



Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

She came up with the perfect California quiche

Ten years ago, Mary Ellen House turned a lifelong interest in good food into a part-time catering business.

"My daughters were still quite young then," she said, "and I wasn't willing to leave them to the extent necessary to build a full-time business."

Now, however, she's expanding Mary's Pastries. The last week in January, she began marketing frozen quiches. Bud Phelps put six of them into his store, Long Lake Market at Long Lake and Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills.

His customers know a good thing when they taste it and in two months his quiche order has grown to three dozen a week. Two unusual flavors, spinach with dill and a Mexican food lovers favorite, California quiche (see below) are frequently requested.

"Food is a passion with me," Mary said, describing as "fun" the experimentation necessary to find just the right amounts of ingredients for a perfect California quiche.

A couple of weeks ago, Mary introduced her special homemade chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin and butter cookies. Another success. She's now thinking of opening her own store.

Mary's first cooking instructor was her mother, an excellent baker, but her own interest led her to develop expertise in the kitchen. Now she uses that expertise toward creating interesting and different dishes for her customers, such as this unusual quiche.

I tried this recipe using a frozen pie shell, which turned out to be a mistake as the crust was, well, uninteresting is the kindest description that comes to mind.

The filling, however, was smooth and chock full of bacon, onion, green chilies and cheese. The chilies provide the extra bit of interest in this dish.

CALIFORNIA QUICHE (6 servings)

2 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
1/2 lb. lean bacon, crisply cooked, well drained and crumbled
1 4-oz. can of mild diced green chilies, well drained
3-4 green onions, thinly sliced
1 1/2 cups half and half
4 eggs, medium
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. chili powder
1 9-inch deep dish pie shell (2-lb. deep)

PIE SHELL

1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup shortening
4 to 5 tbsp. water

Combine flour and salt, add shortening, cut in with pastry blender until mixture resembles small peas. Add water and gather mixture together into a ball. Roll out on pastry cloth, to fit pan, gently ease into pie plate, do not stretch. Flute edge and bake in 450-degree oven for five minutes. Do not prick pie shell.

FILLING:

Sprinkle bacon and green chilies and onions evenly over the partially baked shell, reserving 2 to 3 tablespoons of bacon for garnish. Add cheese and spread evenly over mixture. In blender whip eggs, half and half, salt and chili powder. Pour over shell and garnish with remainder of bacon. You may also sprinkle a little parsley on top for color. If you use a larger grade egg, you may have a couple of tablespoons of filling left over after filling the shell. Bake at 325 degrees until a knife inserted just off-center comes out clean. About 35-40 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before serving.

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Seafood ring is filled with a creamy rice mixture.

Seafood rice ring can be made ahead

Entertaining company during Lent can be perplexing. It isn't easy to find a recipe that can be made ahead, uses a seafood, and is both satisfying and elegant to serve.

But a do-ahead technique provides just the opportunity you may be looking for. By using a converted or par-boiled rice, you are able to prepare this seafood ring the evening before you intend to serve it.

The next day, just pop it into the oven when guests arrive.

IMPERIAL SEAFOOD RICE RING

1 medium onion, chopped
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup butter or margarine
1 cup converted rice
2 1/2 cups chicken broth
2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup dairy sour cream
1/4 cup chopped pimiento
2 tsp. grated lemon
2 tbsp. melted butter or margarine
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1/2 tsp. paprika
2 pounds frozen sole fillets, thawed
2 tsp. flour
1/4 cup softened butter or margarine

Saute onion, celery and mushrooms in 1/4 cup butter until mushroom liquid has evaporated and onion and celery are tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in rice, chicken broth and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Cover tightly and simmer 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Let stand covered until all liquid is absorbed, about 5 minutes.

Stir in sour cream, pimiento and lemon peel. Combine 2 tablespoons melted butter, lemon juice and paprika; pour into the bottom of a 6 1/2-cup ring mold.

Pat fish with paper toweling to remove excess moisture; sprinkle fish with remaining 1 teaspoon salt.

Arrange fish pieces in mold, overlapping so ring is completely lined. (Ends of fillets may hang over the mold.) Spoon rice mixture into fish-lined mold; fold ends of fillets over rice.

Cover and refrigerate until ready to bake. Bake in 350 degree F. oven 25 to 30 minutes. Remove and invert mold on wire rack over large bowl or baking pan to drain. Combine drained liquid with 2 teaspoons flour in small saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a wire whisk until mixture is smooth and thickened. Whisk in softened butter. Invert mold on serving platter. Serve with sauce. Serves 6.

Note: This dish may be prepared for two. Wrap and freeze half of ring. Reheat covered in microwave oven on FULL power for 12 minutes.

Left-over corned beef stars

If you have some corned beef left from your St. Patrick's Day celebration, you may want to try this casserole.

CORNERED BEEF CASSEROLE

1 pkg. (7 oz.) elbow macaroni, uncooked
12 oz. corned beef, diced
2 cups (8 oz.) diced cheddar cheese
1 can (10 1/2 oz.) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
1 cup milk
1/2 cup chopped onion
Salt and pepper to taste

2 slices white bread
2 tbsp. butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain. Combine macaroni, corned beef, cheese, soup, milk, onion, salt and pepper; blend thoroughly.

Place in 2-quart round casserole. Trim crust from bread and cube toes in butter. Arrange bread around outer edge of casserole. Bake until top of casserole and bread are golden, about 45 minutes. Allow to stand 10 minutes before serving.

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