and 1 or 2 diced tomatoes can also be added, but only near the end because these will cook to a mush if added too early.**
- 6. A couple of tablespoons of lemon juice will add an interesting tang.**
- 7. A little red wine or cognac added to replace some of the water will elevate this dish to gourmet fare.**



## **Lasagna**

**Categories: Casseroles, Pasta**

**12 sheets lasagna noodles**

**½ c grated Parmesan or Romano cheese**

**1 lb ricotta or dry cottage cheese**

**1 lg egg, lightly beaten**



2 c shredded mozzarella cheese

2 c [Meat Sauce](#)

2 c Tomato Sauce

1 c water

This is a one-step lasagna recipe that can be assembled in minutes from stored frozen Tomato Sauce and [Meat Sauce](#), both listed as separate recipes.

Mix ricotta and Parmesan with the egg and set aside. Dilute the Tomato Sauce with the water. In a well oiled 9x13 ovenproof glass pan arrange 4 of the lasagna noodles. Dot with ½ of the Meat Sauce, ½ of the ricotta mixture and cover with a third of the Tomato Sauce.

Repeat for the second layer. Cover with the remaining noodles and Tomato Sauce. Sprinkle evenly with the mozzarella. Cover tightly with foil and bake at 350° F for 30 minutes or until the liquid has been absorbed. Remove the foil and bake for another 30 minutes.

Serve with a nice crisp green salad.

Variations:

1. A layer of chopped spinach, sliced mushrooms, zucchini, eggplant or steamed cauliflower florets can be added as a layer to increase the vegetable component.
2. If you prefer, a Béchamel sauce may be used instead of the Tomato Sauce.
3. Leftover cooked chicken, turkey or sliced sausages may be added as a layer.
4. For fuller flavor other cheeses such as provolone and/or Romano can be added to replace some of the ricotta.
5. For a vegetarian version: replace the Meat Sauce with additional Tomato Sauce and increase the vegetable component by adding sliced mushrooms, zucchini, eggplants, steamed broccoli, cauliflower, grated carrots or spinach.



## [Lentil Soup](#)

Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion

1 lb lentils, brown or red

**1 c carrots, grated**

**4 bay leaves**

**6 c water or stock**

**2 tb cooking oil**

**2 tb flour, all purpose**

**¼ c brown sugar**

**-salt and black pepper to taste-**

**3 tb vinegar**

Place the first four ingredients in a large pot. Reserve one cup of the water or stock. Bring to a boil and simmer until the lentils are nearly tender, about 40 minutes. In a small saucepan heat the oil on medium and add the flour and the black pepper. Stir until the flour turns a light brown color. Remove from heat, add the brown sugar, salt and the reserved cup of water all at once. Stir vigorously and add this mixture to the simmering soup. Add vinegar. Simmer until thickened.

**Variations:**

1. For variation try adding thyme, red pepper flakes, garlic or onion.
2. Any dried beans can be substituted for the lentils, but the cooking time will be much longer.
3. Leftover ham, sausage or any smoked meat may be added to make this into a meal in a bowl.
4. A dollop of sour cream or yogurt added just before serving will round out the flavors.
5. Diced fresh tomatoes added for the last 5-10 minutes of cooking will add a pleasing touch and color contrast.
6. The carrots can be increased or replaced all or in part by any root vegetables available.



### **Low-Fat Party Spread**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Cheese and Eggs**

**½ c dry cottage cheese**

**3 tb parsley, chopped**

2 cl garlic, chopped

3 tb mayonnaise or yogurt

1 ts salt

In a food processor, pulse cottage cheese until it's cut into fine crumbs. Add parsley, coarsely chopped garlic and salt. Process until very well mixed. Add mayonnaise or yogurt and process to a paste. Refrigerate for at least a day before serving to allow the flavors to blend. It can be stored in a tightly sealed container in the fridge for about 2 weeks.

A great sandwich or cracker spread for those on fat-restricted diets.

Variations:

1. With wet hands form the mixture into a ball or patty and roll it in dry parsley flakes or grated nuts for the cheese ball at your next party.
2. For flavor variation you can add a touch of cayenne, chives or onion flakes.
3. Chopped olives, toasted pine nuts or roasted peppers would give this eye as well as taste appeal.
4. Using roasted garlic will give this recipe a milder flavor.



## Marinade For Seafood

Categories: Sauces and Dips

½ c oil

¼ c catsup

2 tb lemon juice

2 tb soy sauce

Mix ingredients and brush on [seafood kabobs](#), fish steaks or whole fish before barbecuing or grilling. Serve leftover sauce on the side for dipping.

Variations:

1. Add a teaspoon of lemon zest to the marinade.
2. Use the marinade as a dipping sauce for cooked shrimp or crab.
3. Use this sauce as a salad dressing or over cooked vegetables.

4. Add some prepared horseradish and use it as a seafood sauce.



### **Marinated Potato Salad**

**Categories: Salads and Dressings**

**6 md potatoes, cooked in their skin**

**1 md onion, sliced fine lengthwise**

**1 c olive oil**

**-salt to taste-**

**¼ c sugar**

**2 c water**

**½ c white vinegar**

**¼ ts tarragon, dry**

**¼ ts basil, crushed, dry**

**Peel the potatoes while they are still slightly warm and slice them about a ¼ inch thick. Place slices in a large mixing bowl a single layer at a time, sprinkle each layer with salt and dribble a little oil on it. Continue until all the potatoes have been salted and oiled. Dissolve sugar in water, add the spices and pour this dressing on the potatoes. Separate onion slices into single strands and add to potato mixture. Gently toss the mixture to coat all parts with the dressing. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours. To serve drain off excess dressing, transfer to a salad bowl and sprinkle with paprika or black pepper as a garnish.**

**Variations:**

- 1. You may want to add a touch of garlic or some minced shallots to the salad.**
- 2. Fresh tomatoes added just before serving will give you an attractive color contrast.**
- 3. Chopped hard-boiled eggs or cold boiled wieners will make this a one-bowl meal.**
- 4. For the vinegar you may use ordinary white vinegar, cider vinegar, rice vinegar or any flavored vinegar of your choice.**
- 5. For a low fat diet, all or part of the oil may be safely omitted.**



## **Marinated Roast Vegetables**

**Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 sm zucchini**

**8 md mushrooms**

**1 fleshy bell pepper**

**2 cl garlic, crushed**

**1 ts basil, dry**

**1 ts oregano, dry**

**1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed**

**¼ c olive oil**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**1 lg tomato**

**-balsamic vinegar to drizzle over the vegetables-**

**Cut vegetables into coarse chunks (2 inch). Combine all ingredients except tomatoes and vinegar. Let the mixture marinate on the counter for at least an hour. Transfer vegetable mixture to a 9 inch deep glass pie plate or similar ovenproof dish. Broil it on the middle rack of the oven for 20 minutes, mixing it once after 10 minutes. The vegetables should look scorched around the edges. Add coarsely chopped tomatoes, broil for 5 minutes more. Remove from the oven and drizzle with balsamic vinegar.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Any number of other vegetables can be included or substituted such as sweet potatoes, egg plant, pearl onions or broccoli.**
- 2. The herbs used are just a guide. You can alter the quantities and the choices to customize it to your own taste.**
- 3. Cider or rice vinegar as well as lemon or lime juice can substitute for the balsamic vinegar.**
- 4. Leftovers can be served cold as a salad.**
- 5. The marinated vegetables can be placed on bamboo skewers and barbecued as vegetable kabobs.**

6. This dish can serve as a vegetarian main course with pasta.



## Meat Sauce

Categories: Pasta, Sauces and Dips

2 lb lean ground beef

2 tb oil

1 lg onion, minced very fine

-black pepper to taste-

2 md bell peppers, diced

1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed

1 ts oregano, dry

2 ts basil, dry

3 bay leaves

1 can tomatoes, diced (28 oz.)

1 can tomato paste (13 oz.)

2 c water

-salt to taste-

In a Dutch oven heat oil, add onions and black pepper and sauté until you hear sizzling. Add bell peppers and continue to sauté, stirring occasionally, until the onions are transparent. Add crumbled ground meat and stir to coat with the onion mixture, pressing with your wooden spoon to break up the lumps. When all the bits of meat are separated, add the rest of the ingredients. Stir, cover and reduce the heat to a slow simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 hours

This is a large recipe of a basic meat sauce designed to be frozen in containers and adjusted as required for other recipes.

