



# Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

## Advice to a new bride who can't scramble an egg

New Year's is traditionally a time of new beginnings. The whole holiday season, starting Thanksgiving weekend, is one of the two most preferred times for weddings, which is certainly a new beginning.

You probably have noticed some of the pages in this paper jam-packed with marriage announcements recently.

These new brides will be returning soon from romantic honeymoons to face the cold reality of their kitchens and cooking every day. Some already know how to cook; some can't scramble an egg.

Eggs are a good place to start as they, too, are linked with beginnings. For example, an old Jewish custom, not much practiced these days, calls for the giving of a boiled egg to first-time guests in the hostess's new home.

Some experienced cooks have difficulty with scrambled eggs. Here's how to make them.

### SCRAMBLED EGGS

- 1 medium egg
- 1 tsp. butter or margarine
- 1/4 tsp. cream or milk
- Salt and pepper

Multiply by the number of people to be served, or eggs needed, except only increase the butter to an amount which, when melted will thinly cover the pan bottom.

Always break eggs one at a time into a small bowl, then, if making more than one, add to a larger bowl. This allows for easy removal of shell or other imperfections. Add the cream and whisk briefly with a fork. The egg and cream should be broken up and intertwined, yellow and white, but still identifiable separately.

Don't overmix; they will become watery. Add salt and pepper at last minute before turning into the pan. Cook over low to medium heat, folding over with a large spoon until the egg forms small soft lumps. Serve at once.

### AND FOR ENTERTAINING:

If you should invite half a dozen of your best chums over to see your new digs and eat brunch, intending to serve scrambled eggs, don't break the eggs in advance and leave to sit. Also, don't break the dozen eggs into a blender to mix. They will become watery and not nearly as good. The texture changes somewhat and the eggs don't form into small soft lumps as easily.

Give your guests another Bloody Mary, they won't mind the slight delay while you crack the eggs.

Scrambled eggs can be livened with any of the following. Just be sure the other ingredients are in the pan first, then add the eggs.

1. Crisp bacon, crumbled.
2. Strips of frizzled ham.

3. Sautéed mushrooms.
  4. Diced potatoes, julienned ham and chopped onion.
  5. Sautéed chopped fresh tomatoes.
  6. Onions sautéed in butter, sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese.
  7. Crostons fried in olive oil, with or without garlic.
- Let your taste buds and creativity lead you to concoctions pleasing to your family's taste. While you are experimenting, try this super-easy egg and cheese dish.

### EGGS SWITZERLAND

- 8 eggs
- 4 tbsp. cream
- Salt, freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 lb. Swiss or Gruyere cheese, grated

Butter 4 individual casseroles well. Break 2 eggs into each and add 2 tbsp. cream, being careful not to let the cream cover the egg yolks. Season to taste with salt and pepper and sprinkle with the grated cheese, again being careful not to get any on the yolks.

Bake in a 350-degree oven until the whites are set and the yolks just glazed over. This will take about 10 minutes. Serves 4.

This recipe is from "How to Eat Better for Less Money," by James Beard and Sam Aaron, paperback, \$1.50. This book has a very good section on "The Instant Meal: A Guide to Impromptu Cooking," which I have found helpful for those times when I have to get something good on the table fast, such as unexpected guests, getting home late, etc.

### The Next Step

Your confidence should be growing now that you have become an expert egg-maker, so surprise your new spouse with this savory chicken dish. This one is easy too.

### PAPRIKA CHICKEN

- 3 tsp. butter

- 3 tbsp. oil
- 2 tbsp. Hungarian sweet paprika
- 1 broiler-fryer, about 2 1/2 lbs., quartered

1 large onion, finely chopped  
1/2 cup tomato juice or 3 tsp. tomato paste, mixed with 1/4 cup water  
Salt to taste

3/4 to 1 cup commercial sour cream mixed with 3 tbsp. flour  
Melt butter with the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the paprika and cook a little, stirring well (this mellows the flavor and takes away the rawness of the spice). Put in the chicken pieces and brown very lightly all over. Push chicken pieces to one side of the pan, add the onion, and stir until limp. It may be necessary to remove the chicken to do this.

If so, add the tomato juice or tomato paste and water, stir to mix with onion, return chicken to pan, then add salt. Turn heat very low and cook until the chicken is just tender. Remove chicken

to a hot serving platter or pile it on a mound of hot rice. Stir the sour cream-flour mixture into the pan juices and heat and stir just until the sauce simmers, about one to two minutes. Serve over the chicken or separately. Serves 2.

Craig Claiborne, who was food editor of the New York Times for years, wrote an excellent book for beginners called "The Kitchen Primer" (hardback \$10, paperback \$2.95). The book was published just a few years ago, but is still available.

He starts at the very beginning with a thorough, readable discussion of equipment needs and basic cooking techniques.

Questions, comments or recipes to share should be mailed to Vivian Byrd, The Eccentric Newspapers, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, Mich 48012. Please include name, address and telephone number. All correspondence is answered.



Beef noodle bake is a hearty Italian concoction.

## Italian foods vary — delicate to robust

Mention Italian cuisine and Americans immediately think of such pasta and tomato sauce favorites as spaghetti, ravioli and lasagna.

Actually, these popular dishes are regional favorites and represent but a small part of the vast cuisine of this country.

The foods of Italy vary with each region and range from the delicate to the robust; from the simple to the elaborate. For a sample of a dish inspired by the cooks of Tuscany, the region in which Florence is located, try Florentine Beef-Noodle Bake.

This recipe resembles lasagna in that it is a main dish casserole that is made by alternating layers of pasta, ground beef, and cheese. The similarities end there, however, as this bake is not dominated by a spicy tomato sauce. The distinguishing feature that marks it as Florentine is the layer of chopped spinach tucked in the center. Also adding interest are the wide noodles mixed with creamy white sauce and the subtle nutmeg seasoning.

Just as the more familiar Italian dishes are favored by American cooks as budget stretchers, the Florentine bake also offers a delicious means of economizing in the kitchen. With a little culinary creativity, two pounds of ground beef are transformed into a nutritious and satisfying entree providing eight servings.

**FLORENTINE BEEF-NOODLE BAKE**  
2 lbs. ground beef  
1 medium onion chopped

- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce
- 2 pkgs. (10 oz. each) spinach, defrosted
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup flour
- 2 tsp. salt
- 3 cups milk
- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) wide noodles
- 4 oz. shredded Cheddar cheese
- 2 tsp. grated Parmesan cheese

Lightly brown ground beef and onion in large frying pan. Pour off drippings. Sprinkle 1 1/2 tsp. salt, nutmeg and pepper over meat.

Stir in tomato sauce and cook slowly 10 minutes. Chop spinach, pat dry on absorbent paper. Melt butter or margarine and blend in flour and 2 tsp. salt.

Gradually add milk and cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Cook noodles in boiling salted water until just tender, drain and fold into white sauce. Place half the noodle mixture in the bottom of a 13x9-inch utility pan.

Spread 1/2 of the meat mixture over noodles. Reserve 2 tbsp. of the shredded cheese and sprinkle remaining cheese over meat. Place spinach in layer over cheese, top with remaining noodle mixture, distributing evenly, and top with remaining meat mixture.

Cover tightly and bake in moderate oven, 350 degrees, 25 minutes. Sprinkle with reserved Cheddar cheese and Parmesan cheese and continue baking 5 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes; cut into serving size pieces. 8 servings.

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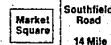
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