

Don't pull plug on hot-line



When your jam won't jell, or you want to know what to do with meat in the freezer after a power outage, help is just a phone call away. Sylvia Treitman, home economist for the Michigan State University, Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service, is always helpful and reassuring. I've called them lots of times, and have referred readers to their Food Safety and Nutrition Hotline — 858-0904, weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., when I didn't know the answer to a question.

But who are we going to call if the line is silenced? I recently learned that the Oakland County Executive's office is recommending a 45 percent budget cut in 1994 and 1995. Under this plan, the food hot-line would be eliminated, and there would be a reduction in other services, including a few food safety classes, and less printed resource materials.

The Oakland County Commissioners will make their recommendations for the Extension budget at the 9 a.m. Friday, Oct. 15, personnel committee meeting, and 9 a.m. Friday, Oct. 22 at the Finance Committee meeting in the commissioner's auditorium, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Let your voice be heard. If you live in Oakland County, express your concern over these cutbacks and call your local county commissioner. To find out who your commissioner is, call 858-0100.

Rose Halsey of Westland called this week for a Dirt Cake recipe. I found the recipe in one of my favorite community cookbooks — "From Generation to Generation," recently published by the Sisterhood of Congregation Sharey Zetck in Southfield. Kids love this cake. When you're looking for something unusual to serve at a birthday party — let them eat dirt!

DIRT CAKE

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2-1 cup powdered sugar, sifted
- 3/4 cups milk
- 2 packages instant vanilla pudding or other flavor to your liking (3 1/2-ounce size)
- 12 ounces frozen whipped cream, partially thawed
- 1 7-inch flower pot or 10 small flower pots
- 1 20-ounce package chocolate sandwich cookies, crushed
- In a medium size bowl, mix butter, cream cheese and sugar, with a mixer.
- In another medium size bowl, mix the milk and the pudding.

Add the whipped topping to the pudding mixture. Combine the two mixtures. Prepare the flower pots as follows; if the pots are plastic wash them with soap and water. If they are clay, rinse with water, do not use soap. The clay will absorb the soap and the flavor will remain.

To sterilize the clay pots, bake them in a 350 degree oven for 20 minutes. Cover the bottom of the pots with a plastic lid, a layer of foil or plastic wrap.

Start layering with a piece of cookie crumbs followed by the pudding mixture. Repeat until the ingredients are used up, ending with the cookie crumbs.

Refrigerate several hours. Decorate with gummy worms and plastic flowers or other appropriate candies. Serves 10.

Betty Crocker tip of the week: Cooking for a crowd? Clip these guidelines for your next lunch: 50 servings equals approximately 2 gallons of ice cream (1/4 cup per serving); 12 pounds boneless cooked ham (4-ounce servings); 1 pound of coffee (6-ounce cup per person); 2 quarts of olives or pickles and 1 1/2 pounds mixed nuts.

Keely Wygonik is editor of the Taste and Entertainment sections of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She welcomes your calls and comments, 553-2105, fax 591-7279, or write: Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

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Pillsbury makes baking easy

By Keely Wygonik Staff Writer

Those of us who have never baked bread approach the subject with trepidation. It's so complicated — you have to mix dough, be sure water is warm enough for yeast to dissolve, find a place to let it rise, then knead, pop in the oven, and cross your fingers hoping all this work pays off.

Pillsbury makes it look so easy in "The Complete Book of Baking," (Viking, \$28 hardcover). It's a compendium of the most recent and time-honored recipes developed in the Pillsbury kitchens.

The opening chapter "Baking from A to Z" answers questions about baking ingredients, equipment, terms and techniques like measuring ingredients, and freezing guidelines. There are lots of detailed diagrams, and color pictures that take some of the guesswork out of baking. You'll also find a list of emergency substitutions.

Each of the six sections — cookies, cakes, desserts, pies and pastries, quick breads, and yeast breads — contains Secrets for Success, Cook's Notes, Step-by-Step Features, Special Hints, Handy Reference Charts, and Nutrition Information.

REVIEW

Whether you're a beginning cook, or pro, you'll find this book to be a welcome addition to your cookbook collection. Here's an easy recipe to try. Batter breads aren't kneaded or shaped. This bread is even better the second day.

EASY CHEESE BATTER BREAD

- 2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 4 ounces (1 cup) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 3 eggs

In large bowl, combine 1/4 cups flour, sugar, salt and yeast; blend well. Stir in cheese. In small saucepan, heat milk and margarine until very warm (120 to 130 degrees). Add warm liquid and eggs to flour mixture. Blend at low speed until moistened; beat 3 minutes at medium speed.

By hand, stir in remaining 1/2 cup flour. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and cloth towel. Let rise in warm place (80 to 85 degrees) until

light and doubled in size, 45 to 60 minutes. Generously grease 1 1/2 or 2-quart casserole or 9 by 5 inch loaf pan. Stir dough to remove all air bubbles. Turn into greased casserole. Cover; let rise in warm place until light and doubled in size, 20 to 25 minutes.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Uncover dough. Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until deep golden brown. Immediately remove from casserole cool on wire rack. Yield 1 (18-slice) loaf.

Nutrition Per Serving: Calories 150; Protein 5g; Carbohydrate 15g; Fat 8g; Sodium 290mg.

Make yeast the least of your bread making fears

Here are some "Secrets for Baking with Yeast," from "The Complete Book of Baking."

■ Check the expiration date on the package — outdated yeast won't become active and the bread won't rise.

■ To substitute one form of yeast for another form of yeast, use these equivalents — One teaspoon of active yeast equals 2 1/2 teaspoons of bulk active dry yeast or 1/4 of a 2-ounce cake of compressed fresh yeast. To substitute fast-acting yeast for regular yeast, reduce the rise time in the recipe by about half.

■ Use a yeast or candy thermometer to accurately determine the temperature of liquids. If the liquid in which the dry yeast is dissolved is too hot, it will kill the yeast cells. If it's too cold, they won't be activated. Use very warm liquid (120 to 130 degrees) if the active dry yeast will be added to dry ingredients. If it's to be added to liquid ingredients, use warm liquid (110 to 115 degrees).

■ Place dough in a warm spot to rise. Yeast doughs rise or "proof" best when the temperature is 80 to 85 degrees F. To make sure the dough is warm enough: Cover the bowl loosely with plastic wrap and/or a cloth towel. Place the bowl on a wire rack over a pan of hot water in a draft-free spot. Or place the bowl on the top rack of an unheated oven. Put a pan of hot water on the rack below it. Or turn the oven on at 400 degrees for 1 minute, then turn it off. Place the bowl on the center rack of the oven and close the door.

■ Test the dough to make sure



Baking companion: "The Complete Book of Baking" by Pillsbury takes a lot of the guesswork out of baking.

that it has risen sufficiently. When you think the dough has doubled in size, lightly poke 2 fingers about 1/2 inch into the dough. If the indentations remain, the dough has risen enough.

■ If you forget to add the yeast — dissolve it in a small amount of warm liquid and work it into the dough.

■ If the dough rises too quickly — punch down the dough and let it rise again. If it rises before you're ready to bake it, move the dough to a cooler spot. If it doesn't rise, try placing the dough in a warmer spot or waiting longer to give it more time to rise.

■ Use aluminum pans — they give breads and rolls well-browned crusts.

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