Variations:

1. For those who like it spicy add a few slices of jalapeno, a little crushed chili pepper or a few drops of hot sauce.
2. Thin with water or broth and serve over spaghetti or any other pasta shape of your choosing.

3. Serve "as is" with any grain recipe of your choice on the side.
4. Add sautéed mushrooms at the tomato paste stage for a great chunky sauce.



### Mediterranean Stirfry

Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion

3 tb cooking oil

1 lg bell pepper, diced

1 c mushrooms, sliced

1 md eggplants, peeled, diced

1 cl garlic, minced

1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed

1 ts basil, crushed, dry

1 ts oregano, dry

-salt and pepper to taste-

Heat oil in a wok or large frying pan on medium high heat. Add diced peppers and fry until slightly wilted. Add mushrooms and continue frying until the mushrooms are softened. Add eggplant and all the seasoning except the salt. Stirfry until the eggplants are somewhat limp. Add salt, lower the heat to simmer and cover. Let it cook at low for about 5 minutes. Serve as a pasta topping or on rice in a vegetarian meal.

This preparation can be made ahead and reheated in the microwave without loss of flavor or texture.

This super-quick, flavorful preparation quickly became a family favorite.

Variations:

1. You may want to add some diced tomatoes at the same time as the salt.
2. Pine nuts will make a nice addition as a garnish.
3. Zucchini can substitute for eggplant.
4. You may want to add chopped green onions with the eggplant.
5. Adding ¼ cup of broth or wine at the simmering stage will produce a

flavorful sauce, if you wish.



## **Mexican Scoop**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food**

**1 can refried beans (14 oz.)**

**1 can green chilies, chopped (4 oz.)**

**½ c green onions chopped**

**½ c sour cream**

**3 md fresh ripe tomatoes, chopped**

**½ c black olives, chopped**

**1 c cheddar cheese, coarsely grated**

**Layer ingredients, in the order listed above, in a bowl.**

**Serve with corn chips for scooping.**

**I like to use a clear bowl to show off the attractive color combination, but you can also heap it in a nice mound in the center of a large platter and surround it with the chips.**

**Variations:**

- 1. For a hotter version replace all or part of the chilies with jalapenos.**
- 2. My preference is for old cheddar, but you may choose any cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese if you prefer.**
- 3. Add a layer of very finely chopped cucumbers or lettuce to make this dish a bit lighter.**
- 4. Yogurt can replace all or part of the sour cream for a lower fat version.**



## **Minestrone Soup**

**Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**3 tb olive oil**

**1 md onion, chopped**



1 st celery, chopped  
1 bell pepper, diced (optional)  
1 md carrot, diced (optional)  
-black pepper to taste-  
½ ts oregano (dry)  
1 cl garlic, minced  
3 tb parsley, chopped  
1 c navy beans, soaked overnight  
1 c cabbage, shredded  
1 can tomatoes, crushed or diced (28 oz.)  
½ c cooked pasta shells or macaroni  
8 c water or stock  
-salt to taste-

Heat oil on medium high in a large pot or Dutch oven. Add onion, celery, bell pepper, carrots and black pepper. Sauté until the onions are transparent. Add all of the rest of the ingredients except the pasta, reduce heat and simmer until the beans are done, about 1 hour. Taste to adjust seasoning, add pasta and cook until it's heated through. Serve sprinkled with Parmesan cheese and a crusty bread or roll.

#### Variations:

1. Diced turnips, potatoes and leek can be added in addition to or instead of some of the vegetables.
2. ½ cup of frozen peas and/or fresh chopped spinach added just before the pasta makes for an interesting presentation of contrasting colors and textures.
3. Fresh diced tomatoes and a pinch of basil added with the pasta can intensify the flavor.



### Mushroom Gulash

Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion

1 lg cooking onion, finely minced

1 bell pepper, chopped (optional)

1 tb shortening or cooking oil

1 lb fresh mushrooms, sliced

2 ts paprika, Hungarian sweet

¼ c water

1 pinch cayenne or red pepper (optional)

-salt to taste-

Heat oil or shortening, add onions and peppers, and sauté on medium heat until the onions are transparent. Add mushrooms and continue sautéing until the mushrooms are wilted. Make sure the heat is high enough that the onions, peppers and mushrooms are gently frying and not steaming in their own juice. Remove the pot from the stove, add the paprika, mix well. Add salt and cayenne to taste. Coat the mushrooms thoroughly with the onion-paprika mixture, add the water and simmer covered until the mushrooms are tender. Serve with sour cream on a bed of rice, with tiny dumplings (spaetzle), with boiled potatoes or use the gulash as topping on cooked pasta.

Variations:

1. Replace mushrooms with parboiled beans; increase the water to cover the beans and cook until tender.

2. Replace mushrooms with zucchini, eggplant or sweet Hungarian yellow peppers for further variations.

3. Add a tablespoon or two of thick tomato paste or chopped tomatoes in the last 10 minutes of cooking if you wish.

4. Herbs and spices, such as garlic, marjoram, thyme, can customize this dish.



## **Mushroom Salad Supreme**

Categories: Salads and Dressings, Vegetables

2 cans sliced mushrooms (10 oz.)

½ c green onions, finely chopped

½ c frozen peas

**¼ c ranch dressing**

**-black pepper-**

**¼ ts savory or sage**

**You may want to choose two different kinds of mushrooms for this. Mix all the ingredients, let them stand for 20-30 minutes. Serve with cold meat, crusty bread or as a buffet item.**

**Variations:**

- 1. You can add toasted pine nuts, chopped chicken or fish, hard-boiled or scrambled eggs or cubes of cheese to make a main course salad out of this recipe.**
- 2. Diced fresh tomatoes may be added just before serving.**
- 3. Try substituting fresh basil if available for the savory.**
- 4. Add 1-1½ cups of cooked pasta to this to create a tasty and unusual pasta salad.**



## **Mushroom Soup**

**Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**3 tb butter or margarine**

**1 sm onion, minced**

**2 c fresh mushrooms, sliced**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**3 tb flour, all purpose**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**4 c cold water or stock**

**-salt to taste-**

**Melt butter, add mushrooms, onions and pepper. Saute on medium-high heat until the onions are transparent and the mushrooms are wilted. Make sure that the heat is high enough that no liquid collects and the mushrooms are frying. Sprinkle on the flour and continue to cook for 2 minutes, stirring and scraping the sides. Remove the saucepan from the heat, mix in the paprika, then add the cold water all at once. Stir well. Return to the stove and simmer until the mushrooms**

are tender. Serve with crackers or croutons.

**Variations:**

1. The full flavor of mushrooms require little else, but chopped celery or grated carrots may be added with the water to make the soup richer.
2. Savory, sage or parsley may be added for an alternative flavor.
3. All or part of the water may be replaced with milk or cream for cream of mushroom soup.
4. Try adding ½ cup of yogurt or sour cream, just before serving, for a really different and delicious effect.



## **Mushrooms In Wine**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Salads and Dressings, Sauces and Dips**

**½ c oil**

**1 lg onion, minced very fine**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**1 md bell pepper, diced**

**1½ lb mushrooms, sliced**

**2 bay leaves**

**1 ts basil, dry, crushed**

**½ c red wine**

**1 can tomato, paste (5½ oz.)**

**In large skillet on medium setting heat oil, add onions and black pepper. Sauté until onions are frying with a gentle hiss. Add the bell peppers and continue to sauté until the heat recovers and the ingredients are sizzling. Add mushrooms in 2-3 portions. Each time make sure the heat is high enough that everything is frying and the moisture from the vegetables evaporates as fast as it forms and is not pooling in the pan. When the mushrooms are wilted, add the bay leaves and basil and the red wine. Stir well and scrape the sides to deglaze the pan.**

**Reduce the heat to simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Add tomato paste.**

**Continue cooking for 5 more minutes.**

Served hot over pasta this makes an excellent meatless meal. This can be served cold as an appetizer with crackers or as a condiment with meat.

Variations:

1. For a spicier fare, chopped hot peppers can be added to the bell peppers.
2. Additional herbs such as rosemary, sage or thyme can vary the flavor.
3. Sherry, white wine, vermouth or broth can be used instead of the red wine.



