

Recipes and instructions for the dishes created at the Basics of Cooking, Fall 2011, class.

Session I: Baked Whole Chicken: Chicken purchased at sale price, and there are often sales on chicken. Five-pound bird, very simply baked, no stuffing, just wash well and oil the surface and heavily salt inside and out. Be sure to dig out the package of giblets, etc. before baking. Also, tie the legs together with string and bake turned upside down, breast side down. At mid baking time, flip the bird. Should be done in 1 hour, 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand for 20 minutes to gather its juices into itself and redistribute.

(After everyone took a sample, I took the bird home and removed all the meat from the bones, then put the rack and bones, skin, etc. into a kettle, covered with plenty of water, added a stalk of celery, ½ onion, three bay leaves, salt and pepper, and boiled it for several hours until the water became quite flavorful. You can probably add any number of other herbs to flavor it like sage, oregano, and thyme. And I probably added more water as some would have boiled away and it needed to cook more. After it has boiled to suit you, strain through a sieve into a bowl and pitch the solids. Once cooled, I put it into a large container and froze it along with a package of the chicken I had taken from it earlier. This I brought back to the next session of the class)

(Students will recall that we worked on knife skills at this session.)

Session II: Stocks and Sauces:

Much of this class included description of what I had done with the chicken at home and presentation of the stock for the making of chicken noodle soup. Then discussion of how to make a basic white sauce. A variation on this method was used in making spinach with a Boursin cream sauce. The usual proportions of ingredients for white sauce are 2 T butter, 2T. flour, one cup milk.

Melt the butter in a pan and add the flour, stirring for a minute until the flour is incorporated and has had a chance to cook, taking off the raw taste. Then gradually add the milk, or cream if you prefer, and stir until smooth and thickened. Season with salt and white pepper if you have it. If a thinner sauce is wanted, use more milk, if a thick sauce, start with less until you get the thickness you want.

Demonstrations:

Chicken Noodle Soup

The stock was placed into a kettle on the stove and students added the following to it: chopped onion, chopped carrots, and chopped celery that was cooked until the veggies were soft. Then the noodles (medium wide egg noodles) were added, but not before the stock was checked for seasoning. (With any type of pasta, salting should be done to water in which it is boiled, not afterwards which is too late for salting pasta.). After noodles

were done, about 20 minutes, chicken was added to the mix and checked for final flavoring.

Spinach with Boursin Cheese: (note variation on proportions of fat to liquid and flour. Note also that cheese and cream would add the fat needed.)

Preheat oven to 425 and coat a shallow 2-cup baking dish with nonstick spray. Set aside.

Sauté ½ diced onion in 1 T butter over medium heat and until soft. Add 2 T flour and stir to coat onion and cook about 1 minute. Gradually whisk 1 cup milk and ½ cup heavy cream to onion stirring constantly and simmer sauce for 1 minute. Stir in 1 pkg (5.2) oz. Boursin Garlic and Fine Herbs cheese a little at a time until cheese is melted and sauce is smooth. Remove saucepan from heat.

Meanwhile, you have thawed a box of chopped frozen spinach and pushed it through a sieve to get out as much moisture as possible. Add this, 2 T grated Parmesan cheese, 1 tsp lemon zest and salt, pepper, cayenne pepper and ground nutmeg to the mixture and place in your prepared dish. For topping, break up several slices of fresh bread to make about 2/3 cup fresh crumbs. Melt 1 T butter in microwave and add it along with 1 T olive oil to bread crumbs and mix up with some salt and pepper and sprinkle over the spinach casserole. Place dish on baking sheet and bake until crumbs are golden and sauce is bubbly, 20 to 25 minutes.

(Recipe from *Cuisine at Home* magazine)

Session III: Cooking with dry heat

Menu: Fried chicken cutlets
Roasted potatoes

Cooking with dry heat includes techniques like baking, broiling, frying, sautéing, grilling.

