

# Thanksgiving menu combined old and new world traditions



## Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

The Lauretti family is part Italian, part Sicilian. Italy and Sicily each contributed one pair of grandparents, who immigrated to Connecticut some years ago. My sister Sharon married into that family.

On a holiday visit with them in 1978, we were served the following Thanksgiving dinner:

- Stuffed Artichokes
- Escarole Soup
- Lasagna
- Roast Turkey with Herb Stuffing
- Whole Cranberry Sauce
- Corn Souffle
- Fresh Green Beans in Butter Sauce
- Fresh Italian Bread and Rolls
- Tossed Green Salad
- Cannoli
- Chocolate Cake
- Coffee and Tea

The salad was served after the main course, in the European manner, an arrangement designed to allow for clearing of the palate between the main course and dessert. Wine accompanied the dinner and brandy was offered with the coffee, along with bowls of nuts, as well as dishes of candies and mints.

It was a sumptuous meal that successfully combined a Mediterranean heritage with American tradition. The grownups remained at the dining-room table through all the courses, but the youngsters would disappear to the basement playroom during the courses which did not interest them. Everything served, except the bread and rolls, was homemade. The Escarole Soup was prepared with a chicken-stock base, to which dumplings and fresh escarole had been added.

Artichokes, which had been stuffed with garlic, cheese and bread crumbs, were then steamed until tender. Their aroma wafted through the house, drawing all the family to the kitchen.

The weather that weekend was cold, crisp and breezy, lit by a bright fall sun, the kind of weather that clears out the cobwebs from the mind and sharpens memories, particularly poignant ones.

For the Laurettis, it was the first major holiday since the death of their mother. All the children, the two young grandchildren, and assorted visitors, had gathered at the father's home. As each family member was reminded of a dish the mother had always prepared for Thanksgiving, the dish was added to the menu.

The artichokes were remembered only the night before, necessitating a last-minute search through local grocery stores. Six or eight artichokes were finally found and purchased. Though they were a smaller size than usually would have been chosen, they were the only artichokes to be found in the area. Trimmed and prepared, the vegetables' appearance improved greatly, adding to the considerable success of the meal.

### STUFFED ARTICHOKE LAURETTI

To prepare the vegetable:

1. Cut the stem from the artichoke, leaving the bottom flat. Slice off the top of the vegetable as well. Snip the points from the lower leaves with scissors. Rub the cuts briefly with lemon juice to prevent discoloration.
2. Press the artichoke, top side down,

against the counter-top to open up the inside for the stuffing. Soak for a few minutes in cold water and then drain.

### STUFFING

For each artichoke, you will need:

- 1 or 2 small cloves chopped garlic
- ¼ tsp. chopped parsley
- 1 or 2 tsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 or 2 tsp. bread crumbs or package stuffing
- 2 or 3 cured black olives (optional)
- 1 tsp. salad oil (or olive oil, if you prefer the taste)

Alternate amounts are given above as the size of the artichoke (small, medium or large) will determine the amount needed for stuffing.

Stuff the garlic and parsley into the center and between the outer leaves of the artichoke. Sprinkle the cheese and the stuffing into the center and outer leaves. If necessary, pull the leaves out to do this. Arrange the olives in the same manner. If you are using the olives, sprinkle the salad oil (or olive oil) on top of each artichoke to keep it from drying out during the cooking process and for additional flavor.

Steam over a small amount of water at medium heat until the outer leaves come out easily. Can be served warm, at room temperature or cold, as an appetizer or a vegetable side dish.

Note: The cheese and olives add salt, but you may wish to add salt (slight amount) before stuffing.

Correspondence should be addressed to Vivian Byrd, P.O. Box 1024, Birmingham, 48012.



## A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callaghan

# Last half hour was chaos

In early October I served a turkey dinner. It was a sort of dry run for Thanksgiving. There are still a few wrinkles to be ironed out even after years of this kind of an ordeal.

Most of these wrinkles have to do with the chaos that ensues in the half hour between the time dinner is scheduled and the actual time it is all together on the table.

By this time everyone over the age of reason (or tall enough to reach a kitchen counter) has been pressed into service — mashing potatoes, stirring gravy, slicing the meat, running platters and bowls from kitchen to dining room. At least half of the food is stone cold. I am dressed in old jeans and a sweater. Cooking in good clothes would be foolhardy given the exorbitant cost of dry cleaning and it's too late to change now.

The total picture is a far cry from the photographs of holiday meals in women's magazines or in Norman Rockwell paintings. Rafts of steaming-hot dishes, artistically arranged, grace a long harvest table ringed by a congenial three-generation family dressed in their Sunday best. They are preparing to invoke a lengthy blessing — a luxury they can afford since the food is still piping hot and dinner is on schedule.

I ATTRIBUTE part of my failure to reach this ideal to the gap between the number of last-minute, top-of-the-stove dishes I attempt and the number of burners on my stove. For this most recent dinner, the foods that had to be cooked at the very last minute on top of the stove included: mashed potatoes, sauteed carrots, steamed broccoli, steamed cauliflower, and gravy (the roaster takes up two burners).