## Orange Walnut Rice

Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 c orange juice

1 c wild or brown rice

1 ts grated lemon or orange rind

½ c walnuts or pecans, chopped

-black pepper and salt to taste-

Rinse and drain rice. Bring orange juice to boil. Add rice, rind, salt and pepper; stir and cover. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook for 50-60 minutes or until tender and all the liquid is absorbed. Add the nuts. Cover and let it rest for 10 minutes. Serve with panfried fish or with roast game or poultry.

Variations:

1. ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley added with the nuts will give this dish an attractive color presentation.
2. Raisins, pine nuts or chopped apples can substitute for the walnuts.
3. A touch of cinnamon or nutmeg will add a distinctive flavor to this dish.



## Onion Soup

Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 lg cooking onions, sliced paper thin

**3 tb oil**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**4 c clear beef broth**

**½ c Brown Coloring**

**-salt to taste-**

**4 sl toasted French or white bread**

**½ c grated cheese**

**Heat oil to a temperature where a strand of onion will fry with a sizzle.**

**Add onions and black pepper and fry, lifting to stir occasionally. Be sure to avoid crushing the onions, cook until they look well browned, but be careful not to burn them. Add broth, Brown Coloring, salt and simmer until the onions are tender.**

**Meanwhile, place the toasted bread slices on a cookie sheet and mound each slice with cheese. Use a mixture of Mozzarella, Parmesan and/or Romano for best results. Broil until the cheese melts. Place a slice into each soup bowl and ladle on the hot soup.**

**Serve immediately.**

**Variations:**

- 1. All or part of the onions may be substituted with leeks.**
- 2. Worcestershire sauce, savory or oregano can customize the flavor.**
- 3. Use Gruyère as the cheese to alter the flavor of this soup.**
- 4. You may want to add a ½ cup of red wine with the broth for a unique flavor.**
- 5. The toast may be floated on top of the soup for a crispier variation**



## **Pasta With Eggs**

**Categories: Cheese and Eggs, Pasta, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**3 c cooked pasta**

**2 tb oil**

**5 lg eggs lightly beaten**

**-black pepper and salt to taste-**

**This is a great way to use up leftover pasta or to experiment with the texture of the great variety of shapes available. If you're using long noodles, chop them to fork-sized pieces. Heat the oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven and add the noodles. Mix the pasta gently in the hot oil until the strands are all separated . Keep frying until the noodles look dry. Add the eggs and stir furiously to coat the noodles evenly. Just before the last stir, sprinkle on the black pepper. Give it one more stir and remove it from the heat. Add salt, mix and serve with a heaping bowl of fresh salad**

**Variations:**

- 1. To add zip you may add sage, rosemary or fresh chopped chives with the black pepper.**
- 2. If you are feeling creative add some finely chopped fresh tomatoes as well with the black pepper, just warm the tomatoes, don't cook them.**
- 3. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan or Romano just before serving for a "dressed-up" presentation.**



## **Pesto**

**Categories: Seasonings, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 c fresh parsley leaves**

**¼ c dry basil**

**¼ c pine nuts, toasted**

**2 cl garlic, quartered**

**½ c olive oil**

**½ c Parmesan cheese, grated**

**-salt and black pepper to taste-**

**In the food processor combine parsley, basil, pine nuts and garlic. Pulse until finely chopped. With the processor going, add oil slowly, alternating with the cheese. This mixture should be as thick as tomato paste. Add more cheese if necessary. Scrape it into a clean container that has a good seal. It will keep for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator or for months in the freezer. Great on boiled pasta or tossed with steamed vegetables. Particularly good on spaghetti squash.**

### Variations:

1. The parsley may be substituted with fresh spinach.
2. The pine nuts can be substituted with walnuts or pecans.
3. The basil may be increased and fresh instead of dry can be used, when available.
4. For garlic lovers the garlic can be increased to 4 cloves.
5. All or part of the Parmesan cheese, can be replaced by Romano for a sharper flavor.
6. Instead of salt, anchovies or anchovy paste will give this a more intense flavor.
7. Use a tablespoon or two of the pesto to flavor ordinary steamed rice for a tasty sidedish.



### Pineapple Ham

Categories: Stews, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 tb oil

1 bell pepper, diced

1 bunch green onions, chopped

1 c cooked ham, diced

½ ts paprika, Hungarian

1 can pineapple, un-sweetened, diced (19 oz.)

3 tb sugar

2 tb soy sauce

2 tb cornstarch, dissolved in ¼ c water

-salt and pepper to taste-

Heat oil in a wok or skillet. Add onions and peppers and sauté until they are wilted. Add the ham and continue to sauté for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to a simmer. Stir in the paprika and add the pineapple with its juice, sugar, soy sauce and the cornstarch mixture. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.



Serve on a bed of rice or, better yet, with couscous. A very appealing, easy and tasty dish.

Variations:

1. A pinch of cayenne, hot sauce or crushed chili can make this a hot dish.
2. All or part of the pineapple can be replaced with canned mandarin oranges or fresh grapes.
3. Herbs that can give variety to this dish are sage, crushed ginger, thyme or savory.
4. The ham can be replaced with any number of cooked meats or fish.
5. Peanuts, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds or pecans added will give this dish a "dress-up" feature.
6. For a vegetarian variation, try substituting diced firm tofu and sautéed mushrooms for the ham. You can add a little liquid smoke for flavor if you wish.



## Polenta Made Easy

Categories: Casseroles, Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion

1½ c water

½ ts salt

½ c cornmeal

I've been flabbergasted at the price of prepared polenta in the supermarket, but I can understand busy people buying it because the preparation is tedious and leaves a mess to clean up. Particularly the goop on the stove. With a bit of experimentation, I developed this recipe with all the advantages of homemade polenta and much easier clean-up.

In a large (4 cup) glass measuring cup microwave the water for 6 minutes on high. Whisk in the cornmeal and salt and microwave uncovered on high for 2 minutes. Stir, then microwave for 1 minute longer. Cover with plastic film and allow it to stand for 10-15 minutes to cool a bit. Meanwhile, oil a piece of plastic film generously.

With wet hands form a fat "sausage" on the plastic film. Wrap tightly and let it cool. Slice to desired thickness using a length of thread. Refry in oil to a light brown and serve as a side dish.

### **Variations:**

1. Chopped chives or parsley may be added to make this dish more colorful and tasty.
2. If refrying uses too much oil to your liking, generously oil a large pie plate and spread the still hot corn mush out evenly, using an oil dipped spoon. Bake at 400° F for 20 minutes and serve in sections like a pie.
3. To make cornmeal dumplings: Generously oil a large ovenproof casserole dish and using an oil dipped teaspoon take spoonfuls of polenta and place them side by side in a single layer in the dish. Bake uncovered at 400° F for 20 minutes. Use as a side dish.
4. For a meatless main course crumble 1 cup of feta cheese over the dumplings and drizzle with yoghurt. Chopped dill added to the yogurt will make it even better.
5. You can make a pie shell by pressing the warm cornmeal mush into an oiled pie plate and pressing portions up against the side of the dish with an oiled spoon to form a shell. Fill this with leftover stew or your favorite pot pie mixture. You can also fill it with chopped artichokes or chopped spinach topped with a cheese sauce. It can be spread with spaghetti sauce and topped with pizza toppings. Bake at 400° F for 30 minutes. Let it cool slightly before serving.
6. If you need a top crust, make a second batch of polenta. Roll it out between layers of oiled waxed paper and place it on the top of your pie. Makes a change from ordinary meat pies and is much lower in fat than conventional crust.

**A flexible, easy basic recipe just waiting for your imagination to make it great!**



### **Pot Roast With A Difference**

**Categories: Meat, Roasting**

**3 lb boneless beef roast**

**(rump, round or shoulder)**

**1 lg onion, sliced fine**

**3 tb prepared mustard, ordinary**

**-black pepper and salt to taste-**

**½ c dry white wine, stock or water**

Spray a suitable covered roaster with oil. Place the roast in the middle. Spread the mustard all over the roast, cover with onion slices and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Pour the liquid of your choice into the pan. Cover and bake at 325° F for 30-35 minutes per pound, basting occasionally. When done, slice the meat very thin, arrange it on a platter and pour the sauce from the pan over the meat. Leftovers can be reheated or frozen in the generous amount of pan juices.