Fried Chicken Cutlets:

Chicken cutlets were washed and dried and pounded between waxed paper to make each flat and even in thickness. Skillet heated and 1/2 inch of oil, part olive and more parts canola oil, until sizzling. About 350 degrees. Two low bowls prepared with two eggs beaten and a little water added to one and to the other a good quantity of Panko crumbs mixed with spices that included chili powder, Hungarian paprika, salt and pepper, maybe garlic powder.

Each cutlet was first coated with the Panko, then dipped in egg, and then back to the Panko before laying into the hot oil As many cutlets as could fit without crowding began to fry until easily lifted and flipped, maybe 4 minutes. When back sides were browned, they were removed to a cookie sheet that was lined with parchment paper and then

Finished in the oven for about 25 minutes at 375 degrees. To check for doneness, use an instant read thermometer; should read 165 degrees. Allowed to sit for ten minutes to keep juices inside.

Roasted Potatoes: You can use whatever potatoes you like, red or Yukons as long as they are cleaned, and chopped to even sizes. Anyway, cut up into chunks about 5/8 inches square and put into a bowl to which you add the following: chili powder, cumin, garlic salt, or powder, cayenne, a drop of hot sauce, thyme, (whatever you like, really), salt, pepper and a few glugs of olive oil. Mix it up really well and pour out onto a cookie sheet, which is lined with parchment paper. Spread evenly so potatoes are in one layer. Roast at 375 or hotter (we had to use same temp as chicken) until potatoes are crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. Check for more salt and serve hot. These are great.

Session IV: Cooking with wet heat.

Cooking with wet heat includes steaming, boiling, poaching, blanching, braising.

Menu: Steamed tilapia in foil packets (steaming)
Pork tenderloin and red cabbage slaw (stovetop braising)
Creamed parsnips (boiling)
Cheesy cauliflower (steaming)

Steamed Tilapia

Filets of tilapia were rinsed and dried and placed on individual sheets of aluminum foil (12 x 12 inches). Salt and peppered on both sides, sprinkled with tarragon, lemon slices and spread with butter and a sprinkle of water. Then foil was folded around fish to make tight fitting package and laid on a cookie sheet which was put into the oven to bake for about 20 minutes. Important that the fish not be over cooked as it would fall apart.

Pork tenderloin and Red Cabbage Slaw:

You can buy this cut already seasoned with a variety of spices and they are very good. We used one that we seasoned ourselves and I can't recall what we used but probably my usual fallbacks of garlic salt, salt, pepper, oregano, and cayenne powder. (Noted that one could work with a portion of the whole piece for a meal for one and save the rest in the freezer.) We used the whole piece and cut it into 1/2 inch medallions, searing in hot canola oil very quickly, then pouring into the pan and surrounding the meat with red cabbage slaw. (A jar of this can be found in the vegetable aisle of your supermarket. It is good cold, in salads, sandwiches and for meats such as these) Cover the skillet and cook for just a few minutes until the pork is cooked through and the cabbage is hot. Don't overcook as the meat will get tough. (Pork tip: I generally always cook my pork with liquid once it has been browned, I especially like to pair it with fruits, both fresh and canned, because pork loves sweetness.)

Creamed parsnips: Not a lot of people know the joys of parsnips but once they try them, they are hooked.

We scraped and cut the parsnips into pieces and boiled them in salted water to cover. Unfortunately we ran out of time before they were really as soft as I would have liked, but we persisted by putting them into the blender with cream in an attempt to puree. They should have been softer, so we simply ate them with butter, cream and salt and pepper. They were still wonderful.

Cheesy Cauliflower: I like to keep my cauliflower as much intact as possible because it is showy if it comes out all right. We removed the surrounding leaves and tough stuff like the core but keeping the whole intact. Placing in a large pot with ½ inch of water, covered and let cook on the stove for about 10 minutes until a knife easily penetrated the stalk. Then drained the residual water and sprinkled a ton of shredded cheddar cheese on top, returned the lid and waited for a few minutes for the cheese to melt. If you are lucky, the cauliflower is still intact enough to be lifted from the pot and placed in a lovely bowl to make a showy presentation. Add some parsley for color.

