

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Anyone can make
an ice cream pie

Last week, I took a little trip Downriver and did "the good son thing." I edged momma's lawn, washed a few windows, drove dad out to the grand opening of the new Home Depot for a spot check, and when we returned, momma had made a cool ice cream pie.

Now you have to understand that momma's idea of an ice cream pie is a store bought graham cracker crust, a pint of the cheapest ice cream money can buy, a quart of ersatz non-dairy whipped topping and a healthy drizzle of Hershey's syrup. I call it summer comfort food. The best part? She made two and told me, in no uncertain terms, that the other pie was for me "to enjoy at home." I ate it all in one sitting, right out of the tin with nothing more than a spoon to catch all the meltings. Some habits are still difficult to break.

Having been invited to a late night soiree at some friends after an Art Arbor Art Fair, I thought it would be a good idea if I tried my luck at a homemade ice cream pie. I knew the food police would be in attendance, and they would certainly be able to tell the difference between a store bought crust and a real one. So I drove to the store in search of butter, premium ice cream, real whipped cream, designer hot fudge sauce and Macadamia nuts bearing a price tag almost as high as the price of an airline ticket to Hawaii. Ravas and Ludes were gratuitously offered, but then I thought, hey, it wasn't that difficult and I really believe that anyone could make a stellar ice cream pie with minimal effort. I checked out a few books and here's what I found:

Cookie crusts

Ice cream pies have the advantages of quick preparation and can be made from the simplest of ingredients. But because ice cream pies are served frozen, they need to have crusts that taste good frozen. Cookie crumb crusts fit the bill perfectly. I was lucky enough to have a dozen chocolate chip cookies in the freezer. I tossed them in the food processor for a quick chop, noticed that a dozen three-inch cookies were just the right amount to make a deep dish 10-inch pie crust. It would also make a nine-inch in diameter, three-inch tall spring form pan. Knowing you might be prone to having the barest of gourmet necessities (ala momma), a dozen Oreos, a Chip's Ahoy or even 24 Nilla Wafers could suffice. Any dry cookie that might pose a problem standing up the sides of a spring form pan could handle the addition of a couple of tablespoons of melted butter or margarine.

Premium is better

Then I set out to really see if ice cream made a difference. Federal government regulations state that ice cream must have a minimum milk fat content of 10 percent. A good quality ice cream has 12 percent. A premium ice cream can have so much butterfat you'll need to take a plunger to your heart valves. Is higher fat better? In this case, definitely. A higher milk fat content of the ice cream retards ice crystal formation when the ice cream freezes hard after its slight softening during preparation. There is hope for healthy eaters though, as my testing did reveal that a good, high quality, fat free frozen dessert or frozen yogurt will suffice with minimal repercussions.

When preparing the pie, the first rule is to soften the ice cream until it is easy to scoop and spread. The less the ice cream melts, the better it will taste after freezing firm again. One good method is to soften the ice cream in a glass bowl in the refrigerator for about 30-40 minutes, so that it softens evenly without melted spots. Even though I worship my microwave, this is no time to push buttons and demand speed. As soon as the ice cream pie is assembled, immediately return it to the freezer and follow wrapping instructions carefully.

Butterable containers work best and you can safely store ice cream pies in the freezer for up to two weeks. After that, you better have a box of baking soda near by and hope that all those opened freezer doors looking for ice cubes, Popsicles and tomorrow's dinner haven't wreaked havoc on the pie's exterior.

When serving an ice cream pie, allow it to soften slowly for about 30-40 minutes in the refrigerator. Since the temperature of your freezer and the temperature of your kitchen affect how the ice cream pie will react, there is no hard and fast rule as to how long to let it sit out of the freezer.

Chef Larry Janes is a free-lance writer. He welcomes your calls and comments. To leave a message for him, dial (313) 853-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1886. See recipes inside.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

Focus on Wine.