#### Variations:

1. Firm vegetables like carrots, celery and parsnips can be arranged around the roast.
2. Sliced mushrooms and/or green peppers added to the onions could also add more pizzazz to this simple dish.
3. Tough cuts of lamb or pork would also be suitable meat for this delicious pot roast.



### Potato Casserole

Categories: Casseroles, Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion

8 md potatoes, peeled, sliced very thin

1 lg onion, sliced fine

1 bell pepper, sliced very thin

1 c sour cream or yogurt

¼ c water, milk or stock

1 ts paprika, Hungarian

-salt to taste-

Mix sour cream and paprika, blend in the water. Line a lightly greased oven-proof dish with ¼ of the potatoes. Arrange a third of the onions and peppers in the dish and sprinkle with salt. Lightly drizzle with ¼ of the sour cream sauce, repeat with the remaining potatoes and sour cream sauce.

Bake covered at 400° F for 1 hour

#### Variations:

1. You can add very thin slices of pork, chicken, lamb or turkey as an extra layer.
2. Wieners, sausages or hard-boiled eggs can serve to expand this theme.

3. Small florettes of cauliflower or broccoli added as an additional layer makes a tasty variation. Any number of other vegetables can be added or substituted for color and taste appeal.



## **Potato Croquettes**

**Categories: Pasta, Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 c mashed potatoes, cold**

**1 lg egg**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  c flour, all purpose**

**$\frac{1}{2}$  ts salt**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**Combine ingredients in a bowl using a fork. The dough should be quite firm; add more flour if it's sticky. Place dough on floured board and knead once or twice. Form into 1/2 x 2 inch rods and deep fry at 350° F until golden brown. An excellent way to use leftover mashed potatoes to create a tasty side dish that goes well with a number of main courses.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Dip rods into lightly beaten egg and roll in bread crumbs before frying for great texture.**
- 2. Freeze rods, placed individually on lightly floured cookie sheets. When solid, pack them into plastic bags and fry as needed without thawing.**
- 3. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of leftover vegetables like peas, carrots or mushrooms to the mixture for a totally different effect.**
- 4. Serve with a sauce as the main dish of a vegetarian meal.**
- 5. Chopped onions and any number of herbs and spices can customize this to make it your own special dish.**
- 6. The dough can be used to wrap around wieners, vegetable mixtures, cooked meat or canned fish for an interesting effect.**

**This is a good basic dough with endless possibilities for creativity.**



## **Potato Dumplings**

**Categories: Pasta, Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 lb potatoes, boiled in their skin**

**½ c farina (wheat cereal, regular)**

**¾ c flour, all purpose**

**1 ts salt**

**1 egg**

**Rice or mash peeled potatoes. Add the rest of the ingredients and work them together. The dough should be stiff, but somewhat sticky. Add a little more flour if necessary. Let the dough rest for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a hard boil, add to it 2 teaspoons of oil and 1 teaspoon of salt. With wet hands form golfball sized dumplings and drop them into the water. Cook for 15 minutes and drain in a colander.**

**Serve as a side dish with something that has a good sauce. Cheap and tasty**

**Variations:**

- 1. Add fried grated cabbage, diced apple, roasted peppers or carrots to the dough for something different.**
- 2. Herbs such as sage, savory or parsley will give this bland dish some zip.**
- 3. Serve with a vegetable or mushroom sauce as a main course.**
- 4. Serve with fried onions and crisp bacon bits and a yogurt dip for lunch.**
- 5. Roll in fried bread crumbs for an interesting texture.**



## **Potato Paprikas**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Stews, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 lg cooking onion, finely diced**

**1 bell pepper, diced (optional)**

**1 tb shortening or cooking oil**

**2 ts paprika, Hungarian sweet**

**1½ lb potatoes**

**½ c water**

**1 tb liquid smoke (optional)**

**-salt to taste-**

Heat oil or shortening, add onion and pepper and sauté on medium heat until the onions are transparent. Make sure the heat is high enough that the onions are gently frying and not steaming in their own juice. Remove the pot from the stove, add paprika, mix well. Add the peeled and quartered (length wise) potatoes. Coat the potatoes thoroughly with the onion-paprika mixture; add the water, liquid smoke and salt. Simmer covered until the potatoes are tender. The slower the cooking the better the flavor. This dish tastes even better reheated. Serve it as a main course with a generous salad or as a side dish with steak or pork chops.

I call this dish the greatest secret of the Hungarian cuisine. Everyone loves it, but no one admits to eating it because it's a sign of poverty. Yet this really should be elevated to star status.

**Variations:**

1. All kinds of smoked sausages may be added for a meatier version.
2. Not authentic, but tasty: replace part of the potatoes with carrots, turnips or parsnip.
3. Add a little crushed chili peppers or hot sauce for a spicier version.



## **Potato Pie**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**6 md potatoes, coarsely grated**

**2 tb plain yogurt**

**1 md onion, coarsely grated**

**1 eggs, lightly beaten**

**¼ c flour, all purpose**

**½ ts salt**

**-black pepper to taste-**

Preheat oven to 375° F. Mix potatoes and yogurt as soon as possible after the grating. Add all of the other ingredients. Press the mixture into a generously greased shallow, oven-proof serving dish or deep pie plate. Bake until golden

brown, about 1 hour. To serve cut into slices or wedges. Goes well with meats cooked in a sauce or can easily serve as a focus for a vegetarian meal.

This is really a potato pancake recipe baked in bulk. Excellent for when you don't know when "they'll" show up. It can be kept warm, reheated or served immediately.

Variations:

1. Add chopped chives, diced roasted peppers or any herb of your choice that complements the main course.
2. Add chopped cooked meat to make it a complete one dish meal and serve it with a light tart sauce.
3. Add leftover cooked vegetables to the mixture and serve as a vegetarian entree with a salad.
4. Sprinkle lightly with coarsely grated cheese 10 minutes before the end of the cooking time for a special presentation.



## Potato Soup

Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion

3 tb butter or margarine

½ c celery, sliced

-black pepper to taste-

3 tb flour, all purpose

4 c water or stock

4 md potatoes, sliced

½ c carrot, coarsely grated, (optional)

2 bay leaves

-salt to taste-

2 tb vinegar

½ c sour cream or yogurt

Heat butter, add celery and black pepper and sauté until the celery is slightly softened. Sprinkle with the flour and continue to sauté until the flour is lightly

browned. Add the water, potatoes, carrots, bay leaves and salt. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are tender, but not overcooked. Add vinegar and sour cream or yogurt and let it cook for 2 more minutes just to heat through and serve. Do not allow it come to a boil, otherwise the sour cream will separate.

**Variations:**

1. Chopped green pepper and/or onions can replace the celery.
2. Sliced zucchini, parsnip, green beans or broccoli can be used to substitute for the carrots or as an additional ingredient.
3. Sage, thyme, savory, parsley or tarragon can give your soup a customized flavor.
4. For that "old world flavor" substitute fried smoked bacon for the butter.



### **Quick Bean Dip**

**Categories:** Appetizers and Party Food, Sauces and Dips, Vegetarian Suggestion

**1 can refried beans (14 oz.)**

**1 can green chilies, chopped (4 oz.)**

**½ c green onions chopped**

**½ c plain yogurt**

**Mix all ingredients together and serve the dip with corn chips. This is a very quick to make dip for unexpected visitors.**

**Variations:**

1. For a hotter version replace all or part of the chilies with jalapenos.
2. You may add grated cheese if you wish.
3. Add a ½ cup of very finely chopped cucumbers or lettuce to make this dish a bit lighter.
4. Although I usually serve it with corn chips, there is no reason why it can't be used as a dip for vegetables or potato chips.





## **Quick Turkey Stirfry**

**Categories: Poultry**

**3 tb cooking oil**

**1 lb turkey breast, cut into strips**

**1 cl garlic, minced**

**1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed**

**1 ts basil, crushed, dry**

**1 ts oregano, dry**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**¼ c water, wine or stock**

**This is a very quick, but very tasty concoction.**

**Heat oil in a wok or large frying pan on medium high heat. Add turkey and fry until all sides turn white. Add all the seasoning except the salt. Stirfry until the meat can be cut with the stirring spatula. Add salt, water, wine or stock and lower the heat to simmer. Let it cook covered at low heat for about 5 minutes.**

**Serve with pasta or rice as a topping or on top of a green salad.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Toasted pine nuts or sesame seeds will make a nice addition as a garnish.**
- 2. You may want to add chopped green onions and diced tomatoes just before adding the salt.**
- 3. For a different effect add a little lemon zest to the seasonings and a teaspoon or more of lemon juice before serving.**
- 4. Use sliced black olives to garnish.**



## **Raspberry Vinegar**

**Categories: Seasonings**

**½ c fresh or frozen raspberries**

**2 c white vinegar**

Find a plastic topped screw cap jar. (Ask the instant coffee drinkers!) Add berries, mash them lightly with a fork and top with vinegar. Screw on the top and let it ripen at room temperature in a dark cupboard for a month. Strain through a coffee filter and pour into clean bottles. Use it to make light dressings for fruit salads or for a delicate lettuce like Boston Bib.

