

Small-scale cooking needn't mean large-scale leftovers

Small-scale cooking can be both challenging and fun. All it takes is a bit of preplanning, and some tips from experts who have addressed the problem. They have come up with creative, exciting solutions to outsmart the "causes of leftovers."

For starters, look to the meat department. Round steak, a great economical and versatile cut, is frequently on sale. But even two hearty appetites can't finish one in a meal, and leftovers may be wasted. Round steak is one of those cuts of meat that is readily cut into manageable sized portions. It freezes beautifully when securely wrapped (don't forget to label it with the date you freeze it, and to use it within 6 to 12 months). It will also keep in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days, awaiting a different, interesting preparation from the first time it was served.

Most cookbooks call for braising round steak in a small amount of liquid, because it is considered a "tender" cut. But this means cooking an hour or more, longer than most care to devote to making dinner.

There are, however, ways to prepare round steak that are wonderful eating, easy and take less time. Broiling is quick, and when the cooked meat is sliced across the grain into thin strips, it makes for tender eating.

For flavor, marinate the meat first. Pourable dressings are popular, con-

venient marinades providing ready-combined seasoning ingredients. While cooking, baste the round steak with the dressing to keep it moist and add flavor.

MARINATED ROUND STEAK
¼ cup Italian dressing
¼ lb. boneless beef round steak, ¼-inch thick

Pour dressing over steak. Cover; marinate in refrigerator overnight. Drain, reserving marinade. Place steak on rack of broiler pan. Broil on both sides to desired doneness, brushing frequently with marinade. With knife slanted, carve meat across grain into thin slices, 3 servings.

There are other tricks for tenderizing meats such as pounding to break up tough fibers. Stroganoff for Two takes no chances — the meat is both pounded and cut into bite-size pieces before browning. Cream cheese used as a rich sauce base eliminates the need for a traditional sauce. It's quick and delicious.

STROGANOFF FOR TWO

½ lb. beef round steak
1 tbsp. margarine
2 tbsp. chopped onion
1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, cubed
¼ cup milk
¼ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
Dash of salt and pepper
2 cups (4 oz.) noodles, cooked, drained

With meat mallet or edge of plate, pound steak well on both sides. Cut steak into strips, brown in margarine. Add onion; cook until tender. Add cream cheese and milk; stir over low heat until cream cheese is melted. Stir in Worcestershire sauce and seasonings. Serve over hot noodles, 2 servings.

Variations are endless. Add mushrooms and a pinch of dry mustard, or stir in tomato wedges and chopped green pepper along with a touch of sherry, and heat through. With a bit of creativity, you'll find many other ways to serve round steak. Taking a tip from the Chinese, for example, it could be cut into strips, then stir-fried with fresh vegetables, ginger and soy sauce. Serve over rice for a meal in minutes. Round steak also can be cut into bite-size pieces and marinated in pourable dressing overnight.

At mealtime, skewer for kebabs, with or without vegetables, and grill or broil, basting with the marinade. Once you've decided on the entire, it's important to choose a compatible accompaniment. Vegetables in cheese sauce are popular, but many small-scale cooks feel an elaborate sauce preparation is just "too much." For an easy cheese-flavored sauce, we suggest stirring pasteurized processed cheese spread into cooked vegetables and heat through to melt. There's no grating, no slicing, no waiting.

Frozen vegetables packed in plastic bags are a great help. You can remove only the amount needed, reclose the package and return the unused portion to the freezer.

GLORIOUS GREEN BEANS

1 cup frozen cut green beans, cooked, drained
¼ cup pasteurized process cheese spread
1 2½-oz. jar sliced mushrooms, drained

Combine ingredients; heat thoroughly, stirring occasionally, 2 servings.

Microwave: Microwave beans in covered 1-quart casserole on high 4 minutes or until crisp-tender, stirring after 2 minutes; drain. Add process cheese spread and mushrooms; microwave 1 minute or until process cheese spread is melted when stirred.

The pasteurized process cheese spread which is leftover should be stored in the refrigerator for further use. Save it for another vegetable service, or you might like to try some of the many other imaginative ways this versatile cheese product can be served:

- For an appetizer or snack, spread on crackers and top with crumbled cooked bacon, chopped nuts, thinly sliced green onion, finely chopped vegetables, or any other way that you like.
- Spread on hamburgers or hot dogs.
- Spoon over baked potatoes.



pilot light

Greg Melikov

Potato skins are in

I first came in contact with potato skins across the table of a fancy Miami Beach restaurant. Our hostess, Dorothy Modell, ordered them with her steak. My wife sampled them. I stuck with the baked potato, which I devour skin and all at home.

When Dorothy invited us out this year, she took Anita and me to an elegant North Miami Beach restaurant. Because of a driving rainstorm, we had to sit in a line of cars 30 minutes down the street from the entrance.

Inside the dining room, our luck didn't change. After finishing our platter of Chinese hors d'oeuvres, the roof sprung a leak and raindrops fell on our heads. We moved to another table and were presented the wrong order instead of sliced steak on a bed of Chinese vegetables.

While we didn't order potato skins — they were on the menu — we talked about them and the weather. "Potato skins are the rage," said Dorothy, who lives half the year in Southfield.

When you prepare them, be sure to leave a thin layer of flesh after scooping out the shells to ensure the skins don't burn. You can enjoy potato skins in any kind of weather.

POTATO SKINS

4 baking potatoes, about 3 lbs.
¼ cup melted butter
1 tsp. soy sauce

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Scrub potatoes and pierce each several times with fork. Bake on cookie sheet 45 minutes and let cool briefly. Halve lengthwise, remove flesh, leaving ¼-inch shells, and reserve for future dishes. Raise heat to 500 degrees. Mix butter and soy sauce, brush on both sides of skins, place outside up on cookie sheet and bake until crisp, 8 to 10 minutes. Sprinkle on coarse salt. Brush on remaining butter mixture or try with favorite dip. Serves 4.

SPANISH POTATOES

3 tbsp. bacon fat
1 tbsp. minced onion
2 tbsp. chopped green pepper
2 tbsp. chopped pimiento
2 cups sliced cold cooked potatoes
¼ cup chopped cooked ham
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. paprika

In large skillet, melt fat and lightly brown onion, green pepper and pimiento on medium heat. Stir in potatoes, ham, salt and paprika and cook until thoroughly heated. Serves 3-4.

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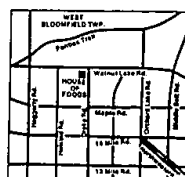
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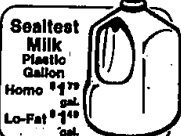
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