

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1997

TASTE

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KELLI LEWTON

Mom made childhood a delicious memory

Since the dawn of time, women have been nourishing all of humanity. In times past, women in most cultures were the food gath-ers. The rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood came with an apron. Food was a way to man's heart as well as a cure for your chil-dren's aches and pains.

Some of our most precious childhood memories include the special soup that made us all better, those magic chocolate chip cookies that fixed our bruised knees, and remember those special Sun-day dinners at grandma's - pot roast, mashed potatoes, and green beans.

Whenever a boy broke my heart, my mom made double chocolate cake with fudge icing. I'm 33, and she's still baking!

To Sharyn: Love Tara Mooney of Birmingham - "My mom would always make me chocolate ball soup, and she told me that it would cure all that ailed me. Who knew that she was right?"

To Mommy: Love Cierra of Birmingham - "As I am 5, my Auntie Jen is helping me write this. My mommy's macaroni and cheese with the dinosaur shapes always makes me giggle."

To Louise: Love Kathy Brian of Birmingham - "Mom, you still know your children so well. Pineapple cookies travel to Florida for Ed; Ann still gets homemade custard, a desire inherited by her son; Grandma's soup still comes to my doorstep whether it's a cold or broken heart. Homemade pizzas travel to Cleveland! Thanks for knowing, and loving us so well!"

When moms went to work outside the home microwave ovens began arriving on the home front with an avalanche of new "convenience" products. With women sharing as equal partners in the workforce, and ever pressed for time, some children won't remember "licking the spoon" while making cookies. They'll remember helping slice cookies in the tube, and putting them in the oven to bake.

Comfort food

Our childhood memories are helping fuel a craving for comfort food. My good friend and restaurateur, Mary Brady, certified executive chef of Diamond Jim Brady's in Novi, is serving her famous wild mushroom meat loaf by the pounds.

Comfort food takes an elegant turn at certified master chef Jeff Gabriel's restaurant "The Farm" in Fort Austin. Gabriel, who is also a chef instructor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, features Grandma Lizzi's Chicken and Lemon Dumplings, Farmer's Style Braised Swiss Steak with Red Wine Sauce and Corn Crusted Fried Leeks, Veggie Stuffed Cabbage with Red Lentils and Smoked Tomatoes at his restaurant. Wow! Did grandma ever make it sound so good?

It seems as if we are all trying to get back to simpler times. Comfort food has even monopolized the fast food market such as "Boston Market" which offers real mashed potatoes, corn, and creamed spinach. If mom can't make dinner at least she can dish it up.

Perhaps today's moms are different, but today's kids don't seem to be pining for home-made chicken noodle soup. They are too busy "surfing the net." So not to worry moms, as long as we keep reading bedtime stories, and kissing boo-boos, I think we'll still have our jobs.

10 dinner tips for busy moms

1. Save time with pre-cut vegetables such as "salad in a bag."
2. Take advantage of weekly specials at your grocery store, and incorporate them into your meal plan.
3. Plan menus for the week on the weekend to avoid last minute stress. You'll save time, and money, in the long run.
4. Prep for the week on Sunday. For example, you can boil pasta ahead. To prevent it from becoming soggy, cook pasta al dente (firm to the bite) cool immediately with cold water, and toss with olive oil to prevent sticking. Pasta continues to cook until cooled down. Make sauces, soups, and chili. Freeze what you won't be using in a few days. Be sure to wrap tightly, and label with date. Use within three months.
5. Give daily dinner assignments such as making salad, setting and clearing the table, to all who eat.
6. Keep menus simple. For example, Chicken Caesar Salad and baked potatoes.
7. Incorporate one dish casseroles into your weekly meal plan.

