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INVITING IDEAS

Leftovers can be an art with a little creativity



RUTH MOSSOK JOHNSTON

I'm not so sure I agree with this quote from "Larousse Gastronomique" — "The art of using up leftovers is not to be considered as the summit of culinary achievement."

Perhaps not, in the greater culinary scheme of things, but with a little innovation leftovers can be delicious.

It's fun to transform leftovers into exciting new appetizers, entrees and soups. By adding spices and other ingredients you can make a myriad of different dishes.

Leftover turkey is a good base for fabulous soups, ravioli, casseroles, sandwiches, pates, stuffing for puffed pastry and sumptuous strudels. Make double stuffed potatoes and casseroles with leftover mashed potatoes.

I love to add leftover cranberry sauce to homemade applesauce. You can also add cranberries to gelatin. Use leftover cranberry sauce as a spread in a sandwich or a layer in a trifle for dessert.

Invite friends and neighbors over for an informal petluck dinner. Ask everyone to develop a dish based on their own holiday leftovers!

Soups are my favorite. This soup recipe is easy and delicious — smoked turkey makes for a rich flavor — you need not use smoked turkey for the broth or meat balls — experiment, use smoked turkey for the meat balls and plain broth for the soup.

TURKEY SOUP WITH MATED TURKEY BALLS

- 2 quarts of turkey stock (using the carcass, turkey meat and vegetables)
- ¾ pound of turkey leftover meat
- ¼ pound ham
- 2 slices of French bread (measure according to the consistency of the meatballs)
- Sprigs of fresh mint
- Salt to taste
- Cayenne pepper to taste
- 2 large eggs

Prepare turkey broth according to taste — if more flavor is needed, add Minor Turkey Base or Chicken Base (available at Gordon Food Service or Merchant of Vino Shops).

In a food processor, a meat grinder (meat grinder attachment), or heavy duty blender — grind the turkey, ham and bread together. Add the fresh mint, salt and pepper (to desired taste) and grind. Add the eggs and pulse to mix. Add more bread if the mixture seems too loose.

Shape the mixture into walnut-sized balls, and gently drop into the hot strained broth. Let the meat balls cook for

approximately 20 minutes, or until firm. Serve the broth with the meat balls. Yield: 8 servings

These puffs are a basic Choux recipe — they can be used with any type of filling. If you want, make them into little "sweets" — add a little soft ripened cheese and leftover cranberry sauce.

MINIATURE CHOUX PUFFS WITH POTATO-CHEESE STUFFING

Ingredients for the puffs:

- 1 cup water
- ½ cup unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch bits
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs
- Bamboo skewers

To make the puffs

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Place the water, butter and sea salt into a heavy saucepan and place over medium-high heat — bring to a simmer. When the butter has melted, reduce the heat to low. Whisk in the flour and continue to mix until the mixture is smooth and shiny. When the dough forms a ball around the whisk, remove from the heat.

Beat in the eggs one at a time, making sure they are fully incorporated before adding the next one. Set aside momentarily.

Line two baking sheets (do not use the air-cushioned type) with kitchen parchment paper. Using a pastry bag fitted with a number 8 tip (round 5/8-inch tip) squeeze (pipe) pate a' choux onto the parchment paper in ½-inch rounds.

Bake the puffs for 15 minutes and then rotate the sheets in the oven. Turn the heat down to 300 degrees F. and continue to cook until the puffs are golden brown and light as a feather.

Using a bamboo skewer, poke a hole in the side of each puff to release its steam build up. Place on a baking rack to cool thoroughly.

Once the puffs are completely cool, carefully slit each puff in half and remove any uncooked dough that may be present. Fill with your favorite stuffing and serve. Yield: approximately 86 small puffs

Potato and Cheese Stuffing:

Use your leftover mashed potatoes — place in a food processor or blender, add what ever type of cheese you favor and as much as desired — process on pulse to mix, do not let it become soupy.

For added taste and flavor, add ground nuts, sesame seeds, jalapeno, dried fruit bits, or spices!

Ruth Mossok Johnston is an author and food columnist who lives in Franklin. To leave a Voice Mail message for Ruth, dial (313) 933-2047, mailbox 1902.

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