

Easter Tradition in Today's Tempo

The traditional Easter parade at the dinner table features a procession of elegant foods from appetizer through dessert. This challenge to the busy cook of the '80s can be met with ease when tradition is transformed into today's tempo. Shortcuts, simplification and prepare-ahead foods can make Easter dinner holiday-special yet everyday-easy.

Ideal for heading your parade of appetite-appealing culinary attractions is impressive Ham en Croûte, featuring the traditional Easter ham wrapped in a golden crust that also encloses a savory pimiento-onion topping. Only the cook need know that a convenient hot roll mix was used to simplify and shorten preparation. Convenient, too, is the canned ham that can be purchased ahead of the holiday rush and relied upon to be juicy, lean and tender.

Pickled Pears make a flavorful garnish. Always a welcome addition to a special meal, pears are especially tasty when pickled and aromatically spiced. Canned Bartlett pears make the preparation easy.

To end the feast on a triumphant note, serve Easter Blossom Pie. Fresh as a spring bouquet, it features a light and airy crème de menthe filling in an easy-to-make scalloped chocolate cookie crust. You can be confident of success, since the refreshing filling is easily made with versatile unflavored gelatine and can be prepared the day before serving.

Springtime often inspires the spirit of sharing an informal meal with friends. Designed to make a company buffet luncheon or supper a breeze are Pork Strip Stroganoff and Blushing Pear Salad. The simple-to-make, convenient-to-serve entree pairs pork and mushrooms in a wine-laced sour cream sauce. The pork strips can be cut with ease from blade steaks, an economical pork cut that is meaty, tender and flavorful.

Easter Menu

Molded Perfection Salad

- Ham en Croûte Pickled Pear Garnish
- Baked Sweet Potatoes Asparagus Spears
- Easter Blossom Pie
- Coffee Tea Milk

Ham en Croûte

- 5 to 8-pound canned ham
- 1 package (13-3/4 ounces) hot roll mix
- 1 cup fine soft bread crumbs
- 2 jars (4 ounces each) pimiento, drained and chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped ripe olives
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon water
- Pickled Pear Garnish*

Place ham on rack in an open roasting pan. Insert roast meat thermometer so the bulb is centered in the thickest part. Do not add water. Roast in a slow oven (325°F) until meat thermometer registers 130°F, to 140°F. Allow approximately 15 to 18 minutes per pound. Let stand 15 minutes. Meanwhile prepare the hot roll mix according to package directions and the filling. For filling, combine bread crumbs, pimiento, ripe olives, onion and horseradish. Place ham on lightly greased jelly roll pan; spread filling over top, pressing lightly. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface into a 16-inch square. Cut three 3/4 x 16-inch strips from one side; braid, cover and reserve. Drape remaining dough over ham; mold to shape of meat. Trim off extra dough at bottom. Cut slits in sides of dough. Place reserved braid lengthwise down center of ham. Combine egg with water; brush top, including braid, and sides with egg wash. Bake in moderate oven (350°F) 20 minutes or until crust is browned. Serve Pickled Pears with ham.

*Pickled Pear Garnish

- 1 can (29 ounces) Bartlett pear halves
- 1 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon finely sliced orange peel strips
- 8 whole allspice
- 6 whole cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick

Drain pears; reserve 1/2 cup syrup in a small saucepan. Add sugar, vinegar, orange peel, allspice, cloves and cinnamon stick; boil 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add pears; return to rolling boil. Remove from heat. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Drain and use pears as garnish for ham. Yield: about 8 garnishes.

Microwave Directions: Drain pears; reserve 1/2 cup syrup and place in microwave-safe dish. Add remaining ingredients; microwave on HIGH 6 minutes or until mixture boils. Add pears; microwave on HIGH 5 minutes. Cover and refrigerate overnight.



Easter Blossom Pie

- 1 envelope unflavored gelatine
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup green crème de menthe liqueur
- 24 chocolate wafers
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1 cup (1/2 pint) whipping or heavy cream, whipped

In medium saucepan, mix unflavored gelatine with 4 tablespoons sugar; blend in egg yolks beaten with milk. Let stand 1 minute. Stir over low heat until gelatine is completely dissolved, about 5 minutes; add liqueur. Pour into large bowl and chill, stirring occasionally, until mixture mounds slightly when dropped from spoon. Meanwhile, cut 1/4 inch from 11 wafers. Crush 1/4-inch pieces and remaining whole wafers; combine with butter. Press onto bottom of 9-inch pie plate. Stand cut wafers, cut side down, against side of plate; chill. In medium bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form; gradually add remaining sugar and beat until stiff. Fold egg whites, then whipped cream into gelatine mixture. Turn into prepared crust and chill until firm. Garnish, if desired, with additional whipped cream and mini chocolate chips. 8 servings.



Salute to Spring

Pork Strip Stroganoff

- 3 pounds pork blade steaks, cut 3/4 inch thick
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/8 teaspoon white pepper
- 3 tablespoons cooking fat
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup white or rosé wine
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions, including tops
- 1 jar (4 ounces) pimiento, cut in strips
- 1 cup dairy sour cream
- Cooked spinach noodles, if desired

Remove bones from pork steaks and cut meat into strips 1/2 inch wide and 3 inches long. Combine flour, salt and pepper; dredge pork strips and brown (1/2 at a time) in cooking fat in large frying-pan. Pour off drippings. Add garlic, thyme, water and wine to the meat. Cover lightly and cook slowly 30 minutes. Add mushrooms, onions and pimiento and continue cooking 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in sour cream and serve with cooked spinach noodles, if desired. 8 servings.

Blushing Pear Salad

- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatine
- 2-1/2 cups rosé wine or cranberry juice
- 1 can (29 ounces) Bartlett pear halves, drained (reserve syrup)
- Cream cheese
- Chopped walnuts

In medium bowl, sprinkle unflavored gelatine over 1/2 cup wine; let stand 1 minute. Mix reserved syrup with enough water to equal 1-1/2 cups and bring to a boil; add to bowl and stir until gelatine is completely dissolved. Stir in remaining wine. Pour into 8 dessert dishes and place one pear half, cut side up, in each dish; chill until set. Garnish with cream cheese balls rolled in walnuts. 8 servings.