



Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

Pampering will get them every time - try it

Valentine's Day is the time to 'dye your heart red and pin it on your sleeve. Go ahead, be mushy. Your lover, spouse, partner (or whatever label fits the person you feel most romantic about) will love it. Pampering will get them every time, whether it is a man or a woman.

Plan now to bake something in the traditional red and white colors of the day. Like Cherry Coconut Bars. Phyllis Tarnowski, a homemaker who also works part-time for a Southfield law firm, sent along the recipe and after sampling, I can tell you they are wonderful.

CHERRY COCONUT BARS

1 cup flour
3 tbsp. confectioners sugar
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup flour
1/4 tsp. salt
3/4 cup chopped nuts

1/2 cup quartered maraschino cherries
1/2 stick butter or oleo
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 cup coconut

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Measure flour by dipping method or by sifting. With hands, mix 1 cup flour, butter and confectioners sugar until smooth. Spread thin with fingers in ungreased pan 8x8x2. Bake about 25 minutes.

Stir rest of ingredients into eggs. Spread over top of baked pastry, no need to cool. Bake about 25 minutes. Cool. Cut into bars. Makes 18 bars.

Note: If you use self-rising flour, omit baking powder and salt.

THINK ABOUT THOSE evenings you have arrived home from a hard day at the office or elsewhere and been greeted before you could

get your coat off with little voices demanding, "I want my dinner NOW!"

It is one of those times when we all reach for convenience foods. In half an hour the rotini with sauce and garlic bread below can be ready. Just add salad or coleslaw and a glass of milk for a balanced meal that kids will love.

But have a glass of wine with yours. You deserve it.

MIKE'S ROTINI WITH SAUCE

1 lb. hamburger
1 1/2 oz. jar Ragù Spaghetti sauce
1 tsp. dried basil
1 tsp. dried parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
1 lb. box of rotini

Brown the meat and pour off fat. Add spaghetti sauce, salt, pepper, basil and parsley. Simmer approximately 10 minutes. Cook rotini separately to package directions. Drain. Serve on a platter with sauce spooned over the top.

JON'S PARMESAN GARLIC BREAD

Slice Italian bread 3/4-inch to 1-inch thick. Spread evenly with softened butter. Sprinkle to taste with finely chopped fresh garlic (or garlic salt), paprika and grated parmesan cheese. Broil in a conventional oven until toasted golden, watching carefully so as not to burn. Or, pop into a toaster oven, at setting for medium-dark toast. Serve at once.

AN EASY WAY:

People who prefer all-natural peanut butter sometimes complain about the oil separating and rising to the top. To make a simple job of mixing it together again: push an iced-tea spoon through the peanut butter to the bottom of the jar. Grasp the jar in one hand and slowly rotate the spoon handle until the peanut butter has mixed and softened enough to stir.

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Change-of-pace beef stew has an Oriental twist when served with fried rice balls.

Beef stew for chilly days

Now is the time for creative cooks to line up new variations of beef stew for chilly days.

For instance, the popular flavors of Oriental cuisines can be incorporated in this recipe for Change-of-Pace Beef Stew. Beef is joined by celery, mushrooms and green pepper in a gravy that is seasoned with soy sauce and ginger. In keeping with Oriental tradition, cornstarch is used to thicken the cooking liquid, and the vegetables are cooked just to the tender-crisp stage.

Rice, of course, is the logical choice for an accompaniment. In this case, Fried Rice Balls will be a lively addition to the menu.

CHANGE-OF-PACE BEEF STEW

2 lbs. beef for stew,
cut into 1-inch pieces
2 tbsp. cooking fat
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. ginger
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup water
3 tbsp. soy sauce
1/4 cup water
2 tbsp. cornstarch
2 cups thinly sliced celery
1/4 lb. fresh mushrooms, sliced
1 small green pepper, cut in strips
Fried Rice Balls

Brown meat in cooking fat in large frying pan. Pour off drippings. Sprinkle salt and ginger over meat; add onion, 1 cup water and soy sauce; stir to combine. Cover tightly and cook slowly 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until meat is tender. Mix 1/4 cup water with cornstarch; combine with cooking liquid and cook, stirring until thickened. Stir in celery, mushrooms and green pepper and continue cooking, covered, 5 to 7 minutes. Serve with Fried Rice Balls.

Fried Rice Balls
3 cups cooked rice
1 egg, beaten
2 tbsp. snipped parsley
1 tsp. butter
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 cup bread crumbs
Fat for frying

Combine rice, egg, parsley, butter and salt in top of double boiler and cook over hot (not boiling) water for 3 minutes until thickened, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; cool. Shape into 6 to 8 balls, about 1 1/4 inches in diameter. Roll balls in bread crumbs and fry in hot deep fat (375 degrees) 2 to 3 minutes, or until lightly browned. Yield: 6 to 8 rice balls.

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