Variations:

1. When bottling it, you may want to add for decoration as well as flavor: some peppercorns, a chunk of ginger root, a bay leaf or two, some whole raspberries or a sprig of fresh dill.
2. Use wine or cider vinegar instead of white if you wish.
3. Fruits that can be substituted for raspberries are strawberries, raisins, apricots, blueberries or cranberries.

Your imagination is the limit!



## Roast Chicken Marinated In Yogurt

Categories: Poultry, Roasting

1 chicken (3-4 lb)

2 c yogurt

-black pepper to taste-

1 ts coriander

1 ts dill, dry

1 ts basil, dry

2 ts thyme, dry

-salt, to taste-

Split chicken along the backbone and open it up to lay flat. Poultry or utility scissors are the best for this job. Mix yogurt and all the seasonings. Brush the chicken all over with the yogurt mixture. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight. In a lightly oiled oven-proof dish roast the chicken, uncovered, basting often at 350° F, until the legs move freely, about 1 ½ hours.

Serve with kasha, rice or baked potatoes.

Variations:

1. Any combination of herbs may be used. Yogurt is an excellent meat tenderizer.
2. This can be cooked on the barbecue.
3. Chops, steaks, turkey thighs or firm fish may be substituted for the chicken.



## **Roasted Potatoes**

**Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**6 md potatoes cut into ½ inch cubes**

**½ ts salt**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**4 tb oil**

**Wash the potatoes and pat them dry between paper towels. Cut them to size. Dissolve the paprika in the oil, add the salt and toss the potatoes in this mixture until thoroughly coated.**

**Bake in a shallow dish at 375° F, uncovered, turning the potatoes over 2-3 times, until they are brown (about 50 minutes).**

**These never fail to please!**

**Variations:**

1. You may use the pan drippings from your roast instead of the oil.
2. Add white pepper or cayenne for a spicier touch.
3. Herbs such as rosemary, savory or parsley will customize your interpretation of this dish.
4. Root vegetables, like parsnips, carrots, turnips or sweet potatoes may be prepared the same way, but the cooking time may have to be adjusted.



## **Salmon Quiche Without Crust**

**Categories: Cheese and Eggs, Fish and Seafood, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 can pink salmon (8 oz.)**

**¼ c yogurt (plain)**

**4 lg eggs**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**¼ ts savory or sage**

**1 tb farina (wheat cereal regular)**

**Preheat oven to 450° F. Lightly oil or spray an 8 inch pie plate and coat it with farina as if you were flouring a cake pan. In a bowl beat eggs, add seasonings, yogurt and fold in the flaked salmon. Pour into the prepared pie plate and bake until golden on top and the sides start to pull away from the pan. About 15-20 minutes.**

**Serve hot with a garden salad.**

**Variations:**

- 1. You can substitute the salmon with ¾ cup of finely chopped ham, cooked chicken or turkey, mashed canned corn or thawed, squeezed-out and chopped frozen spinach.**
- 2. You may add, if you wish, ½ cup grated cheese to the mixture.**
- 3. You can vary the spices to suit your preferences, but I suggest adding the paprika for color, especially if the salmon is very pale.**
- 4. You can garnish the top before baking with chopped chives, grated cheese or cracker crumbs.**
- 5. Tuna, shrimp or crab would also work well in this recipe.**



## **Salmon Salad**

**Categories: Salads and Dressings**

**1 can salmon (8 oz.)**

**2 tb mayonnaise**

**1 ts prepared mustard, ordinary**

**½ ts horseradish, prepared**

**1 tb capers, minced**

**½ ts paprika**

**-black pepper to taste-**

Mix ingredients, chill and serve either as a sandwich filling, as a salad on a bed of lettuce or as an appetizer on crackers.

**Variations:**

1. Finely minced chives or green onions can be added.
2. Chopped olives, radishes or minced water chestnuts will customize your personal salmon salad.
3. A touch of cayenne or hot sauce will add zing, while fresh dill or parsley will emphasize lightness.
4. For the daring I recommend trying a pinch of tarragon or thyme.



## **Seafood Chowder**

**Categories: Fish and Seafood, Soups**

**2 tb butter or margarine**

**3 c diced mixed vegetables**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**¼ c flour, all purpose**

**6 c water, fish stock or clam juice**

**2 md potatoes, diced**

**2 c fish or seafood**

**-salt to taste-**

**1 ts dill, dry**

**½ ts garlic powder**

**2 tb parsley, minced**

Heat the butter on medium high in a large pot, add the vegetables, 2 cups at a time allowing the heat to recover before adding the next portion. Sprinkle with pepper and sauté until the vegetables are lightly cooked. Sprinkle on the flour, mix, cook for 2 minutes. Mix in the paprika. Add the cold water, dill and salt. Add the potatoes. Mix, bring to a boil then simmer, uncovered, until the vegetables are

nearly tender. Add fish or seafood and cook for 10 minutes more or until the fish or seafood is just cooked.

The mixed vegetables can include fresh or frozen onions, peppers, carrots, turnip, mushrooms, leek, broccoli, peas, green beans or cauliflower. The fish and seafood can be any number of items from chunks of firm fish like cod or haddock, to clam, shrimp, mussels or a combination of all.

**Variations:**

1. You may use canned clams for an excellent clam chowder.
2. Fresh tomatoes diced and added 5 minutes before the end of cooking will improve the color and texture.
3. Bay leaves, chives, cayenne or thyme can be added to this soup.



## **Seafood Kabobs**

**Categories: Fish and Seafood**

**12 lg shrimps**

**12 lg scallops**

**12 sm mushrooms**

**12 chunks bell peppers (red, green, yellow)**

**-Marinade Sauce for Seafood-**

**Soak 6 bamboo skewers for 1 hour in water.**

**Alternate ingredients on the skewers. Brush with marinade and broil 3 minutes on each side in preheated oven.**

**Variations:**

1. Onions, cherry tomatoes or cubes of zucchini can be added instead of or in addition to the vegetables mentioned.
2. Small cubes of chicken breast can replace the seafood.
3. Chunks of imitation crab or lobster can be used instead of the scallops and shrimp.



## Sloppy Joe's

**Categories: Meat, Sauces and Dips**

**½ Meat Sauce recipe**

**1 c catsup**

**2 tb brown sugar**

**2 tb prepared mustard, ordinary**

**2 tb Worcestershire sauce**

**Combine all ingredients and simmer 10 minutes to blend flavors. Adjust salt and serve on rolls that are cut in half lengthwise, then toasted.**

**Variations:**

- 1. You may use chili or barbecue sauce instead of the catsup.**
- 2. Add a can of peas or corn, some cooked carrots or leftover rice to stretch the meat.**
- 3. This versatile sauce can be served over couscous, kasha, rice or with polenta and need not be restricted to the traditional toasted rolls.**



## Smoked Salmon Spread

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Cheese and Eggs, Fish and Seafood**

**1 can pink salmon, drained (8 oz.)**

**1 pkg plain cream cheese**

**1 tb liquid smoke**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**Using a fork mash ingredients together and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, so that the flavors can blend.**

**This is a very tasty spread on bagels or buns or it can be used to stuff vegetables, such as cherry tomatoes. Try it as a topping on hot pasta. Makes a great hors d'oeuvre placed on top of a cracker or on a slice of cucumber.**

**Variations:**

- 1. You may want to add chopped chilies, minced pimentos or a touch of dill**

as flavoring.

2. The salmon can be replaced with spinach and flavored with garlic.
3. For a crunchy texture contrast, add some minced water chestnuts or pine nuts.
4. Sardines can also substitute for the salmon. Replace the liquid smoke with lemon juice.



