

THE ADVENTURE OF THE *New American Cuisine*

It is fashionably called the New American Cuisine, but the term means quite different things to different people. What is clear is that there is a revolution in American kitchens, and the consumer has many interesting choices to make.

Clearly New American Cuisine pays homage to America's Bounty by celebrating the quality and diversity of our food products. USA-grown garden-fresh fruits and vegetables take precedence over the most exotic imports; regional dishes are enjoying new prestige far from their natural habitat. In terms of style, on one hand we have a return to the most robust of foods such as muffins, stews and cobblers, while the minimalists, in the manner of Nouvelle Cuisine, opt for light sauces and smaller portions. The ambience—the presentation on the plate, the table setting, even fresh flowers—become focal and the food is treated almost reverently.

Also in the range of this new American Cuisine is the importance given to salads. Great emphasis is placed on fresh ingredients—raw and cooked vegetables, fresh fruits and unusual vinegars. The European custom of a salad as a separate course has caught on and the salad bar has been introduced into many popular-priced restaurants.

Ethnic cooking, with nostalgic recipes prepared exactly as that far-off homeland, is coming into the mainstream of American cookery. New restaurants define themselves by menus devoted exclusively to the foods of a single country, and they have broadened the public's knowledge of seasonings, herbs and even cooking utensils. For example, the once exotic woks and bamboo steamers are now sold in department stores.

Another offshoot of the revolution is Down-Home Cooking, robust and satisfying with a country feeling. Chili from Texas, fish chowders from New England and Creole cooking from Louisiana are enjoyed in regions far from their birth.

No matter how the New American Cuisine is defined, the lesson is that the meal is no longer simply meat, two veggies and apple pie. What was once a side dish may serve as an entree. Foods are combined in new ways to tease the palate and offer contrasts in taste and texture. With a fresh look at some of our best basic foods, meals are more exciting.

Florida Sunshine Salad takes advantage of readily available fresh citrus from Florida and offers the unexpected piquancy of succulent, sunshine-sweet sections of fresh oranges and grapefruit to add zest to a variety of fresh vegetables and chicken. Each element is placed separately on the salad plate. The vegetables are crisp, the chicken tender and the citrus juicy and delightful.

Seafood Potato Topping brings the Idaho* potato front and center for a new approach. Famous for its texture and flavor, the world-famous spud with its "Grown in Idaho" seal combines with tender seafood and a delicate sauce for a perfect example of the meal of the future.

A brand new version of a beloved classic is Idaho Potatoes Au Chevre. Fresh goat cheese and garlic-scented butter are the only additions to slices of the earthy potato. The result is a light but satisfying dish.

Desserts, too, are being rewritten. Florida Orange-Rum Chiffon Cake has a sensual appeal—the delicate texture of the cake contrasts with the rum-laden finish and glazed orange slices. It's a fine example of a perfect marriage of flavor and texture.



FLORIDA SUNSHINE SALAD

- 1 1/2 pounds boned, skinned chicken breasts
- 1 onion, quartered
- 1 carrot, cut in pieces
- 1 celery stalk, cut in pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 4 peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup cooked, sliced beets
- 1/2 pound pea pods, blanched, drained
- 1 small head radicchio, shredded
- 1 avocado, pitted, pitted, sliced
- 2 grapefruit, peeled and sectioned
- 3 oranges, peeled and sectioned
- Lettuce

Combine chicken, onion, carrot, celery, salt, peppercorns and bay leaf in a deep saucepan. Add water to barely cover; bring to a slow boil. Reduce heat; cover. Simmer gently 15 to 20 minutes until chicken is tender. Remove chicken; cool. Cut chicken in strips. Arrange chicken and remaining ingredients on individual salad plates. Serve with Citrus Dressing.* YIELD: 4 to 6 servings.

*Citrus Dressing

- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup salad oil
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
- 1 teaspoon crushed fennel seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1 egg yolk

In measuring cup combine orange juice, oil, vinegar, mustard, fennel, salt and pepper. In medium bowl beat egg yolk; gradually whisk in orange juice mixture. YIELD: 1-1/4 cups.

FRESH SEAFOOD TOPPED POTATOES

- 4 Idaho* potatoes
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped, fresh ginger
- 1/2 pound bay scallops
- 1/2 pound raw shrimp, shelled, deveined
- 2 pounds fresh tomatoes, peeled, chopped (about 3 cups)
- 1 tablespoon chopped, fresh cilantro (coriander)
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 small, red bell pepper, julienned (3/4 cup)

Scrub potatoes, dry and prick with a fork. Bake in a 425°F. oven 55 to 65 minutes, until soft. In large skillet heat butter and oil; add ginger, cook 1 minute. Add scallops and shrimp. Stir over medium heat until done, about 3 minutes. Remove scallops and shrimp. In same skillet add tomatoes, cilantro, salt and pepper. Cover. Simmer 8 minutes. Add red pepper. Simmer 2 minutes longer. Return scallops and shrimp; heat through. When potatoes are soft, cut an "X" in top with a fork. Push some of the potato up with slight pressure of the fingers on the side of the potato. Spoon topping over blossomed potatoes. YIELD: 4 servings.

IDAHO POTATOES AU CHEVRE

- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 pounds potatoes (4 medium potatoes)
- 1/2 pound goat cheese, sliced 1/8-inch thick
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 3/4 cup chopped scallions, divided

In small saucepan melt butter; add garlic and cook until golden. Do not pare potatoes. Slice 1/8-inch thick. In shallow, 2-quart casserole arrange half the potato slices and half the cheese. Sprinkle with half the salt, pepper and 1/2 cup scallions. Pour over half the butter. Repeat layer, reserving remaining scallions. Cover. Bake in a 375°F. oven 30 minutes. Uncover. Bake 30 minutes longer or until potatoes are tender. About 5 minutes before removing from oven, sprinkle with remaining scallions. YIELD: 4 servings.

FLORIDA ORANGE-RUM CHIFFON CAKE

- 1 cup egg whites (6 or 7 large), at room temperature
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup salad oil
- 5 large egg yolks
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons grated orange peel
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 oranges, unpeeled, sliced as thinly as possible
- 3/4 cup light rum or coconut rum

In large bowl beat egg whites with cream of tartar until soft peaks form. Gradually add 1/4 cup sugar, beating until stiff. In another large bowl sift together flour, 1 cup sugar, baking powder and salt. Make well in center. Add oil, egg yolks, orange juice and peel; beat until smooth. Fold egg whites into batter. Turn into ungreased, 10-inch tube pan. Bake in a 350°F. oven 55 minutes or until cake tester inserted in center comes out clean. Immediately invert pan over neck of tall bottle; let cake cool completely, about 1 1/2 hours. Meanwhile prepare rum syrup. In medium saucepan, combine remaining 3/4 cup sugar and water; stir until dissolved. Add sliced oranges. Boil mixture rapidly until liquid is reduced to 3/4 cup. Remove orange slices, reserve. Remove syrup from heat; add rum. With cake tester, make holes in cake in pan. Pour warm syrup over cake, 1/4 cup at a time. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour, or until all syrup is absorbed. Turn cake out of pan onto serving plate. Arrange cooked orange slices over top of cake. YIELD: 12 to 14 servings.