H A R V E S T T I M E

Preserve

some

summer

for

winter

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS • SPECIAL WRITER

What a wonderful time of year! Fresh vegetables and fruit from your garden and the local produce stand are abundant and delicious. There's something special about biting into a juicy, ripe tomato, right out of the garden. Fresh salads are great now and so are green beans, corn, watermelon, zucchini and many other home-grown vegetables, fruits and herbs.

But if your bountiful harvest is crowding you out of house and garden, it's time for you to take action. My father makes a big pot of fresh marinara sauce, uses some of it immediately, and freezes the rest in family-size containers to enjoy later on. He calls it "Meneste" and doesn't follow a recipe.

He just cuts up tomatoes, seeds them and throws them into a pot, skins and all, he adds onions, green pepper, zucchini, mushrooms, fresh basil, oregano, garlic and whatever happens to be in the refrigerator — broccoli, green beans and eggplant are good. He then cooks it down to a nice consistency, seasons with a little salt and pepper to taste and ladles it over pasta.

If you have a large basil crop, pesto is a great thing to make. I freeze mine in ice cube trays and pop them out whenever I want to season a pasta sauce, marinara or soup.

For the rest of your harvest, home food preservation methods such as freezing or canning, work well. Canning is particularly good if you have an abundance of fruit or vegetables that you can't possibly consume fresh. Opening a jar of tomatoes or green beans in February that came from your garden can be especially gratifying.

Here are some simple food preservation ideas that keep your harvest healthy and tasty.

FREEZING Freezing is one of the easiest ways to preserve food, although not all produce freezes well. I've had good luck with green beans, corn, marinara sauce, green peppers and shredded zucchini. Use rigid plastic containers, freezer bags or freezer paper and tape. Freeze in small batches at 0 degrees F or below. Be sure to thoroughly dry produce before freezing and do not freeze too much at a time. Leave space between packages so air can circulate freely until frozen.

Some fruits and vegetables must be blanched before freezing. Others can go directly into the freezer with little preparation. Peppers and shredded zucchini can simply be washed, (peppers cut into strips) and then packed tightly with no headspace.

For chopped peppers or blueberries, currants and raspberries; spread them one layer deep on a tray and freeze. Then pour into freezer bags and seal with no headspace.

Use a large kettle of boiling water with a basket for vegetables that require blanching. Wash the produce in cold water and cut if desired, then place vegetables into the boiling water, cover and start counting the time immediately. Different vegetables require different blanching times. It's best to check a recipe book, but as a general rule, greens take



Numbers to call for freezing and canning tips:

- Altrista's Consumer Affairs representatives, the experts behind Ball brand and Kerr brand canning products, 1-800-240-3340, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- Michigan State University Extension, Oakland County, Food and Nutrition Hotline, (810) 858-0904, Monday-Friday.
- Michigan State University Extension, Wayne County, Food and Nutrition Hotline, (313) 833-3297.

about 30 seconds; green beans two to three minutes; and corn-on-the-cob 7 to 11 minutes. After blanching, remove and plunge the basket of vegetables into a large quantity of ice water, allowing as much time for cooling as for boiling or blanching. Drain and dry vegetables thoroughly, then pack into labeled containers.

Fruit can be packed in sugar, syrup, water, fruit juice, or without sugar or liquid. Rhubarb, grapes and strawberries can be fresh frozen with no liquid. Some friends of mine have kids who love to eat frozen grapes, right out of the freezer. Try it! They're actually quite good.

CANNING

Most canning is done by using the Boiling Water Bath Process. The best advice I can give is to get a good canning book and follow the instructions carefully. The "Ball Blue Book of Canning" is a good reference and it's available in hardware stores and wherever canning supplies are sold.

You can use either the hot pack or raw pack method of packing food into jars. For hot pack, the food is pre-heated in a liquid or extracted juices. With the raw pack method, the produce is packed raw into jars, boiling liquid can be added if needed to meet headspace.

Prepare food and fill jars to specified headspace. Slide spatula around sides of jar to remove air pockets and wipe the top of jar clean. Immerse filled, sealed jars into boiling water, the water should be one inch or more above top of jars. Start counting the processing time as soon as the jars have been added and the water returns to a boil. Boil gently for time recommended. After the food has been processed, carefully remove the jars and cool them slowly in a safe place, away from drafts.

