



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Ground turkey and taco fixings combine for Mexican Fiesta Pie, created by Sally Versaci of Bloomfield Hills.

Mexican Fiesta Pie was last-minute meal

June, a month traditionally favored by brides, students and, I dare say, teachers as well, is finally here. And what a joyful month it is, as the leaves on the trees are finally unfurled and able to wave freely in the soft breezes of early summer.

It is as if all of nature has joined together to celebrate its triumph over the dark and oftentimes harsh months that precede it, by hosting a spectacular party for us to enjoy. The fresh colors, scents and sounds of the season are nature's gifts to us, and remind us, as in the immortal words of James Russell Lowell, that there is nothing "so rare as a day in June."

Because the warm weather beckons us outside, it has also been said, at least at our house, "What is so rare as a decent dinner in June?" After all, who really wants to be stuck in a hot, stuffy kitchen when there is so much to do outside? But, thanks to Sally Versaci of Bloomfield Hills, this week's delicious Winner Dinner can be quickly prepared and still leave you with plenty of time to enjoy the beauty of the season.

Versaci created this recipe for Mexican Fiesta Pie one night in desperation when she had a package of ground turkey defrosting in the sink, a cupboard full of taco fixings and practically nothing else on hand. Her innovative dish was a hit with her three children and husband, and they all came back for seconds. Versaci serves the pie with carrot and celery sticks. She likes to end this



family-tested winner dinner

Betsy Brethen

meal with a fabulous-tasting dessert called Mountain Mama's Muddslide. With a name like that, you know it is going to be terrific.

ALTHOUGH HER LIFE is very busy keeping up with her three teenagers, Versaci also works part-time as a restaurant interior designer. Her husband owns 15 Burger King restaurants in the Chicago and suburban Detroit area and, for the last 10 years, she has been in charge of all the decorating and remodeling projects that have been periodically undertaken at each restaurant.

An avid tennis player, she also has enjoyed taking painting classes at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association. Versaci has a college degree in home economics but is planning to go back to school this fall and take classes, specializing in interior design. She looks toward the future and hopes to expand her decorating

career once her children are fully grown and off on their own.

Thank you, Sally Versaci, for sharing your recipes with us and congratulations on being this week's Winner Dinner Winner. I wish you continued good luck with your career and family and hope you will keep this column in mind if you create any more new recipes.

And, as we begin a new week, isn't it nice to know that it isn't necessary to RSVP to Mother Nature's garden party. The only hostess gift she asks of us is that we simply open our eyes and enjoy the magnificent beauty she has created for us. After all, no one can top her when it comes to setting a beautiful "tableau."

Observer & Eccentric Winner Dinner

Menu

**MEXICAN FIESTA PIE
CARROT AND CELERY STICKS
MOUNTAIN MAMA'S MUDDSLIDE**

Recipes

MEXICAN FIESTA PIE

Quick and easy to assemble, this dish serves 4-6 people. It can be made early in the day and refrigerated until dinnertime.

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef or turkey
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 package medium-sized flour tortillas
- 1 can refried beans, 16-ounce size
- 1 can peeled and chopped green chilies, 4-ounce size
- 2 cups shredded taco cheese (Colby and Monterey Jack)
- 2 cups crushed tortilla chips
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- Taco sauce

Saute onion in small amount of oil until tender. Add ground meat and brown, stirring. Drain the grease off the meat and add the taco seasoning packet along with 1/2 cup of water. Simmer, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, place 3 flour tortillas on the bottom of a 9-inch pie pan, spreading the tortillas out to cover the entire bottom of the pan. Spread 1/2 of the refried beans over the tortillas. Add 1/2 of the green chilies. Cover with half the meat mixture and 1 cup of the cheese. Repeat the layers and top with crushed tortilla chips. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Top with chopped tomatoes and serve with taco sauce, if desired.

CARROT AND CELERY STICKS

So simple to make, just

grate some carrots and wash some celery stalks and serve them any length you want to. Kids love to help make these.

"MOUNTAIN MAMA'S MUDDSLIDE"

This yummy dessert was invented by Fran Cooper. She is happy to share the recipe as long as you and whomever you should pass it on to don't change the name. With a name like that, though, who would want to change it.

- 1 stick softened margarine
- 1 cup flour
- 1 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 4-ounce package of cream cheese
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar
- 1 medium-sized Cool Whip container
- 2 cups cold milk
- 1 small package vanilla instant pudding
- 1 small package chocolate instant pudding
- 1 chocolate Hershey bar

Mix well. 1 stick softened margarine, 1 cup flour and 1 cup chopped pecans. Press in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Cool completely.

Beat 1/2 fluffy 4 ounces cream cheese and 1 cup confectioner's sugar.

Fold in: 1 cup Cool Whip from medium container. Spread over cooled crust. Mix 2 cups cold milk, 1 small package vanilla instant pudding and 1 small package chocolate instant pudding.

Beat ingredients until very thick. Spread over the cream cheese mixture.

Top with remaining Cool Whip.

Grate a Hershey bar over the top. Sprinkle with chopped nuts. Refrigerate overnight or at least 4 hours.

Shopping List

- 1 onion
- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef or turkey
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 package medium-sized flour tortillas
- 1 can refried beans, 16-ounce size
- 1 can peeled and chopped green chilies, 4-ounce size
- 2 cups shredded taco cheese (Colby and Monterey Jack)
- 2 cups crushed tortilla chips
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- celery
- margarine
- cream cheese, 4-ounce size
- milk
- medium-sized Cool Whip
- confectioner's sugar
- 1 small package vanilla instant pudding
- 1 small package chocolate instant pudding
- chopped pecans
- 1 chocolate Hershey bar

Notes

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