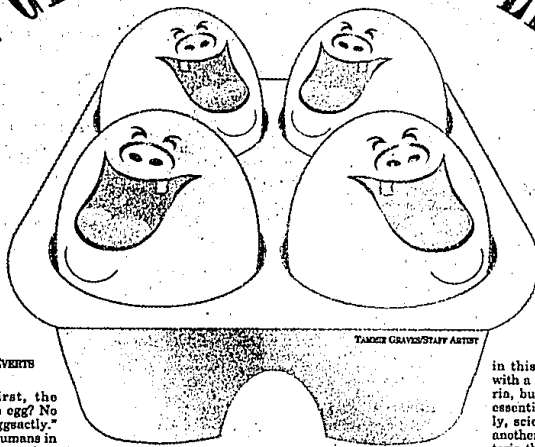
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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Specialty Foods

DON'T GET CRACKED-UP OVER EGGS



TAMAR GRAVES/STAFF ARTIST

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? No one knows "eggsactly." Since birds preceded humans in the evolutionary and creationism chain, this question may never be answered. However, eggs from many different animals have been used as food for centuries all around the world.

Today, eggs are considered highly nutritious, versatile and economical food. Eggs contain all the essential vitamins (except vitamin C) and many important minerals too. The chicken eggs we purchase at the grocery store are a wonder-ful source of protein. In fact, the measurement of protein of eggs is so good it is the stan-dard by which other sources of protein are measured.

A large egg contains about 75 calories, 5.5 grams of pro-tein, 5 grams of fat and 200-220 milligrams of cholesterol. Sev-enty-five percent of these cal-ories, and 100 percent of the cho-lesterol, is found in the egg yolk.

Because eggs do contain a sig-nificant amount of cholesterol, they often are the first thing exclud-ed from our diets. But eggs have so much going for them that it's a shame to shun them even when we're watching our cholesterol. Instead, limit egg consumption according to your doctor's recommendations, and then get creative.

The American Heart Associa-

"Egducation"

- Thaw frozen egg products (such as frozen pasteurized eggs or egg substitutes or frozen custard) in refrigerator. Defrosting at temperatures higher than 45°F. can cause curdling and off-flavors.
- Eggs should be cooked slowly at low to moderate heat. High temperatures and over-cooking toughen eggs.
- For hard-cooked eggs, use your oldest eggs. Very fresh eggs when hard-cooked may be harder to peel.
- Never cook eggs in their shell in the microwave oven - they will explode. Always break the membrane of the egg yolk before cooking.
- When cooking eggs in the microwave oven, use half or one-third power for most egg dishes because the yolk and the white cook at different rates; high power will result in uneven cooking.
- "Weeping" or water separating out from cooked eggs is caused by overcooking, cooking and holding at high heat, or from the addition of watery ingredients.

tion's "Prudent" diet allows for three egg yolks per week. You can also use egg whites in your cooking. Two egg whites can be substituted for one whole egg; just be sure to add 1 teaspoon of oil if fat is needed in the recipe.

Eggs should be purchased chilled; only from refrigerated display cases, and not from unrefrigerated roadside stands. Store eggs in the refrigerator, large end up. Eggs cannot be frozen whole, and should be stored in their original contain-er to prevent loss of moisture (egg shells are very porous). Store eggs in the bottom of your refrigerator away from foods such as onions, cabbage and apples because eggs can pick up strong odors.

To freeze eggs, break egg into a muffin tin, gently stir yolk and white with a fork. Freeze until firm, and put in a freezer bag when firm. Freeze egg whites in an ice cube tray, and put in freezer bag when firm. You can store eggs, and egg whites, up to three months in the freezer.

Dangerous pathogens found on the shell of an egg when it is laid will be destroyed by proper washing and sanitizing of the egg. Many years ago, chickens

in this country were infected with a type of salmonella bac-teria, but this disease has been essentially eradicated. Recent-ly, scientists have discovered another type of salmonella bac-teria that may infect the repro-ductive system of some egg lay-ing hens and some of those hens lay eggs contaminated with the salmonella organism. Because of the risk of salmonel-la, cracked eggs should be thrown away.

Toas old recipes for mayon-naise, Caesar salad dressing, mousses, ice cream, and hol-landaise sauce, which call for raw eggs.

Use a cooked base, or a com-mercially pasteurized egg sub-stitute instead.