Session V: Focus on Eggs: If you have eggs in the house, you have food. Always a fallback and adaptable to many preparation methods. Since most students indicated they know how to make the usual breakfast egg choices, we worked with omelets and Eggs Benedict, a nice supper choice if you have all the ingredients in hand.

First, we were graced by the presence and expertise of Carolyn Sanders who demonstrated how to make Hollandaise Sauce by the blender method.

Hollandaise Sauce: In a medium size pan, melt on the stove two sticks of butter until very hot. For the blender, beat up two eggs and add the juice of one lemon (avoid the seeds by holding the lemon half cut side up while squeezing.) Beat the two ingredients until blended and then slowly add the melted butter. Beat that and then pour it all back into the pan, return to the stove and stand there and stir until the mixture thickens into a nice sauce. Carolyn says that if it curdles, put it all back into the blender and repeat from there. Ours didn't curdle.

Eggs Benedict:

English muffins. Because there were more of us than our little toaster oven could manage, we spread the English muffin halves on a broiler pan along with slices of Canadian bacon and put it under the broiler until the muffins were toasted and the bacon crisp. Meanwhile, we trimmed the asparagus and cut into two inch pieces and then steamed on the stove with a little water, being careful not to over cook.

While this was going on, we prepared the poached eggs. I tried a method for a quantity of eggs cooked in this style and it worked. Into our large electric skillet, I put a ½ inch of canola oil and when it was hot, I broke an egg into a small dish and then slipped the egg into the oil carefully. I repeated that with another and then when the whites of those eggs were firm enough to hold shape, I poured in hot water to cover. I carefully broke the

remaining eggs into the pan but tried not to crowd; the combination of the oil and the water allowed the eggs to retain their shapes and so I covered the skillet for just a minute or so to firm up the tops of the yolks. They slipped out of the pan easily and I finished up the rest of the eggs in this same fashion. (One could use this same procedure for just one or two eggs.)

Assembling the dish was easy: A muffin half, a slice of Canadian bacon, an egg, several pieces of asparagus, and finally the decidedly buttery Hollandaise sauce. Terrific!

Omelets: I brought with me my favorite small non-stick skillet that I use for many dishes, included omelets. I used my own method for making this favorite egg style because I cannot flip to save my soul. Rather, I do a fold of the firm egg mixture.

Into the hot pan, I put a generous amount of butter and when it was hot, I poured in a mixture of eggs (two) and a little bit of water. (I also use egg substitute with some success for this). I turned down the heat to medium and waited until the mixture firmed up; some would still be liquid and so tilted the pan from side to side to let the edges of the pan cook the still-liquid egg. When all appeared to be firm, I added salt and pepper and added a little shredded cheddar, but I could have used bits of ham, cooked sausage, scallions, peppers, etc. Cook's choice. Then I folded the omelet in half with my spatula and slipped it out of the pan onto the plate.

I demonstrated my favorite alternate to this, my mashed potato omelet. When the mixture stabilized, on one side of the omelet, I laid in about two tablespoons of prepared mashed potatoes (if you have leftovers or use the prepared mashed potatoes you can pick up at the store, either works), then a layer of sour cream and a sprinkle of chopped scallions. I folded the omelet and let it ooze together to heat the additions and slipped it out of the pan. Absolutely divine.

Session VI: Focus on Tomatoes

Menu: Fried Green Tomatoes

Spaghetti sauce from scratch

Baked Whole Tomatoes (from a can)

Fried Green Tomatoes: Carolyn Sanders demonstrated this dish and she used the green tomatoes from her garden. She sliced them in ½ inch slices, but says that if you want a crispier result, the slices could be thinner. Then she dipped them in a mixture of egg mixed with a tad of water, then into corn meal and fried them in hot butter and bacon grease. Flipping them when brown on one side and then letting them finish on the other before removing from the pan to a paper towel lined plate. Salt and pepper. Really good.