## **Spiced Vinegar**

**Categories: Seasonings**

**4 cl garlic, sliced**

**½ ts mustard seed**

**20 peppercorns**

**4 bay leaves**

**½ ts marjoram**

**1 ts tarragon**

**1 ts basil**

**1 ts rosemary**

**4 c vinegar (white or cider)**

Place all ingredients in a quart jar that has a plastic top or use 4 layers of plastic wrap and secure it over the jar with a rubber band under the metal top. (The vinegar attacks metal.) Mix well, cover and let it sit for at least a month at room temperature.

Strain with a coffee filter and pour into a clean bottle. Use this in any recipe that calls for vinegar.

**Variations:**

1. Use only fresh dill weed as a spice for Dill Vinegar.
2. Use sprigs of tarragon for Tarragon Vinegar.
3. Substitute cider, wine or malt vinegar for interesting variations.





## **Spinach Casserole**

**Categories: Casseroles, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**¾ c couscous**

**1 c boiling water**

**1 bouillon cube or equivalent powder**

**1 frozen chopped spinach, thawed**

**2 cl garlic**

**¼ c plain yogurt**

**1 c cooked ham, diced**

**½ c grated cheddar cheese**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**Place couscous into an ovenproof casserole dish. Dissolve bouillon in boiling water and pour over the couscous. Cover and let stand for at least 5 minutes. Meanwhile, mix spinach, garlic, yoghurt, cheese, salt and pepper. Set aside. Fluff couscous with a fork and distribute it evenly in the pan. Cover the couscous with the diced ham and top with the spinach mixture. Bake at 400° F for 20-25 minutes or until well heated through. Serve with a salad.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Although the recipe calls for couscous, rice, couscous, buckwheat or even cooked pasta would work equally well as the starchy component.**
- 2. Ham can be replaced with any cooked meat, sausage, fish or seafood.**
- 3. For a creamier and richer texture, the yogurt can be replaced with sour cream.**
- 4. For garnishing, the top can be sprinkled with more shredded cheese, bacon bits, bread crumbs or a crunchy cereal.**
- 5. All or part of the spinach can be substituted with artichokes, steamed Swiss chard or finely diced zucchini.**
- 6. For a meatless variation: replace the ham with sliced hard-boiled eggs, seasoned tofu, feta or dry cottage cheese. Season with herbs.**



## **Stirfried Cucumber With Peas**

**Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 tb olive oil**

**2 cl garlic, minced**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**2 c cucumber, chopped**

**2 c peas, frozen**

**1 ts thyme, dried**

**-salt to taste-**

**Heat oil in large skillet on medium high, add garlic, cucumbers and black pepper stir-fry for 5 minutes or until the cucumber looks soft.**

**Add peas and thyme, mix, cover, reduce the heat to simmer and cook for another 5 minutes. Add salt, mix and serve as a vegetable or as a feature of a vegetarian meal.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Roasted garlic can be substituted for the fresh.**
- 2. Zucchini can substitute for the cucumber, but the cooking time has to be increased slightly.**
- 3. Roasted peppers, minced shallots or green onions, parsley or a touch of oregano can customize this dish to be your very own.**
- 4. Frozen corn, mushrooms, carrots or mixed vegetables can substitute for all or part of the peas.**



## **Stirfried Green Beans**

**Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**1 lb fresh green beans**

**2 tb oil**

**2 cl garlic, crushed**

**1 ts fresh ginger, minced**

**¼ c stock or water**

**Heat oil in wok or sauté pan on high heat until very hot. Add beans, garlic and ginger. Stir until all the beans are coated with oil.**

**Add the stock or water and salt. Reduce heat to simmer and cook covered for 5 minutes. Remove the lid and cook until all the liquid has evaporated.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Sesame oil, a touch of chili paste or hot sauce would heighten the flavor.**
- 2. A sprinkle of sesame seeds or slivered almonds would make for a nice presentation.**
- 3. Add ¼ cup of chopped red bell peppers to the beans for color contrast.**
- 4. Drizzle with a little lemon or lime juice for a bit of tang.**



### **Stuffed Mussels Turkish Style**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Fish and Seafood**

**20 fresh mussels in the shell, cleaned**

**1 c short grain rice**

**1 sm onion, minced**

**¼ c olive oil**

**1 ts sugar**

**-black pepper and salt to taste-**

**2 tb currants**

**1 tb pine nuts, toasted**

**1 dash cinnamon powder**

**2 c water**

**-lemon wedges-**

**Heat oil and sauté the onions until they are transparent. Add the rice and fry for 2 minutes. Add the currants, pine nuts and seasonings. Stir and add the water. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce the heat to simmer until all the liquid is absorbed, about 15 minutes. Steam fresh mussels in a steamer basket placed over boiling water for 1 minute or just until they open. With a sharp knife remove**

the "beard". Discard any mussels that didn't open. Cool and stuff the mussels with the rice mixture and re-close the shell. Place the stuffed mussels in a steamer basket and steam over simmering water for 30 minutes. Serve this dish chilled, on a bed of crushed ice, garnished with lemon wedges to squeeze on the stuffing.

This is an authentic Turkish recipe that is absolutely heavenly. It is eaten with one shell removed and used as a shovel to push the rice and mussel into the mouth.

Variations:

1. This tasty stuffing would go equally well as a stuffing for fresh tomatoes, spinach leaves or baked squash or as an excellent sidedish.
2. Oregano or basil could replace the cinnamon, and chopped olives could substitute for the currants and sugar for a Mediterranean flavor.



### Sweet Potato-Orange Casserole

Categories: Casseroles, Vegetables

3 lg oranges

2½ c sweet potatoes, cooked and mashed

½ c milk

½ c raisins or currants

½ ts salt

½ ts cinnamon

1 ts orange zest, grated

Cut oranges in half and carefully spoon out the pulp. Add the chopped orange flesh and all the other ingredients to the mashed sweet potatoes.

Mix well and place the mixture in a suitable ovenproof serving dish or refill the orange skins.

Bake for 20 minutes at 350° F.

This is a lovely vegetable dish for that special holiday meal. The mixture can be made ahead and baked before serving time.

Variations:

1. For a colorful contrast garnish with chopped parsley.

2. Nutmeg can replace the cinnamon if you wish.
3. You can decorate the top with sliced oranges and/or toasted almond slivers.
4. Other fruits such as plums, grapes, diced apples or cranberries can be used instead of the raisins.



### **Tabbouli---Couscous Salad**

**Categories: Salads and Dressings**

**1 c couscous**

**2 c boiling water**

**¼ c olive oil**

**2 c parsley, finely chopped**

**½ c green onions, finely chopped**

**¼ c mint, dry, crushed**

**4 md tomatoes, diced**

**1 c lemon juice (or more, to taste)**

**-salt and black pepper to taste-**

**Pour boiling water over couscous, cover and let it sit for at least an hour. Drain it in a sieve and press to remove as much of the water as possible. Drizzle on the olive oil and mix to coat the grains. Fold in the rest of the ingredients and refrigerate for at least an hour before serving, so that the flavors can blend and the ingredients can chill.**

**Serve on a bed of lettuce leaves with pita bread.**

**Variations:**

1. The couscous can be substituted with cracked wheat.
2. Additional spices can be allspice, a touch of garlic, cumin, cinnamon, turmeric or oregano.
3. To increase the vegetable component of this salad you may add fresh grated raw carrots, diced cucumbers or zucchini, fresh or frozen peas, diced bell peppers, cooked chick peas and diced apples.

4. Currants, raisins or chopped black olives also go well in this salad.



### Tetrazinni Style Mushroom Sauce

Categories: Casseroles, Sauces and Dips, Vegetarian Suggestion

¼ c olive oil

2 c fresh mushrooms, sliced

-black pepper to taste-

¼ c flour, all purpose

1 can chicken broth (10 oz.)

1 c milk or cream

2 tb plain yogurt

½ c grated cheese

1 tb lemon juice

-salt to taste-

Heat oil in skillet on medium high and when it is hot enough, add the mushrooms. Be sure to keep the heat high enough that the mushrooms are frying, not steaming in their own juices. Sprinkle with black pepper. Continue frying gently until the mushrooms are wilted. Sprinkle on the flour and continue cooking for 2 more minutes, stirring and scraping sides continuously. Remove the pan from the burner and add at once the cold broth and milk. Stir well, return to stove and reduce the heat to simmer. Add your choice of herbs (see suggestions below), yoghurt, and simmer stirring occasionally until thickened. Add the cheese of your choice and adjust salt.

