

An Irish grandmother's bequest—good cooking



A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callaghan

She had soft, white hair in a fashion rarely seen anymore. Her body was also soft in a fashion that has gone out of style as grandmothers join the national crusade for physical fitness.

Her skin was soft and sweet-smelling and she had what was, to my ears, a soft Irish brogue.

It was only many years after her death that I discovered that her thick, Northern-Irish brogue would have been considered harsh.

Somewhat the harshness would have been more appropriate for the circumstances of her life. Her own mother died when my grandmother was only 4 years old.

At the age of 11 she left school to work in a mill 12 hours a day. When she was 15 her father re-married. Unhappy with her step-mother, she left home at the age of 18.

Ten years later she married my grandfather who ran "a shop," (a grocery store) in Belfast. She must have run the shop herself much of

the time because my grandfather was an IRA man on the run.

He finally fled Ireland and arrived in America as a political refugee in 1921 and was followed six months later by my grandmother and their four young children.

THE FACT that my grandfather had left Ireland without a passport was not a serious problem because they never intended to stay here permanently. Ten years and three more children later, my grandmother was still in Detroit, coping with an ailing husband and the Great Depression.

Times were tight but she always managed to feed her family well. Neighbors might have economized by eating bowls of popcorn and milk for supper, but the food in the Giffen home was abundant, of the best quality and lovingly prepared.

She even managed to feed the out-of-work men who came to her back door and who might not otherwise have eaten. This was all before my time, of

course, recalled only from family stories.

What I can recall of my grandmother's cooking are her apple pies, crammed with fruit and fragrant with cinnamon, her strawberry jam and grape jelly, her soda breads, and a potato dish called "Champ."

Any of the soda breads make fine accompaniments to soup or salad. They are, however, perhaps best enjoyed the way my grandmother served them — hot with butter (never margarine), homemade jam, and a good pot of tea (made with the water at a rolling boil).

Any left-over bread can be used to make superb peanut-butter sandwiches — hardly an authentic use, but a pairing so perfect as to excuse the break with tradition.

WHOLE WHEAT SODA BREAD

3 cups whole wheat flour
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. baking powder
1½ to 2 cups buttermilk

Stir together dry ingredients until thoroughly combined. Add enough buttermilk to make a soft dough, similar to a biscuit dough.

Turn out onto a lightly floured board and knead lightly for 2 or 3 minutes until quite smooth and velvety-looking. Form into an 8-inch round. Place on a well-buttered baking sheet or 8-inch cake pan. Cut a cross on the top with a sharp, floured knife.

Bake in a preheated 375 degree F. oven for 35 or 40 minutes until it has turned a nice brown and sounds hollow when you tap it with your knuckles. Cool completely before cutting. Makes one loaf.

RAISIN-CARAWAY SEED SODA BREAD

4 cups unbleached four

1 to 2 tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. baking powder
1½ cup to 2 cups buttermilk
½ golden or dark raisins
(floured lightly)
2 tbsp. caraway seeds

Stir together the first five ingredients. Add enough buttermilk to make a soft dough. Stir in the raisins and caraway seeds.

Turn out onto a lightly floured board and knead for 2 to 3 minutes. Form into an 8-inch round loaf. Place on a well-buttered baking sheet or in a buttered 8-inch cake pan. Cut across on the top with a sharp, floured knife.

Bake in a preheated 375 degree F. oven for 35 to 40 minutes, until brown and sounds hollow when you tap it with your knuckles. Cool before cutting. Makes one loaf.

remaining 2 tablespoons butter in the indentation. Serve steaming hot. Serves 6.

CHAMP

6 medium-sized potatoes, pared and quartered
5 tbsp. butter, divided
1 tsp. salt
½ cup milk
4 tender, young green onions, diced (use only the green portion)

Cook the potatoes, covered, in a small amount of boiling, salted water until tender, about 30 minutes. Drain; add milk, 3 tablespoons of the butter, the salt, milk, and green onions. Return to the heat until the butter melts. Mash with a potato masher until free of lumps and creamy. Pile into a heated serving dish. Make an indentation in the top with the back of a spoon; place

Chunky soups provide base

Chunky soups are used as a base for these main dishes. They are economical because the meat or fish is in the soup.

CHICKEN PAPRIKA

1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
½ cup sliced green onions
2 tbsp. melted butter
1 19-ounce can chunky chicken soup
1 cup cooked peas
½ cup sour cream
½ tsp. paprika

Cook mushrooms and green onions in butter until tender. Stir in soup, peas, sour cream and paprika. Heat; stir occasionally. Serve over toast. Makes about 3½ cups. Serves 3.

SEAFOOD ORIENTALE

1 19-ounce can chunky clam chowder soup
1 15-ounce can Chinese vegetables, drained
13-ounce can tuna, drained and flaked
¼ tsp. garlic powder

In a saucepan, mix soup, Chinese vegetables, tuna and garlic powder. Heat; stir occasionally. Serve over chow mein noodles with soy sauce. Makes about 3½ cups. Serves 3.

Pontchartrain celebration

Celebrate a special occasion using this recipe from Detroit's Pontchartrain Wine Cellars. Pork chops accentuated with dill and white wine add a bit of French to your cuisine.

CHOUROUTE GARNIE

6 ¼-inch-thick pork chops
6 slices bacon
6 cups washed sauerkraut
2 tsp. pepper
3 tbsp. dill
2 quarts dry white wine
6 knackwurst
6 unpeeled potatoes, boiled

Line a big kettle with bacon. Place washed sauerkraut on top of bacon slices. Add pork chops and season with

pepper and dill. Add just enough dry white wine to cover the ingredients. Put a lid on the kettle and simmer gently for 4 hours. Then add knackwurst and cook 15-20 minutes longer. Arrange sauerkraut on a platter and arrange pork chops and knackwurst on top. Serve with hot boiled potatoes. This makes a good dish to prepare the day before and reheat. Serves 6.



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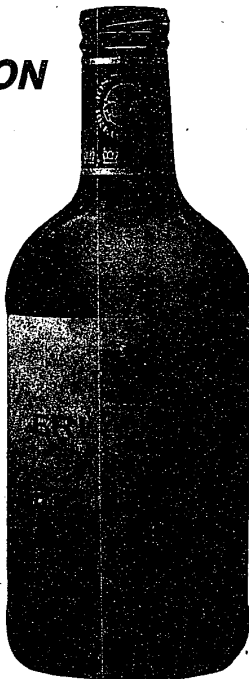
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