

The Warming Oven by Emily Watson

Home for the holidays!

The boys arrive from school, toss their duffel bags of dirty laundry in the middle of the living room, give Momma a quick kiss and say, "What's for dinner?"

Depending on which boy it is, the right answer is Chicken Leg Pie or Barbecued Spareribs.

Since the sauce for barbecued spareribs is also good on chicken, I thought I would share these two family favorites with you.

With chicken on sale at any supermarkets, it's a good way to fill up hungry families without breaking the budget. They're also different enough that you can get away with serving them around that turkey dinner without getting protests about an excess of "fowl food."

CHICKEN LEG PIE

Lightly flour 6 chicken legs and thighs. Brown on all sides in 6 tbsp. butter. Add 4 slices bacon, cut in small pieces, 2 finely chopped onions, 1 crushed garlic clove, 1 crumbled bay leaf, 1 tsp. thyme, and salt and pepper to taste.

Add 1 can drained button mushrooms and 1 cup white wine.

Cover and simmer 45 minutes. Add a little more wine if it cooks down too much. Cool, and remove chicken to a pie dish. Add 4 hardboiled eggs, halved and pour pan liquid all over. Top with a crust of rolled-out pie dough, cut vent in top and insert paper cornucopia (rolled up to vent steam). Brush pastry with 1 egg yolk beaten with 1 tsp. cream. Bake in 375 degree oven 30 minutes or until crust is brown. Serves 6.

(Incidentally, if you want to save on the high cost of chicken legs, here's a good way. I always buy whole fryers and cut them up for three-way distribution. The legs and thighs go in the pie; the breasts are for salads or for chicken with cheese sauce; and everything that is left goes in a pot for stew or soup.)

COLONIAL BARBECUE SAUCE

(Good on chicken, spareribs or pork chops)

- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 1/4 cups catsup
- 1 cup vinegar
- 2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp. minced onion
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Combine all ingredients and simmer 20 minutes. A little is also good with baked beans. Store in the refrigerator. I usually make a double recipe and freeze half.

One thing my whole family always expects for Christmas breakfast is kidney stew. Butchers used to give kidneys away, because not many people appreciated them.

But those days are gone forever, and you're lucky to even find them these days, especially the baby beef kidneys, which are the most tender.

BEEF KIDNEY STEW

For beef kidneys, soak overnight in the refrigerator in salt water. If they are baby beef, soaking overnight is not necessary.

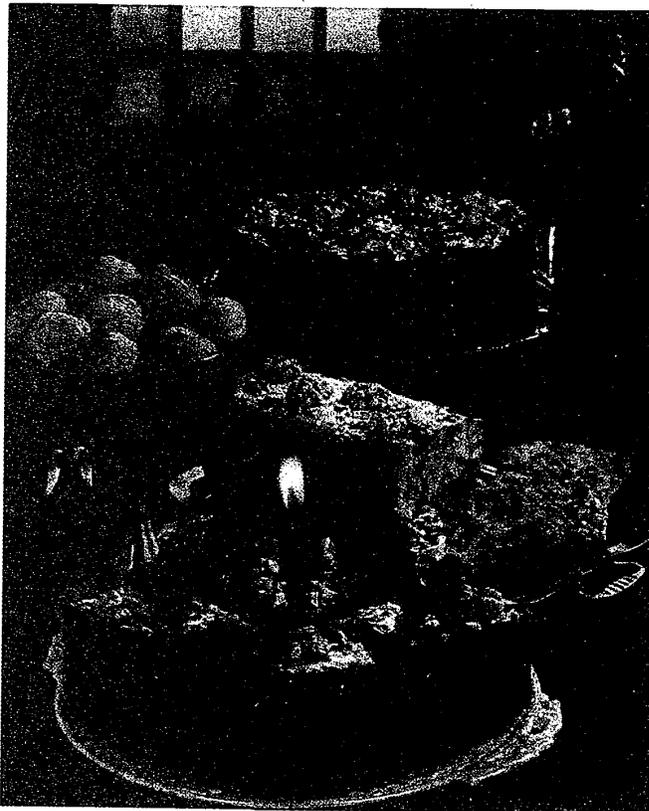
Cut the kidneys into stew-size chunks, removing fat and skin.

Parboil them for about 10-15 minutes in water to cover. Rinse the kidneys under cool running water, and discard the liquid.

Cover with water again, and set them back on the stove to cook. Salt to taste, and add a cut-up onion or two.

Simmer until tender, two to three hours. Cool overnight. Christmas morning, skim off the fat, and using flour, make a gravy.

Serve on toast.
(As far as the dirty laundry is concerned, I've convinced them they can do their own, but do suggest that they use some bleach.)



FESTIVE WALNUT FRUITCAKES

SPICY WALNUT FRUITCAKE

- 1 cup Walnuts
- 1 cup seedless raisins
- 2/3 cup currants
- 1 cup snipped Prunes
- 1/2 cup sliced Dried Apricots
- 1/2 cup halved candied cherries
- 1/4 cup chopped candied orange peel
- 1/4 cup chopped candied lemon peel
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar

- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon mace
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1/8 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup golden molasses
- 1 cup sifted all-purpose flour

Coarsely chop walnuts and raisins; rinse and drain currants. Combine well with prunes, remaining fruits and peels. Cream butter, sugar, salt and spices until fluffy. Beat in eggs. Add soda, molasses and flour; mix to moderately stiff batter. Combine with walnut-fruit mixture. Pack batter into 8-cup mold or pan. Bake at 275°F. about 2-1/2 hours until cake tests done. Cool, then remove from pan, wrap in foil and store in cool place. Batter measures about 5-1/2 cups and weighs about 2 pounds, 10 ounces. Makes one cake that may be eaten after 48 hours storing.