Variations:

1. Combine this sauce with 2 cups of leftover cooked poultry, meat or fish and arrange it over a bed of cooked spaghetti (about 1 lb.). Bake until all heated through, about 35 minutes at 350° F.
2. For cheese you have the choice of cream cheese, cheddar, Swiss or Parmesan or a combination of any of the above. A little blue cheese will give it a special touch, if you are daring.
3. Herbs to season could be sage, bay leaf, parsley or tarragon.
4. You can add some chopped celery and/or onion to the mushrooms.

5. Roasted diced red bell peppers are decorative as well as tasty in this sauce.
6. This can also be used as a topping for any casserole.
7. Pour over panfried pork chops, lamb chops, chicken thighs or breasts or fish fillets for an elegant dinner.
8. Use it as a spaghetti sauce or as a sauce for vegetables in a meatless meal.



### Theresa's Black Chicken Wings

Categories: Poultry

2 lb chicken wings

2 tb oil

½ c soy sauce

2 cl garlic, minced

2 tb sugar

½ ts ginger, minced

Heat oil in large frying pan at medium heat, tuck wing tips in to form a triangle and place them into the hot oil. Brown lightly on both sides and reduce the heat to simmer. Add all the other ingredients and continue to simmer, uncovered, until the wings are done, turning them in the sauce often. The sauce will be reduced to a black, sticky glaze in the process.

Serve with rice and lots of napkins. One of my personal favorites.

Variation:

1. Add ½ cup chopped green onions for the last 5 minutes of cooking.
2. Replace sugar with honey or a jam of your choice.
3. Strips of meat, small drumsticks or firm fish can replace the wings, but the timing will have to be adjusted.



## **Tiny Hungarian Dumplings---Nokkedli**

**Categories: Pasta, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**2 lg eggs**

**1 c water**

**1½ c flour, all purpose, un-sifted**

**½ ts salt**

**Prepare a large pot of rapidly boiling water, making sure that the water is no more than 2 inches from the lip of the pot. Add a little oil to the water.**

**Place flour in large mixing bowl, make a well, add the other ingredients and stir using a wooden spoon until just mixed. Do not work the dough.**

**The easiest way to form the dumplings is to use a spaetzle maker. (Looks like a grater with dime size holes and a hopper on top, available in many kitchen shops.) Place this device on top of the pot with the boiling water. Fill the hopper with dough and slide it back and forth as fast as you can. The faster you do it the smaller the dumplings. The dough should be thick enough to offer resistance, but "grate" easily. When all the dumplings are floating (about 2 minutes), pour into a colander, drain and serve.**

**Alternatives to using a spaetzle maker:**

- 1. Place dough on a small cutting board and use a knife to cut bean size pieces of dough into the boiling water.**
- 2. Use a colander with large holes, a chestnut roaster with holes or a coarse grater and mash the dough through with a wooden spoon.**

**Serve these dumplings with any gulash or stew that has a very good sauce.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Refry with eggs as in Pasta With Eggs.**
- 2. Use as pasta in any recipe.**
- 3. Serve with pesto.**



## **Tomato Sauce**

**Categories: Sauces and Dips, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**3 tb oil**



1 lg onion, minced very fine  
-black pepper to taste-  
2 md bell peppers, diced  
1 lb mushrooms, sliced (optional)  
1 c carrots, grated  
2 cl garlic, crushed  
1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed  
1 ts oregano, dry  
2 ts basil  
3 bay leaves  
1 can tomatoes, crushed or diced (28 oz.)  
1 can tomato paste (13 oz.)  
1 c water  
-salt, to taste-

In a Dutch oven heat oil, add onions and black pepper and sauté until you hear sizzling. Add the bell peppers and continue to sauté, stirring occasionally. Repeat with mushrooms. Sauté until the onions are transparent and the mushrooms have wilted. Be sure to keep the heat high enough that the vegetables are frying, not steaming in their own juices. Add the grated carrots. Stir to coat with the mixture in the pan. Add the rest of the ingredients, stir, cover and reduce the heat to a slow simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally and adding a little water if necessary for at least 30 minutes; the longer the better.

This is a large recipe of a basic tomato sauce, about 5 cups, designed to be frozen in containers and adjusted as required for other recipes.

#### **Variations:**

1. For those who like it hot and spicy add a few slices of jalapeno, a little crushed chili pepper or a few drops of hot sauce.
2. Mix a cup of sauce, with a can of beans (pinto or kidney), add a little chili powder and adjust the salt for an excellent vegetarian Chili con Carne.
3. Add a cup of cooked Burghul to the sauce to give it a "meaty" texture in vegetarian recipes.
4. Thin it with water or broth, and serve over spaghetti or any other pasta

shape of your choosing.

5. Thin with water or broth to use in your lasagna recipe as the sauce.

6. Use it thick as sauce for steamed vegetables like zucchini, spaghetti squash or green beans.



## Tomato Soup

Categories: Soups, Vegetarian Suggestion

3 tb butter or margarine

3 tb flour, all purpose

-black pepper to taste-

1 can tomato paste (5½ oz)

3½ c cold water

-salt to taste-

Melt butter on medium heat, add flour and pepper and brown, stirring constantly until the flour becomes lightly browned. Remove from heat, add the tomato paste, water and seasonings. Mix well and return to the stove to simmer 10-15 minutes.

Variations:

1. Replace all or part of the water with milk or cream for a cream of tomato soup.
2. Replace the tomato paste with crushed or stewed canned tomatoes and adjust water accordingly for a coarser soup. Add a tablespoon or two of hot salsa to heighten the flavor.
3. Bay leaves, basil, oregano, cayenne (if you like it hot), celery seeds, pepper flakes, a couple of fresh tomatoes cut up, a touch of sugar and parsley may be added to round out the flavors.
4. Add boiled rice or cooked pasta for the last 5 minutes of simmering.



## Vegetable Stew

Categories: Stews, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 tb oil  
1 md onion, minced  
1 bell pepper, diced  
3 c root vegetables  
-black pepper to taste-  
2 c mushrooms, sliced  
3 c fibrous vegetables  
1 cl garlic, minced  
2 c green peas fresh or frozen  
1 ts oregano, dry  
1 ts rosemary, dry, crushed  
1 ts sage, dry, crushed  
1 c water  
2 md tomatoes diced (optional)  
-salt to taste-

To choose root and fibrous vegetables, please refer to the section on vegetables.

Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven on medium and add the onions. Adjust the heat so that the onions are slowly frying and no liquid collects in the bottom of the pan. Cook until the onion is wilted. Add peppers and cook until peppers are wilted. Sprinkle with black pepper and add 1 cup of the root vegetables at a time cooking until the vegetables are limp before adding the next cup. Repeat the procedure with the mushrooms and the next 3 cups of fibrous vegetables. Add garlic. Add peas all at once. Add herbs and stir. Add tomatoes if you wish. Add the water, cover and reduce the heat to simmer. Continue cooking for another 10-15 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Makes about 7 cups.

Variations:

1. With the addition of a little wine, cream, yogurt or broth, the thickness can be adjusted to create a great sauce for pasta.
2. Add some of this mixture to cooked rice, barley, bulghur or couscous to make a Vegetarian Pilaf. Serve topped with coarsely grated Parmesan cheese and a green salad.
3. Serve with polenta or baked potatoes and a nice green salad for a tasty

vegetarian meal.

4. Mix with leftover cooked fish or meat to disguise the fact that they are leftovers.

5. Dilute with broth or water, adjust salt, thicken with cornstarch, add some cooked pasta, barley or rice for a stick-to-your-ribs winter soup.

This is a versatile dish that can be made in minutes from stored components in the freezer. Leftover cooked meat, sausage, sliced wieners or fish can be added to the vegetables for an even more substantial meal in a bowl.

This recipe emphasizes the importance of technique and exemplifies how a good basic recipe can serve many different functions.



