



Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

Do-it-yourself slimming with health spa recipes

Are your holiday memories clouded by a few unsightly extra pounds picked up during the feasting and still clinging to the old waistline?

There is only one way to get rid of them — reduced food intake, otherwise known as (curses!) dieting.

While most of us struggle through our usual schedule with the additional stress of the hungries, some lucky souls hie themselves off to a spa to lose weight. Those are the places sometimes uncharitably referred to as "fat farms."

A friend recently spent some time being pampered at a spa in Florida and brought back some of their low-cal recipes. Maybe these will help us fannies into a dieting mood.

At the spa, my friend was put on a 600-calorie-a-day plan and scheduled for morning and afternoon exercise classes. Three or four hours of unscheduled time each day were devoted to relaxing with friends and getting a tan. Each female visitor at the spa received a massage and facial every day (a super way to relax) and a hairdo and manicure once a week.

Can you imagine not losing weight in such an atmosphere? You don't have to worry about what to cook and how to fix it. They have already done that. You just relax and watch the pounds drop away.

Below are some of the appetizing, non-fattening recipes spa chefs came up with that you can make at home.

One ingredient that may not sound familiar is Vege-sal, a seasoning salt containing sea salt. It is available at health food stores.

EGGPLANT PARMESAN

Peel and slice eggplant into 1/2-inch slices. Bake in oven in very little water until tender.

SAUCE: Dice green peppers, onions, shallots, celery and fresh mushrooms (about 3/4 cup each). Add 2 cloves crushed garlic. Sauté vegetables in own juice until tender. Add 1 can crushed tomatoes and 2 cans tomato paste. Season with 1/2 tsp. Vege-sal, 1/4 tsp. white pepper and 1 level tsp. oregano. Simmer for 30 minutes.

If sauce is too thin, add a small amount of arrowroot dissolved in water. Put a small amount of

sauce in casserole, a layer of eggplant, another layer of sauce over the eggplant. Cover with thin slices of Mozzarella cheese. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan or Romano cheese. Bake for 10-15 minutes until cheese is melted.

BARBECUE SAUCE FOR CHICKEN

1 bottle diet catsup
1 bottle diet chili sauce
1/2 jar unsalted mustard
2 cups white wine
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. soy sauce
1 tsp. oregano leaves
1 tsp. rosemary leaves
1 tsp. whole cloves
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. whole black pepper
1/2 tsp. each Accent and Vege-sal
1/2 tsp. liquid hickory smoke
Juice of 2 lemons

Simmer slowly for 1 hour. Strain and baste chicken with sauce and bake slowly in oven, basting

frequently with sauce until chicken is tender.

EGG WHITE OMELET WITH CHEESE OR MUSHROOMS

3 egg whites (45 calories)
1/4 cup Farmers cheese (50 calories)
1/2 cup sliced fresh mushrooms (20 calories)
Spray Teflon-coated pan with vegetable spray and heat. Lightly blend egg whites with fork. Cook egg whites slowly over low heat until bottom is set. Add farmer cheese or mushrooms and put under broiler. When top is set, remove from broiler and fold. Brown lightly under broiler if desired.

LIME MOUSSE

Make 2 pkgs. low-calorie lime gelatin according to package directions. Add 2 tsp. fresh lime juice and 1/2 tsp. grated lime rind plus a small amount of sweetening agent. When chilled but not yet set, fold in 2 well-beaten egg whites or 1/2 cup non-dairy whipped topping.

Questions and comments should be addressed to Vivian Byrd, c/o the Eccentric Newspapers, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.



Beef dumplings are a boon to dumpling lovers with their tender outer coats and hearty centers.

Beef dumplings star

Flavorful balls of ground beef, baked within light dumplings, set the stage for a great winter dinner. If you're hesitant about making dumplings, wait no longer for this recipe is simple and the results, sure. The ground beef is first seasoned with onion, catsup and marjoram leaves and shaped into balls which are browned.

Next, rectangles of dough are formed around the balls and the dumplings cook to moist and tender goodness. The result is something special.

BEEF DUMPLINGS

2 lb. ground beef
1 1/2 tsp. salt
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1/4 cup catsup
3/4 tsp. marjoram leaves
1 tbsp. cooking fat
3 cups biscuit mix
3/4 cup milk
1 egg
3 tsp. flour
3 cups water
2 tbsp. pickle relish

2 tbsp. capers, if desired
1 tsp. prepared mustard
1/2 tsp. salt
2 tbsp. snipped parsley

Sprinkle 1 1/2 tsp. salt over ground beef. Add onion, catsup and marjoram; combine lightly; divide into 12 equal portions and shape into balls. Slowly brown balls in lard or drippings in large fry pan or Dutch oven. Combine biscuit mix, milk and egg according to package directions; roll out into a 9x16-inch rectangle.

Cut dough into 12 rectangles (3x4 inches). Remove meat balls to absorbent paper and pour off all but 2 tsp. of drippings. Stir flour into drippings and brown lightly. Add water, relish, capers (if desired), mustard and 1/2 tsp. salt.

Simmer for 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Wrap each meat ball in rectangle of dough, pressing edges together to seal. Bring cooking liquid to boiling; drop in dumplings, cover tightly and cook slowly for 20 minutes. Add parsley and cook, uncovered, 10 minutes longer. Remove dumplings to warm platter. 6 servings.

Hearty stew good for you

This stew is hearty and nutritious. Best of all, it's thrifty, too. Slow oven cooking accounts for the full flavor development of this tasty beef and bean combination, using Michigan navy beans.

BEEF AND BEAN BAKE

2 lb. boneless beef for stew, cut in 1-inch pieces
1 cup dried navy beans
6 cups water
2 tsp. flour
2 tsp. salt
2 tsp. cooking fat
1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
3 small onions, halved

2 tbsp. mustard
1 tsp. chili powder

Sort and rinse beans. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 1 hour. Combine flour and salt. Dredge beef cubes in seasoned flour. Brown in cooking fat. Pour off drippings. Drain beans, reserving 2 cups of liquid. Combine meat, beans, reserved liquid, tomato sauce, onions, mustard and chili powder. Cover and bake in slow oven (325 degrees) for 2 to 3 1/2 hours or until beans and meat are tender. 6 to 8 servings.

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