

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Rattlin's about the Kitchen

Have often mentioned to friends and bored column readers there's not much in life that I enjoy more than thrashing about in the kitchen. In fact, a movie we've enjoyed of late has been "Tortilla Soup" which shows the father, a professional chef using a restaurant size stove in the house doing dinner for the family of four. All eight burners are in service, pot or pan on each with stews, sauces, vegetables and whatever bubbling away. Great fun to be able to create new dishes, new recipes, dinner menus, drinks and then enjoy the successes and laugh about the disasters with family and friends.

Food and the attendant social aspects that evolve around it have always been quite rewarding to me. As I look back on living with my parents and then bringing up our own children, one thought sticks out. We always within reason sat down together for supper. This was our time of the day as a family. We talked of the day's events, what we'd done that day, or what the weekend would bring. Talked of all the things families talked of and fought about. This time was part of that intricate web that held us together, gave us a common bond, and good food was the bonus.

Observation: There should be times in every cook's life when recipes stay in the files and cookbooks rest on the shelf. Let the creative juices of experience take over.

In the cold, dark, short-dayed months of winter we tend to crave 'feel good' food. I enjoy revisiting the older cooking and also to perhaps add a few new flavors. Last month I picked up about a 5 lb. picnic ham, cut it into four or five pieces, dunked these into a crockpot with half a cutup cabbage, two apples, 12 oz. of ale, a small onion, some water, black pepper and at least a tablespoon of pickling spices. I let this cook on low for a good eight hours. Then the next day when it was cool, I scraped the fat off the liquid. Then I warmed the pot and removed the ham and vegetables to a bowl, strained the juice and used this to boil some small potatoes (with skins) and carrots—keep the juice for use as a thin gravy. For dinner I put everything back together to warm. Together with side dishes of cole slaw and fresh biscuits, we had ourselves a wicked good deep winter meal that was quite inexpensive. And, the leftovers fed us lunches that week.

Observation: Never again will we buy a stove with a PC board control. We had an electricity spike from nearby lightning and the gas stove was rendered useless along with stereo, microwave, VCR, breadmaker, and AJ's treadmill.

From the 1928 Ladies Aid "Hancock Cookbook", 77 pages for fifty cents: To remove automobile grease from clothes and grease stains from children's clothes spread the spot with lard and rub thoroughly until the

spot disappears. Wash out the lard with warm soapsuds. —And I thought lard was only good for biscuits and piecrusts.

And another from this same tome. For those houseflies that come out on warm spring days to breed... “To keep flies out of a room, put a few drops of oil of lavender on a sponge placed in a saucer of hot water. This will give out a scent like violets”—which flies dislike.

These ladies quite obviously never had or never used an oven thermometer. Catch these.

“Wavies Doughnuts—E.G.W. One cup sugar, 1 cup mashed potato, 2 teaspoons melted butter, 1 cup sour milk, 1 teaspoon soda, nutmeg, lemon, 1 teaspoon cream tarter, salt.”

Or:

“Hesmith cookies—J.A.H. Two cups sugar, 1 cup butter, ½ cup sour milk, ¼ cup raisins, 2 eggs, ½ teaspoon soda. Roll thin and sprinkle with sugar.”

The entire cookbook reads like this. Almost none of the recipes have any cooking time or temperature.

You’re on your own. No wonder men didn’t cook back then. The women kept the key information a secret.

About this same time (1933), the Ladies Congressional Club of Washington, D.C. published a hard cover, 834 page cookbook which spelled out in great defined detail, menus, times, temperatures, translations, nutrients, calories, and essential food elements which could mean that the political wives in Washington needed a lot of help in the kitchen or that the Ladies of Hancock’s grasp of mundane kitchen details were already well understood.

Observation: The kitchen “Department” at Marden’s (Chez Mardeen) often has some really neat and unique cooking stuff from end runs and closeouts at extremely attractive prices.

Last Observation: We’ve all heard, I’m sure, that adults especially men shouldn’t drink cow’s milk for various reasons. Give rice milk a try on morning cereal. A side benefit may be fewer winter colds.

Lee S. Wilbur