It isn't necessary to cook eggs until they're hard and rubbery in order to kill bacteria. Accord-ing to the USDA, eggs should be cooked thoroughly until both the yolk and white are firm, not runny, in order to kill any bac-teria that may be present. Scrambled eggs need to be cooked until firm throughout.

May is National Egg Month, so enjoy the wonderful ways eggs can fit into a healthy diet.

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

See recipe inside.

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL G. WAGNER

Make no apology for serving just pasta

Once upon a time before pasta became a chic and nutritious savvy main dish, it was called spaghetti and macaroni. It was served as an afterthought - after you thought of what meat, fish or chicken would be the centerpiece of the meal. Occasionally, people ate macaroni and cheese instead of meat, but that was usually because it was Lent, the food budget was low, or you were a vegetarian.

Then came the low-fat diet revolution. To reduce fat and cholesterol consumption, spaghetti et al. was elevated to star status and became the perfect health food. Words like angel hair, ziti, fettuccine and rotini became part of our everyday food vocabulary.

Today, no apologies are necessary for serving just pasta as a main course - unembellished by meat, fish or poultry. Athletes recognize the importance of complex carbohydrates (pasta, beans, rice, potatoes) for fueling their athletic achievements. A high carbohydrate rather than a high protein diet, helps build muscle because protein is spared for muscle building rather than being used for energy.

Even though a high carbohydrate, reduced fat, food plan has been proven to be the most effective dietary means of preventing or treating disease, the message needs to be refined.

The first point: Portion control - excess amounts of any nutrient, whether fat, protein or carbohydrate means extra calories. Extra calories are stored as fat. Foods that are mostly carbohydrate have less calories ounce per ounce than foods that are high in fat. Portions can be larger - but not

limited, otherwise you'll gain weight.

The second point: Choose whole wheat bread and pasta, or add beans or veggies, to increase fiber, which decreases the risk of diabetes and colon cancer, and helps lower cholesterol. Fiber also makes it easier for diabetic patients to control their blood sugar.

The third point: Combine some of that high fat food taste that we all love with carbohydrates to stretch the flavor. A little cheese or olive oil goes a long way when you add it to pasta.

My Main Dish Miracle embodies all of these nutritional virtues plus it tastes wonderful - at least that's what my taste buds tell me. This opinion is heartily seconded by my patients and dinner guests.

If you really don't like tomato sauce, or if your taste buds yearn for the creamy richness of Alfredo sauce, this recipe will become one of your favorite dishes.

In this recipe, I included a touch of springtime - asparagus. I also added red peppers for color, and a touch of sweetness. The cream and butter of a traditional Alfredo sauce are replaced by a sauce of evaporated skim milk thickened with cornstarch. The consistency of the canned milk is remarkably cream-like and rich tasting.

The Pecorino cheese in the recipe is a type of Romano cheese with a more mellow flavor than Parmesan. Pecorino cheese is available at most

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Italian markets, and some supermarkets. I like to buy a piece, and grate it just before I use it for a deeper flavor. Pecorino contributes an interesting taste accent, but Parmesan will perform admirably, although the flavor will be different. Both cheeses are not low fat, but because of their flavor intensity when they are freshly grated, a little goes a long way.

That's one of the secrets of successful low-fat cooking. Fat "carries" and intensifies food flavors. By using more deeply flavored ingredients, you can become a successful low-fat cook.

Fresh asparagus spells Spring to me. If it's not your favorite, try broccoli or well-drained spinach. But do retain the red peppers, they add a sweet accent.

Healthy Fettuccine and Alfredo and Asparagus has one-fourth the fat and half the calories of traditional Alfredo sauce. If you get cold feet about a meal with no meat, chicken or fish, some cooked shrimp, or chicken strips can be added to the sauce.

While I cook, I like to share my kitchen with guests. After "carries" and intensifies food flavors, I like to share my kitchen with guests. After "carries" and intensifies food flavors, I like to share my kitchen with guests.

Look for Main Dish Miracle on the second Sunday of the month in Taste. Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter. To subscribe, send a check for \$13.50 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069. See recipe inside.