Spaghetti Sauce from Scratch:

I learned to make spaghetti sauce from my sister well before the grocery store offered us shelves of choices of jarred tomato concoctions. Once those hit the scene, I, like so many others, developed my taste for those. Still, I wanted my students to enjoy the complexities

of making a sauce to suit their own taste buds and to realize that that method is really the best, for it involves long cooking and a depth of flavors that only slow cooking can bring.

So, here is how sister Deedy taught me.

Brown a chopped onion and green pepper in oil but do not burn. Add a chopped up garlic clove and a pound of ground beef. Cook until the meat loses its pinkness and then add the following: contents of one can of tomato paste and then refill the can with water and add that in. Pour in a large can of tomato sauce and here is where you can make your own adjustments by adding instead a can of tomatoes, some water, maybe some wine, although we did not do that in class, and then the spices. For me, that means a lot of oregano, cayenne pepper, bay leaves, salt, pepper, and just get it all stirred up and cook for a long time. The sauce will reduce as it cooks and the flavor become richer. After at least an hour of cooking, you can thin it out, alter the flavorings, whatever you need to make it to your liking.

Baked Whole Tomatoes: The simplicity of this dish is almost ridiculous to include except that the result can be used in so many ways, like as a side dish, cold spread on bread, or mixed into a casserole.

Using a large can of whole (Roma) tomatoes, and a square brownie pan, remove the tomatoes from the can with a slotted spoon and line them up in the pan four to a dimension. With a knife, split each tomato in the pan down the middle and spread butterfly style so the insides are exposed. Add four chopped garlic cloves and pour the juice left in the can over the whole thing. Bake in the oven (400 degrees) uncovered for better than 40 minutes until they look kind of dry. By then, the caramelization should have occurred and the tomatoes should be very sweet and usable as mentioned above. You can also spread with cheese, any kind, avocado, or sour cream to make the dish a little more decadent.

(At a later date, I did add a layer of crushed corn muffins to add crunch.)

Session VII: Roasting, braising and baking

Baked Apples: (baking)

Each student brought an apple of their own choosing and in that way we could see which variety baked up firm or loose or quicker or not, although we ran out of time before we could do a proper comparison. Each person cored and peeled the top ½ inch from their apple and then stuffed theirs with their choice of granola, brown sugar, coconut, cinnamon, and topped it with a bit of butter. We placed them in a large pan with a little water and baked in the oven for about an hour. Served with cream, in lieu of ice cream, they were divine.

Swiss Steak: (braising) Usually Swiss steak takes a long time because the generally accepted cut of beef to use is a piece of round or if you want a really delicious concoction, chuck that has plenty of fat marbled into it. However, to make up for lack of

time, I brought in cubed steaks that had been tenderized already and therefore cook up more quickly. Had I brought the better cuts, I would have tenderized them with my mallet or lacking a mallet, one can use the edge of a plate and whack away until the tendons are broken and the meat surrenders.

The meat was dredged in a mixture of flour, salt and pepper and dropped into a skillet that was sizzling with a mix of mostly canola oil and a little olive oil. Seared on both sides, the meat was put aside and sliced onions and strips of red pepper were added to the pan to cook until soft. Then the meat was put back into the pan with the vegetables and tomato sauce poured over. Seasonings added like bay leaf, cayenne, chili powder, and you can also add something spicier like ginger or clove to add another dimension. We let the whole thing cook for about 45 minutes, thickened at the end with a mixture of liquid and flour, and finally served on noodles. One could have used mashed potatoes instead.

Roast Brussels Sprouts and Apples: (roasting)

This was a very successful dish. The sprouts were trimmed of outside leaves, the heels cut off and the sprouts cut into halves. Meanwhile, two apples were cored and chopped into pieces about the same size as the halved sprouts. Mixed in a bowl with olive oil, salt and pepper, then the mixture was poured out onto a cookie sheet that was lined with parchment paper. Placed in the oven with the baking apples for about 25 minutes until soft to a knife but not burned. You could sprinkle a garnish of cooked chopped bacon on top, if you like.

