

INVITING IDEAS

Stay home at the movies



RUTH MOSSON JOHNSTON

We three Johnston's are big movie fans — if it's out on the big screen, we've seen it. With all the good books and true life stories being made into screen plays, it's interesting to see how marketing can further capitalize on the movies made — toys, clothing, and even cookbooks. And why not, it's fun.

Courtney Work (an illustrator) and Jane Hemminger (a food consultant) from Des Moines, Iowa were selected to become the food prop caterers for food scenes in "The Bridges of Madison County," and now they've written a cookbook, "The Recipes of Madison County," (published by Oxmoor House, Inc., 1995). Included in the book are all of the recipes they prepared for use in the movie, along with some menu ideas and tips for setting the stage, so to speak.

Try some recipes from their book, or develop a movie concept of your own. The theme of the movies can lead to lots of entertainment options: have guests pick their own secret movie and bring a dish that would give a clue to represent the film they've chosen. Or, have guests bring along their favorite video and show the movie during the course of the evening. Everyone can even dress up as their favorite star. Serve food that would be appropriate to the movies selected.

Do a "Breakfast at Tiffany's," (Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard), a "Picnic" (William Holden and Rosalind Russell), a "Joy Luck Club" mahjong party, a "Forest Gump" seafood/shrimp fest, a "Like Water for Chocolate" decadent dessert soiree or a "Sense and Sensibility" country English meal. This evening could be one, or a series of dinners, all the way to the time of the Oscars.

The film fest concept grew out of the urging of some dear friends of ours to go with them on vacation — not just any vacation, but a cattle drive! I quickly threw together a Western evening, served suitable chuck wagon cuisine and showed them the movie "City Slickers," which stars Billy Crystal. A real cattle drive, chaps and all, was definitely not my idea of vacation fun, but the evening was a blast.

"The Recipes of Madison County" offers comfort food and romantic goodies. Here are two recipes from the book.

APPLE BROWN BETTY

¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups graham cracker crumbs
½ cup butter or margarine, melted
3 medium cooking apples, peeled and sliced (about 3 cups)

3 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
¼ cup water, divided
½ cup raisins, divided (optional)
Whipping cream or vanilla ice cream

Combine brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, salt, lemon rind, and vanilla; stir until blended, and set aside.

Combine graham cracker crumbs and melted butter. Firmly press ½ cup crumb mixture on bottom of greased 8-inch square pan. Top crumb mixture with half of sliced apples, and sprinkle with half of sugar mixture. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon lemon juice and 2 tablespoons of water over top of sugar mixture.

Top with an additional ½ cup crumb mixture and, if desired, ¼ cup raisins. Top with remaining apples and remaining sugar mixture. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons each of lemon juice and water. Top with remaining ¼ cup raisins, if desired, and remaining crumb mixture.

Cover pan with aluminum foil and bake at 300 degrees F. for 35 to 40 minutes or until apples are nearly tender. Remove foil, increase heat to 400 degrees F. and bake another 10 minutes or until mixture is lightly browned. Serve warm with whipping cream. Serves 4-6.

WHITE LASAGNA

1 tablespoon butter or margarine
1½ tablespoons all purpose flour
¾ cup milk
¾ cup chicken broth
1 clove garlic, minced
½ teaspoon white pepper
½ medium onion, sliced into thin strips
2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 (14½ ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
8 lasagna noodles, cooked, drained, and cut into thirds
½ cup (2 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Melt butter in a saucepan; stir in flour. Cook 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually add milk and broth; cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened. Stir in garlic and pepper. Saute onion and mushrooms in oil; stir in artichokes. Set aside.

Spread 1½ teaspoons white sauce into 4 greased (2 cup) casseroles. Place 2 pieces of noodles in each dish. Top each with 1 tablespoon white sauce, 2 tablespoons artichoke mixture, 1 tablespoon mozzarella, and 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Top each evenly using half of noodles, 2 tablespoons white sauce, remaining artichoke mixture, and remaining mozzarella. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon Parmesan on each. Top evenly with final layers of noodles, white sauce, and remaining ¼ cup Parmesan. Cover with foil; bake at 375 degrees F. for 15 minutes.

Remove foil and bake 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Freezes well. Serves 4.

Ruth Mosson Johnston is an author and food columnist who lives in Franklin. To leave a Voice Mail message for Ruth, dial (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1902.

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