

# Eating well meant eating rich in the nifty '50s

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When we contacted Heidi at her Rochester home, as the perfect hostess for a '50s retro seducer's meal for Valentine's Day, it was becoming clear why her cookbooks like "The American Gourmet" by Jane and Michael Stern, (Harper Collins, \$25) are garnering kudos by offering classic recipes, deluxe delights, ambivalent, whimsical and swanky company food from the '50s and '60s. Needless to say, Heidi loved the book.

THE COOKBOOK, done up in pink and turquoise of course, says "Eating rich was once equated with eating well."

The recipes are not for the healthiest set, but as James Beard once said, "A gourmet who counts calories is like a lady (sic) of the night who looks at her watch."

## Classic dishes mix romance, nostalgia

See related story on Taste front.

### SEDUCTOR'S POTATOES DAUPHINOISE

"Rich, yes," wrote Helen Gurley Brown, "but just this once, could you forget how fat you're getting?"

- 4 medium size thick skinned potatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- 1/2 cup scalded cream
- 1 garlic clove, cut in half
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup shredded Gruyere cheese

Peel the potatoes and slice them in rounds 1/4 inch thick. Place them in a bowl. Sprinkle on salt and pepper and pour in cream. Toss lightly, taking care not to break the potatoes.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Rub an 8-inch baking dish about 2 inches deep with the cut sides of the garlic clove. Use 1 tablespoon of the butter to generously grease the baking dish. With a slotted spoon, transfer half the potatoes to the prepared dish. Dot with 1 tablespoon of butter. Sprinkle with half the cheese. Add remaining potatoes. Dot them with remaining butter and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Pour the seasoned cream over the potatoes and if necessary, add just enough milk to barely cover. Bake 40-45 minutes or until potatoes have absorbed the milk and are tender.

(From "The American Gourmet" by Jane and Michael Stern, Harper Collins Publishers, copyright 1991, \$25)

### NAKED CHEF'S CARROTS

The prelude to the recipe was rather erotic and mainly unprintable from a young Catholic boys upbringing, so if you want the prelude, you'll have to buy "The American Gourmet."

- 1 pound carrots, scrubbed clean and sliced into 1/4 inch discs
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1/4 cup brandy

Boil carrots until barely tender, about 10 minutes. Drain. Stir in butter and brown sugar, mixing to coat the carrots. Place in a flameproof serving dish. Heat the brandy and pour over the carrots, and ignite. Saute 15-20 seconds, tossing to extinguish the flames.

### CLASSIC FLAMING BAKED ALASKA

"A breathtaking spectacle that is surprisingly easy to prepare" — Heidi Lichtenstein

- 1 half gallon brick of ice cream, any flavor
- 1 pound cake (12-16 ounces)
- 4 egg whites, at room temperature pinch salt
- 1/2 cup confectioners sugar (powdered sugar)
- 2 tablespoons high-proof rum or other flammable liquor

### LUST AT FIRST BITE

Step One: 2 boned, skinned chicken breasts salt and pepper to taste

Cover chicken with wax paper and flatten breasts with mallet. Season inside and out with salt and pepper.

Step Two: 1 medium ripe banana, mashed 1/2 cup orange curacao or Grand Marnier

1/2 teaspoon lemon juice 1/4 cup dark corn syrup 1/4 teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients together and set aside.

Step Three: 1/4 cup butter

- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup soft bread crumbs

Melt butter. Add remaining ingredients and toss to blend. Stuff

Leslie's Checkerboard Sandwiches, Julia Child's Poulet Rotti and Beard's Famous Onion Rings, Graham Kerr's (also known as The Galloping Gourmet) Fillet of Fish Macadamia, the book explores '50s and '60s cuisine and brings back vintage memories of Chop-mattes, Julecutters and chafing dishes.

Ah, those were the days. But would the recipes make it on a table set with Frank Wright china and Howdy Doodie Spoons? Are pink and black Lazy Susans and palm tree napkin holders considered seductive?

PROCLAIMING to be "more goody than romantic," Heidi promised to choose a few of her faves from the book, and from "Cooking in the Nude," "Quickies" by Debbie and Stephen Cornwell, (Well-ton Books). She promised the selections would rock of "Eleganza."

More on what she did and how she

did will follow, like the roving jeweled cat clock eyes and rhinestone studded swinging tail that I remember from life in Wyandotte.

On a slightly more restrained note, John and Marybeth Hobson who both claim to be cruising near 50 years of age remember the '50s and '60s and how entertaining meant a Harris Tweed suit for the guys, a shirt-waist dress, real nylons, heels and pearls for the lady, and always at least one or two other couples.

The table would be set with a floral or lace cloth, the earlier part of the day spent polishing silver and making sure the neighborhood butcher removed most of the fat for the Beef Stroganoff.

BOTH JOHN and Marybeth were

raised in Detroit, but now live in Redford. They vividly remember the days of visiting Trader Vic's and flaming shish-kebobs, the Top of the Pencil and the Niagara Falls Treadway Inn's famed Duck a l'Orange.

Being avid diners, the Hobsons really enjoyed "The American Gourmet's" chapter on Gourmet Restaurants: Suave, Snob and Sloth. While they frequently entertained at home, many a seducer's meal was had from the likes of Laro's, Little Harry's and The Old Place, all of which have gone the route of the Baked Alaska, Steak Tartar and oysters à la Mermaid, all of which are highlighted in the book.

BUT BACK to our featured guest, Heidi Lichtenstein. Anyone who's

ever been in Cinderella's Attic and met Heidi must know that there's almost something Victorian about this lady. My visit to the shop found clothes that were very elegant and well made.

Heidi herself says that the quality of life in the '50s was better, and it was an ebullient and ambitious era that saw a grand transformation in American gastronomy.

Yes, the table was replete with Boris and Natasha napkins and the water glasses were vintage Hopalong Cassidy collectibles, but the food was prepared with love.

The Presto electric skillet performed like it did 40 years ago with a rendition of Seducer's Potatoes that the seductress prepared for her

main squeeze, Mike "Boss' Hoss" Miller of the nationally renowned "Goobar and the Peas" band.

The monkeywood bowls brimmed with Aphrodisiacal Artichokes, while the Roper range simmered Naked Chef's Carrots. The main course, Love at First Bite, a recipe that would make any modern-day chef cringe, featured chicken, Kara Syrup and bananas.

HEIDI SAYS Mike went back for seconds on the chicken while she nibbled through the night on the Seducer's Potatoes. Yes, it was a pre-Valentines meal Heidi will never forget, but then again, emulating someone like Jane Cleaver was easy, but like the Lady of Charm at WXYZ used to say, "A lady never tells."

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