Given the limitations of a four-burner stove, the only question was which vegetables would suffer the least from sitting out for 15 minutes while the rest cooked.

After years of hoping that this dilemma would resolve itself, I have determined to attempt another approach this Thanksgiving. Since some vegetables will be served cold anyway, I will capitate and serve them well-chilled, in a marinade.

The other half of the vegetables — those to be served hot — will be prepared ahead of time in dishes which can bake during the crucial half-hour before dinner. The turkey should be allowed to "rest," outside of the oven during this half hour anyway so the reserved heat of the oven can be put to

good use and the top of the stove clutter and scramble reduced to manageable proportions.

WITH THIS GOAL in mind, I have assembled some of my favorite baked vegetable recipes:

If broccoli is being served, it can appear in a festive, hot molded shape, baked in a creamy Swiss-cheese flavored custard.

Carrots can retain their crisp texture and sweet flavor when cooked quickly on top of the stove and then baked, blanketed by an unusual sauce, sparked by horseradish. An alternative presentation for carrots teams them with brussels sprouts in a rich veloute sauce.

### BROCCOLI MOLD

1. bunch broccoli, well trimmed, flowerets broken into small pieces
- Boiling, salted water
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 3 tsp. butter
- ¼ cup chopped shallots
- 3 tsp. flour
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ cup grated Swiss cheese
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. grated nutmeg
- ¼ cup finely chopped toasted almonds

1) Place broccoli in a saucepan and cover with boiling salted water. Cover, bring to a boil and boil rapidly about eight minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain well. 2) Preheat oven to 350 degrees. 3) Chop broccoli finely and add the chicken broth. 4) Melt the butter, add shallots and saute until tender. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring, one minute. 5) Blend in the sour cream and cook, stirring constantly, until thick, but don't allow to boil. Remove from heat and stir in the eggs. 6) Stir in the broccoli mixture and remaining ingredients and turn into a well-greased 5-cup ring mold. Set in a shallow pan of boiling water and bake 45 minutes. 7) Let stand 5 minutes. Run a knife around edges and unmold onto warm platter. Makes 6-8 servings.

### VELOUTE SAUCE

- 1 ¼ tsp. minced onion
- 1 ¼ tsp. butter
- 2 tsp. flour
- 1 ½ cups chicken stock
- ¾ tsp. salt
- White pepper

In a saucepan, saute the onion in the butter until it is softened. Stir in the flour and cook the roux over low heat, stirring for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and pour in the chicken stock, scalded, whisking vigorously until mixture is thick and smooth. Add the salt and white pepper to taste and simmer 15 minutes. Strain the sauce through a fine sieve and cover it with a buttered round of wax paper to prevent a film from forming. Makes 1 ½ cups.

### COMPANY CARROTS

- 2 ½ lb. whole carrots
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. minced onion
- 1 tsp. prepared horseradish
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup finely crushed saltine crackers
- Parsley, chopped
- Paprika

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cook carrots in boiling salted water until fork-tender. Reserve ¼ cup cooking liquid. Cut carrots lengthwise in narrow strips. Arrange in a 9-inch square baking dish; set aside.

Combine reserved cooking liquid with mayonnaise, onion, horseradish, salt, and pepper. (The sauce may be done ahead and refrigerated.) Pour sauce over carrots. Sprinkle cracker crumbs on top. Sprinkle with parsley and paprika. Bake for 20 minutes. Makes 8 servings.

### BRUSSELS SPROUTS AND CARROTS A LA POULETTE

- ½ lb. carrots
- ½ lb. small or medium Brussels sprouts
- ¼ cup butter
- salt
- pepper
- ¾ cup veloute sauce (recipe follows)
- 1 egg yolk
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- parsley

In a saucepan, blanch the carrots, trimmed into olive shapes, in boiling salted water to cover for 5 minutes and drain them. Cook the Brussels sprouts, boiling them for only 8 minutes. In a skillet, toss the carrots and Brussels sprouts in the butter with salt and pepper to taste over moderate heat until they are coated with the butter. Add the veloute sauce and simmer, covered, 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the egg yolk, lightly beaten with the heavy cream. Return to the heat and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the sauce just thickens. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with minced parsley. Serves 4.

### VELOUTE SAUCE

- 1 ¼ tsp. minced onion
- 1 ¼ tsp. butter
- 2 tsp. flour
- 1 ½ cups chicken stock
- ¾ tsp. salt
- White pepper

In a saucepan, saute the onion in the butter until it is softened. Stir in the flour and cook the roux over low heat, stirring for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and pour in the chicken stock, scalded, whisking vigorously until mixture is thick and smooth. Add the salt and white pepper to taste and simmer 15 minutes. Strain the sauce through a fine sieve and cover it with a buttered round of wax paper to prevent a film from forming. Makes 1 ½ cups.

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## Dig that mole

The mole's head appears to have been designed for digging. Moles have powerful shoulder muscles and broad forefeet that have long, flattened claws. Twisted palms face outward. Their cylindrical bodies taper at both ends and their dirt-repellent fur lies as well backward as forward, easing passage in any direction. Moles' ears — mere holes — have no outer flaps that would hinder digging.

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