After the jars have thoroughly cooled, test the jars by tapping on the lid. If the lid can be moved, either reprocess or put into the refrigerator for immediate use. If a jar on the shelf is not completely sealed, do not eat the contents even if it looks and smells fine. It could contain clostridium botulinum which cannot be killed by regular boiling.

But regardless of the way you preserve your produce, the important thing is to enjoy it now, while it's fresh and then pack away the rest. This winter, when the snow is climbing up your window sill, pull out a few ears of frozen corn. Savor the flavor as you think back to those warm days of the harvest.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts of Clarkston, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company.

LAURA'S FAT FREE KITCHEN

POTATO SOUP

Original Recipe

- 5 large potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 3 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 20 oz. chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups sweetened condensed milk
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/4 cup butter

Place all ingredients in a large pot, except milk, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let cook for 1 hour or until vegetables are cooked.

Add condensed milk once soup stops boiling or it will curdle. Stir frequently to prevent sticking. Serves 6

Nutrition information per serving:

- Calories - 528.9
- Protein - 15.3 grams
- Carbohydrate - 79.9 grams
- Cholesterol - 56 mg
- Sodium - 1,273 mg
- Fat - 17.7 grams

POTATO SOUP

Low Fat Version

- 5 large potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 3 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 20 oz. fat free low sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups evaporated skim milk
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 teaspoons ButterBuds imitation powdered butter

Place all ingredients in a large non-stick pot, except milk, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let cook for 1 hour or until vegetables are cooked. Add evaporated milk once soup stops boiling or it may curdle. Stir frequently to prevent sticking. Serves 6

Nutrition information per serving:

- Calories - 179.9
- Protein - 10.7 grams
- Carbohydrate - 33.7 grams
- Cholesterol - 4 mg
- Sodium - 502 mg
- Fat - 0.5 grams

Pare down fat in potato soup

BY LAURA L. SYKES

SPECIAL WRITER

We usually assume vegetable recipes are low in fat. We also tend to believe they are a healthy choice when planning a meal. The following recipe for potato soup shows us how incorrect this way of thinking can be.

At a quick glance, the original soup recipe doesn't seem to have many high fat items. By taking a closer look we can see it is loaded with sodium, fat and calories.

Let's look at the sodium content first. The majority of it is found in the one teaspoon of salt. There is a large amount of "hidden" sodium in the chicken broth and butter.

To help eliminate the salt problem we use low sodium chicken broth, replace the butter with ButterBuds imitation powdered butter flavoring, and completely eliminate the teaspoon of salt. These simple substitutions eliminated over 700 mg of sodium per serving!

The fat content was reduced by 17.2 grams of fat per serving. The majority of this was accomplished by eliminating the butter. It added 44 grams of fat to the recipe!

The remaining fat was found in the chicken broth and the sweetened condensed milk. By switching to fat free evaporated skim milk and fat free chicken broth we were able to dramatically reduce the fat content.

Keep in mind that every gram of fat contains 9 calories. By reducing the fat content we automatically cut back on our calories.

A few "kitchen hints" regarding this recipe come to mind.

First, remember that potatoes have a very high sugar content. Therefore, I switched to evaporated skim milk instead of fat free sweetened condensed milk. The sweetened condensed milk is made with NutraSweet and gave this recipe a very artificial taste.

Second, don't worry about chopping the vegetables too fine. You can always strain the soup when it is done and place the vegetables in a blender. This will thicken the soup and give it a nice texture.

Laura L. Sykes is a Senior Radiation Therapist, and Clinical Education Supervisor at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. She publishes a monthly, eight-page newsletter, "Laura's Fat Free Kitchen," newsletter contains low-fat and fat-free recipes and kitchen hints. To order, send a \$24 check or money order for 12 issues to PS Publications, P.O. Box 7687 Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302-7687. Or, send a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to the above address for a sample issue. Look for Laura's column on the second Monday of the month in Taste.