BANANA WALNUT FRUITCAKE

- 1-1/2 cups Walnuts
- 2 cups (1 pound) mixed candied fruits
- 3-3/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda

- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2/3 cup butter or margarine
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup mashed banana
- 12 large bananas

Chop walnuts coarsely. Chop candied fruits fine and combine with walnuts; set aside. Resift flour with baking powder, salt, baking soda and nutmeg. Cream butter with sugar until fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Blend in flour mixture alternately with mashed banana of low speed on mixer, or by hand. Flour batter over fruit-walnut mixture and blend well. Turn into a well-greased tube pan (about 2-quart capacity). Bake cake on lowest rack at 300°F. for about 1-1/4 hours until pick inserted in center comes out plain or with a light stinging of powdered sugar over the top. Makes 1 cake, about 3 pounds.

DOUBLE WALNUT FRUITCAKE

- 2-1/2 cups Walnuts
- 1 cup candied pineapple chunks
- 1 cup halved candied cherries
- 1 cup snipped Prunes
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1-1/2 cups sifted all-purpose flour

- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Chop 1 cup walnuts coarsely; combine with candied fruits, prunes and raisins. Grate remaining 1-1/2 cups walnuts with Mouli grater for put in blender; about 1/4 cup at a time, and blend to a fine meal. Resift flour with baking powder and salt. Cream butter and brown sugar together well. Beat in eggs, one at a time (mixture will look curdled). Blend in vanilla, then flour mixture and grated walnuts. Fold in walnut-fruit mixture. Turn into a well-greased 12 x 4-1/4 x 3-inch loaf pan, or other pan with 2-quart capacity. Place a shallow pan of hot water on floor of oven. Bake cake on lowest rack at 300°F. for about 2 hours, until cake tests done. Cool in pan 30 minutes. Turn out onto wire rack to finish cooling. Makes 1 loaf, about 3-1/4 pounds. To decorate: Mix a little powdered sugar with water to thin pouring consistency. Drizzle over top of cake. Pipe mixed candied fruits and peels down center.

More beauties

IRISH FRUITCAKE

- 1-1/2 cups Walnuts
- 1 cup snipped Prunes
- 3/4 cup dark seedless raisins
- 1/2 cup currants
- 3/4 cup diced citron
- 3/4 cup halved candied cherries
- 3/4 cup diced candied orange peel
- 1/2 cup Irish whiskey or bourbon
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mace
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

Chop walnuts coarsely; set aside. Combine prunes, raisins, currants, candied fruits and orange peel with 1 1/2 cup whiskey, molasses and lemon peel. Mix well, cover and let stand overnight. Resift flour with salt, spices and baking powder. Cream butter and brown sugar together well. Beat in eggs, one at a time (mixture will look curdled). Blend flour mixture into creamed mixture; Add fruits and walnuts; mix well. Turn into well-greased 9-inch Bundt pan. Place shallow pan of hot water on floor of oven. Bake cake on lowest rack at 300°F. for about 1-3/4 hours, until cake tests done. Let stand 10 minutes; invert onto wire rack and spoon remaining whiskey (about 4 tablespoons) slowly over cake so it soaks in. When cake is cold, wrap well in foil until serving time. Makes 1 cake, about 2-3/4 pounds. To decorate: Mix a little powdered sugar with water to thin pouring consistency and tint lightly with green food coloring. Drizzle on cake. Sprinkle with green sugar crystals and arrange walnut halves on top.

WHITE WALNUT FRUITCAKE

- 1-1/2 cups Walnuts
- 1-1/2 cups halved candied cherries
- 1 cup diced candied pineapple
- 3/4 cup diced candied orange peel
- 3/4 cup diced candied lemon peel
- 3/4 cup diced citron
- 3/4 cup brandy
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mace
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

Chop walnuts coarsely; set aside. Combine candied fruits and peels. Pour 1/2 cup brandy over fruits, stir to moisten, cover and let stand for several hours or overnight. Line a 9-inch tube pan with one thickness of greased brown paper and one of greased waxed paper. Resift flour with salt, mace and baking powder. Cream butter with sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolks. Add grated orange peel, then sifted dry ingredients alternately with remaining 1/4 cup brandy. Fold in walnuts, candied fruits and any remaining brandy. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar just until stiff. Turn into brandy remaining on them. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar just until stiff. Fold gently into the fruit mixture. Spoon into prepared pan; spread level. Place a shallow pan of hot water on floor of oven. Bake on lowest rack at 300°F. for about 2-1/2 hours, until cake tests done. Cool in pan. Makes 1 cake, about 4 pounds. To decorate: Sift powdered sugar lightly over top of cake. Decorate with strips of angelica or citron and candied cherries.