### Versatile Yorkshire Pudding

Categories: Side Dishes, Vegetarian Suggestion

2 lg eggs, lightly beaten

1 c milk

1 c flour

¼ ts salt

Preheat oven to 400° F. Add ½ teaspoon cooking oil (corn, safflower or sunflower) to each of the 12 wells of a medium-sized muffin tin. While you're preparing the batter, heat the tin and oil in the oven to the point where it's just smoking. Measure the milk in a 2 cup measuring cup. Add the lightly beaten eggs. Place the dry ingredients in a medium sized bowl, make a well and add ½ of the milk mixture. Work it with a wire whisk until you have a smooth paste. Gradually work in the rest of the milk mixture. Pour the batter back into the measuring cup. (It is by far the least messy way of filling the muffin cups.) Quickly divide the batter between the muffin cups. Return the tin to the oven and bake for 15-20 minutes or until well browned. If you wish to bake it in a single pan the baking time will be a little longer, 20-30 minutes. Serve with roast beef in the traditional way.

Variations:

1. Toad-in-a-Hole is a traditional dish where breakfast sausages are cooked in a pan, the excess grease is poured off and the Yorkshire pudding batter is poured over the hot sausages and baked. You still have to have some fat and it has to be near smoking hot.

2. These wonderfully textured puffs can serve as a meat substitute in a vegetarian meal. Add a few dry herbs such as parsley, chives, sage or

garlic powder to give it some zing.

3. The individual baked puddings can be cut in half and the cavity filled with creamed meat, fish or vegetable mixture to create a showy appetizer or luncheon dish.

4. ¼ cup of grated Romano or Parmesan can be added to the batter for a cheesy variation.



### **Viki's Turkish Stuffed Peppers**

**Categories: Appetizers and Party Food, Salads and Dressings, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**8 sm bell peppers**

**½ c olive oil**

**1 sm onion, diced**

**1 c short grain rice**

**1 lg tomatoes, chopped**

**2 tb mint, dry, crushed**

**¼ c pine nuts, toasted**

**-black pepper and salt to taste-**

**2 tb sugar**

**2 c water**

**-lemon wedges-**

**Choose small, squat, thin-skinned bell peppers if you can. That's the kind they have in Turkey.**

**Heat the oil and sauté the onions until transparent. Add the rice and fry for 2 more minutes. Add the mint, nuts, salt, pepper and tomatoes and fry for 2 more minutes. Add sugar and water. Stir, bring to a boil, cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook until all the liquid is absorbed. About 15 minutes.**

**Let the stuffing stand covered until cool. Slice off the stem end of the peppers and scoop out the seeds and veins. Using a teaspoon, stuff the peppers with the rice mixture, making sure it's packed well into the corners. Press after each addition.**

Place the peppers into a pan making sure the peppers touch each other, so that they will not tip into the water. Add about an inch of water, cover and simmer until the peppers are just cooked, about 20 minutes. Lift out the peppers gently.

Serve chilled with lemon wedges to dribble juice over the rice.

Serve as a salad, side dish or as a main course.

Just wonderful on a hot day ! I brought this recipe back from a visit to Turkey in 1996.

Variations:

1. Add leftover cooked meat or fish to the rice mixture.
2. Stuff scooped-out tomatoes or squashes with this aromatic rice mixture and bake them in an oiled pan at 400° F until the vegetable is cooked.
3. Serve the stuffing on its own as a side dish.



### Won Ton Pork Filling

Categories: Pasta

1 pkg Won Ton wrappers (1 lb)

1 lb pork, ground

1 c boiling water

2 envelopes gelatin, dissolved in the water

¼ c soy sauce

2 ts sesame oil

¼ c green onions, finely chopped

½ ts ginger, grated

-salt and pepper to taste-

Dissolve gelatin in water and let it cool. Mix all ingredients together. This amount fills one 1 lb or 454 g package of won ton wraps. This recipe is authentic, but simplified.

The gelatin replaces the complex skin and bone boiling that the original recipe described as a preparation for the stock to hold the ingredients together.

Since tastes and ingredients vary, test a small bit of the filling for taste and

texture.

Add 1 tablespoon of oil to a large pot of water and bring it to a boil. Take a ¼ tsp. of the mixture and drop it into the boiling water. When it rises to the top remove it with a slotted spoon and taste. Adjust salt and pepper if necessary; add a little water if the dumpling is too tough.

Dip each wrapper into water and fill with about ¼ teaspoon of filling. Pinch the tops of the wrappers together to seal well. Place a third of the Won Tons into the boiling water, stir gently just to make sure they are not sticking to the pot and let them cook until they all rise to the top, about 5 minutes. Lift out and drain.

You can freeze them this way and add them to your soup when you wish. The amount of "filling-to-wrapper" is just about right, but if you run out of wrappers and have some filling left, you can just drop teaspoons of it into the boiling water dumpling fashion or add them to a soup.

Variations:

1. Chicken or beef can easily substitute for the pork.
2. To make dry Won Tons, deep-fry the packages, instead of boiling them.
3. This filling can be used to make tasty meatballs in a sauce of your choice.



## Won Ton Soup

Categories: Soups

6 c clear chicken broth

½ c carrots, cut into matchsticks

½ c mushrooms, sliced

½ c fresh or frozen peas

½ ts ginger, finely chopped

2 tb sugar

-chopped green onions-

-Won Tons-

Bring broth to simmer. Add carrots and mushrooms, simmer for 10 minutes. Add cooked Won Tons, peas and sugar. Simmer until it is all warmed through, about 5 minutes.

Serve with chopped green onions and soy sauce on the side.

Variations:

1. Chopped cabbage or spinach can also be added to this soup.
2. You can replace the Won Tons with fine noodles.



## Yogurt Dressing

Categories: Sauces and Dips

1 c plain yogurt

2 tb honey

2 tb olive oil

2 tb vinegar, to taste

1 cl garlic, minced

The vinegar used in this recipe may be plain white, spiced, rice, cider or balsamic vinegar. Using a wire whisk, beat honey and oil together. Add the garlic and beat in the yogurt. Add the vinegar and mix well.

This is a versatile sauce, dip or dressing. Use this as a party dip for raw vegetables. It can be a salad dressing for any salad, but is particularly good on fresh spinach. Serve it as a sauce with savory pancakes of potatoes or zucchini, corn fritters, potato croquettes and fish cakes.

Variations:

1. Lemon juice can replace the vinegar.
2. Chopped chives, black pepper, ginger, tarragon or dill may be added or substituted for the garlic for a different flavor.
3. For a richer mixture, replace all or part of the yogurt with a good quality mayonnaise or sour cream.



## Zucchini Pancakes

Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion

3 c zucchini, coarsely grated



**2 lg eggs**

**-black pepper to taste-**

**$\frac{3}{4}$  c flour, all purpose**

**-oil for frying-**

**Mix ingredients. If the zucchini is a bit old and dry, add a little milk to loosen the mixture. It should be thick enough to need flattening, but moist enough to spoon easily. Heat oil in large skillet and add heaping tablespoons of batter. Flatten with back of the spoon. Fry on each side until golden brown. Lightly salt before serving. Serve with Yogurt Dressing.**

**Excellent as a main course for vegetarian fare.**

**Variations:**

- 1. Replace  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the zucchini with coarsely grated carrots for a livelier color.**
- 2. Add grated onions, chives, dill or parsley for flavoring.**
- 3. Serve with a fresh salsa.**
- 4. You can also bake this batter in the oven in a pan. Heat a small amount of oil in a lasagna pan at 400° F, add the batter, and bake until the top is nicely browned, 20-30 minutes. This method really reduces the amount of fat being used and releases the cook from standing by the stove.**



## **Zucchini-Pepper Ratatouille**

**Categories: Vegetables, Vegetarian Suggestion**

**4 tb oil**

**1 md onion, chopped**

**3 md bell peppers, diced**

**1 md zucchini, cubed small**

**1 ts paprika, Hungarian**

**4 md tomatoes, quartered**

**-salt and pepper to taste-**

**In a large skillet heat oil on medium high and add the onions and pepper. Keep**

the heat high enough that the onions and peppers are frying. Sauté until the onions are limp. Remove from the burner, add the paprika, stir well and add the zucchini, reduce the heat and simmer uncovered until the zucchini is soft. Add the tomatoes, heat through and serve.

Excellent as a sidedish with roasts or as a meatless main course with rice or pasta.

**Variations:**

1. Eggplants can be substituted for all or part of the zucchini.
2. Marjoram, cayenne and/or oregano will give this dish an extra zip.
3. Add cooked meat, fish or sausage for the last 5 minutes to make this into a meal in a skillet.
4. Make a double batch while you're at it and leave it slightly undercooked. This dish freezes very well and will rescue you in a pinch.

