

# Remember, recipes are meant to be changed

Cooking should be fun. If it isn't, then you aren't doing it right.

Perhaps you are one of those people who always follows every recipe "to a tee," afraid to make any changes or substitutions.

Recipes are created by ordinary human beings, just like you and me. They are not carved in stone by lightning on a mountain top. So, don't be afraid to experiment.

Once upon a time, when my oldest son (now nearing 40), was a toddler, I was making a meat pie from a recipe someone had given me.

I had fried the ground beef with onions, drained off the excess fat, seasoned it, and set it aside, while I prepared the biscuit dough, which was to be the crust for the pie.

Just then, the telephone rang, and I went into another room to answer it. I wasn't gone long, but by the time I returned, little Jimmy had dumped the meat mixture into the dough mixture, and was joyously kneading the two together with both hands.

There went my meat pie. But the ingredients were too good to throw away, and I didn't have anything else for supper. So I helped him mix it more thoroughly, and rolled out the dough on a board.

Together, we cut out little rounds, like you would for biscuits, and baked them. The results were terrific.

We called these little meat-filled biscuits, "Jim-Jims" and they became a family favorite. Sometimes we substitute bulk sausage for the ground beef, and sometimes we add shredded cheese to the mixture.

A plate of Jim-Jims straight from the oven, or nowadays, re-heated in a microwave, served with a bowl of hot soup, still makes my family members very happy.

I once dropped a cake, and broke it. It looked terrible. Company was due any minute. I put the salvageable pieces into individual dessert dishes, poured chocolate syrup over them, and topped each dish with a squirt of whipped cream and a maraschino cherry.

My guests raved over the delicacy, and no one ever knew I didn't plan it that way.

My five-year-old granddaughter loves to eat and she loves to cook. One day, she decided she wanted both honey and ketchup on her hot dogs. Instead of trying to discourage her, we mixed honey and ketchup together and glazed our frankfurters with the mixture as we grilled them. They were sensational.

Since then, we've tried honey and mustard, honey and Heinz 57 sauce, honey and barbecue sauce, etc. Some of these combinations have tasted better than others, but all were happily eaten.

Meanwhile, my granddaughter Krystal has gained the satisfaction of trying something new and creating her own recipes for the first time. And she's acquired a self-confidence that I'm sure will be helpful in many situations in life that have

nothing to do with cooking.

And, best of all, we had fun doing it.

Right now, many of you may have vines full of green tomatoes that you know will never ripen before the frost. Why not try the recipe for mock raspberry jam invented by some ingenious cook who wasn't afraid to play around in the kitchen. The results will astound you. It is hard to imagine it isn't the real thing, even after you, yourself, made it.

**MOCK RASPBERRY JAM**  
green tomatoes (about six)  
2 cups white sugar  
one 3-ounce package of raspberry jello

Core and cut up the green tomatoes. Process them in your blender until you have 2 cups of pulp. Boil the tomatoes and sugar together for 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the powdered gelatin. Cool slightly. Pour into clean containers and refrigerate or freeze.

I WAS RAISED during the Great Depression of the 1930's. We were very poor, but I never knew that until years later, because everyone in our town was in the same boat. We were all very poor.

Carlson's grocery store sold soda crackers out of a big barrel. They were very cheap, so we ate a lot of soda crackers.

Anyone my age probably remembers a dish called "depression soup," made of soda crackers, and really not much else. I remember the recipe, but I'd never print it because nobody today would ever eat it, even for old time's sake.

But because we had chickens, we

also had eggs, and my father invented an egg and cracker recipe he called cracker pancakes.

We've all loved it, and it has been passed down for three generations. All of my children make them, even when they have company. My grandkids love them for breakfast or supper.

They can be served with syrup or with catsup; eaten with fruit and powdered sugar, or with salt and pepper and bacon or sausage.

They are versatile and delicious, and the recipe was invented by a man who didn't even like to cook.

## CRACKER PANCAKES

eggs  
soda crackers  
milk

Beat up eggs, one or two per person. Add one-eighth cup of milk for each egg, and beat some more. Crumble crackers into coarse crumbs. Use your own judgment as to how many. Some people like a drier pancake, and some like a moist one. Add crumbs to the eggs and milk mixture, and let sit for a few minutes, until the crackers soak up the egg mixture. Drop mixture by tablespoonfuls onto a hot greased skillet, and cook as you would any pancake, flipping over when firm, and the first side is done to a golden brown. Then cook the other side. Serve hot.

Here's another unusual pancake recipe, made up when we had cold spaghetti left over, and no sauce to go with it.

**SPAGHETTI PANCAKES**  
4 cups cooked cold spaghetti or macaroni  
3 eggs, well beaten

3 tablespoons flour  
3 tablespoons milk

Combine all ingredients, and season to taste. Use salt, pepper, oregano, a dash of cayenne pepper, or whatever suits you.

Sometimes I add ¼ to ½ cup of Parmesan cheese, if I have it on hand. Sometimes I throw in shredded cheddar, or maybe some green onions.

I almost never make these the same way twice, but they are always delicious.

Try as you would any pancake, until golden brown, turning it carefully to cook both sides. You can make a large pancake the size of the skillet, cooking the bottom on top of the stove, and then placing it in the broiler to cook the top. Then turn the whole large pancake out on a plate with butter, and garnish as you like. This serves about four people, all of whom will love it, and call you their favorite kitchen witch.

The important thing is that you have fun cooking. Try new flavorings and spices you haven't used before. Experiment with new combina-



## kitchen witch

### Gundella

tions, and make up a few of your own. Recently, I added some butter pecan flavoring to the apples in a pie I was baking. The taste was terrific.

Start with something simple, like a sauce to serve over your fish, meat, or vegetables. Taste your recipes as you prepare them, and add seasonings when needed.

Encourage your children to play at cooking with you. One year, when I was still teaching school and all four of my children were still at home, we all took turns cooking one day of the week.

Sometimes we had strange menus, but before long, even the youngest children were well able to plan, cook, and serve a palatable, well-balanced meal and have fun doing it.

I was always there to help but by the end of the year I was seldom needed. Another really fun thing to make is fried ice cream. It sounds and looks hard to make, but it's really easy. I made up this recipe, and I like it better than any other I've tried anywhere.

### FRIED ICE CREAM

Using your hands, shape any flavor ice cream into round balls, just as you would make snow balls, just as you would make warm water close by to dip your hands in as you work.)

Roll these ice cream balls in cake crumbs or cookie crumbs, until completely covered. Wrap in foil, and place in the freezer until very hard.

These will keep in the freezer indefinitely.

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