Recipe courtesy of Peter Halverson

Session VIII: Thanksgiving preparation

Menu: Apple pie, Pumpkin pie, Root Vegetable Medley with honey.

Oven was set at 450 and cookie sheets were placed on both racks to heat up. This would help the bottoms of the pies to cook quickly before the juices of the pies could permeate the crust and make them mushy. I have also learned that one can butter the bottom crust before putting in the filling to the same purpose.

This class was fun to do except we didn't have enough time to allow the baked pies to settle and firm up. So we ate hot, sloppy pie with ice cream and no one complained.

We started early due to time issues mentioned above. We used prepared piecrust from Trader Joe's and also the Safeway version.

Apple Pie:

Apple filling: we used seven apples for the deep dish we were using, and I brought them in already cut up to save time. I had cored, peeled and chopped the apples into medium size chunks and sprinkled with lemon juice to keep the apples from darkening too much.

In class we added 1/3 cup brown sugar, 1/3 cup white sugar, pumpkin pie spice, and some ginger, 1/4 cup of flour to make sure the juices would thicken, a dash of salt, and mixed that up. It seemed a bit dry so I added a little water, but maybe shouldn't as the results were very wet without the pie having time to absorb the liquid of the apples back to the filling.

We rolled the pie dough out to make it a little thinner than provided; maybe a 1/8 inch on all dimensions, and then laid the bottom crust on the bottom. Trimmed off the excess dough at the sides. Poured the filling into the dish and dotted it with chunks of butter. Then repeated the rollout with the top crust, made a few cuts in that crust to vent and sprinkled cream on top and then granulated sugar on top of that to help the crust to brown. This pie was put into the 450 oven and 15 minutes later the oven temp was reduced to 350.

Removed when beautifully browned and bubbly about 25 minutes later. (Pie should cool for at least one hour before cutting.)

Pumpkin Pie: My grandson at eight years old was making this pie and continued as a tradition for many years. Now sixteen, he laughs at his great pride in doing that for he admits that nothing is simpler to make than a pumpkin pie.

The instructions for this pie are on the can of pumpkin that you buy at the grocery store. If you wish to make a pie from a real pumpkin, you have to buy a variety of pumpkin that is grown for that purpose. And follow a recipe that I don't have. The canned version is very good. To make it even easier, use the prepared piecrust, you need only one for the bottom, and make the filling according to the instructions on the can. You need evaporated milk for this recipe. Carolyn fluted the edges of the piecrust beautifully to make them high on the apple plate, and the amount of filling just fit without spilling over. Placed in the oven on the hot cookie sheet as other pie, and bake for 15 minutes at 450, then down to 350. The pie is done when a toothpick inserted at the center comes out clean. The center will be a bit wobbly indicating that the thing has to cool. Here the advice offered is that the pie should settle over night, a luxury we did not have. In fact, we threw caution to the wind and topped it with ice cream, which quickly melted. It was sooooo good!

Root Vegetable Medley with honey

We used carrots, parsnips, and rutabaga in this very simple recipe. Unfortunately the hard part was cutting into the rutabaga, which requires a very sharp knife that we don't have in the kitchen. Anyway, after much struggling, the rutabaga was cut into 5/8 inch pieces, and the parsnips and carrots were peeled and chopped into like -size pieces; they were all put into a big pot with water to cover and salt, and boiled until they were easily pierced with a sharp knife. Our ever-useful big electric skillet meanwhile was lined with a little oil and when the veggies were done and drained, they were put into the sizzling oil along with 1/3 cup of honey, pumpkin pie spice and browned. Finally, a tad of butter was added and the dish was done. A good Thanksgiving side dish if anyone wants to try it.