

inviting ideas

Turn to Tabasco to turn up the heat



RUTH MOSSOK JOHNSTON

There are plenty of "Chile Heads" out there - to some degree, I'm one of them. I do love hot stuff, not always, and not on every-thing.

Whenever I do a chili (chill as in one-dish, soup-like meal, not chile - type of pepper)

related food demo, I always find it fascinat- ing, that no matter how hot you make something, somebody just might want it hotter. I generally leave the trusty old 'red sauce' bottle out there to suit everyone's individual palate. It's surprising to watch who adds what, and who adds what, for effect - I see some guys really top off that bowl of chili with more than a drop of Tabasco...tough guy stuff.

Sorry fellas, I don't mean to pick on you, but there are times, the picture is crystal clear, and I'm sure y'all wish there was a chaser of clear, after that bigger than life pretentious splash of hot sauce!

With lines of hot sauces and chile related products on the shelves, that trusty old bottle of Tabasco with its trademark white diamond label, is still going strong...literally.

"Tabasco sauce is as basic as mother's milk" said Craig Claiborne. "Tabasco sauce is an indispensable ingredient, and always on my kitchen counter" said Pierre Franey, and even Lee Bailey be- lowed "Being a native Louisianian, any- thing with Tabasco in it suits me just fine." Now that's heavy endorsement!

In 1993, Paul McIlhenny with Barbara Hunter, put out a small book The Tabasco Brand Cookbook - 125 Years of America's Favorite Pepper Sauce, which

is peppered with the venerable history of the hot sauce and the family-run busi- ness that makes it.

This nostalgic little prize is filled with sepia duo tone photographs from the family archives, recipes and great little tips, with the underlying current... "So don't just reach for the Tabasco sauce when you're thinking "hot"; Tabasco sauce is the perfect solution whenever flavors need a lift."

There is a good message here - what- ever you are cooking should not be just hot, it should have flavor - complex per- haps, taste beyond just heat. A small amount of Tabasco can add a complexity to foods when used sparingly.

What exactly is Tabasco? Tabasco sauce is a product made from ripe pep- pers that are crushed immediately after their harvest, mixed with Avery Island salt, and aged for up to three long years in barrels made of white oak, then drained and blended with a high-quali- ty natural vinegar and stirred for a num- ber of weeks. The last stage of the pro- cess - to sauce, is straining and bottling.

The new book McIlhenny Company Great Tabasco® Recipes, published by Brimar publishing Inc., 1996, takes Tabasco to another level... trendy recipes and the new sauces - the GREEN - Tabasco Jalapeno Sauce (a milder hot sauce) and GARLIC FLA- VOR (Tabasco with a garlic blend). The green Tabasco is generally easy to find on your grocers shelf, the garlic seems to be more of a scavenger hunt.

This book like many cookbooks ends with desserts... these end with Tabasco in the sweet endings... some of you may be left cold, others might like it hot!!

COUNTRY CAPTAIN CHICKEN

Serves: 4

This recipe is from The Tabasco

Brand Cookbook - 125 Years of Ameri- ca's Favorite Pepper Sauce by Paul McIl- henny with Barbara Hunter, 1993 - Tabasco Classic.

"This chicken and rice dish has graced southern tables for many a gen- eration and continues to be popular today. It was a favorite of FDR, a close friend of my great-uncle John Avery McIlhenny. Roosevelt would visit Uncle John in Virginia on his way back from Warm Springs, Georgia, and enjoy this chicken smothered in a blend of curry powder, garlic, pepper sauce, and cur- rants."

- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1 3-pound broiler-fryer chicken, cut up
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 large green peppers, seeded and chopped
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 16-ounce can whole tomatoes, with juice
- 1/2 cup dried currants
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco pepper sauce
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1/2 cup toasted slivered almonds

In a plastic bag, mix the flour, salt, and paprika. Shake the chicken pieces in the bag to coat with the flour mixture. In a large Dutch oven or heavy saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat and brown the chick- en, turning several times. Remove the chicken to a warm platter.

In the drippings remaining in the pot over low heat, saute the onion, peppers, garlic, parsley, and curry powder for 5 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Add the tomatoes and their liquid, the currants, and

the Tabasco sauce, and mix well. Return the chicken to the pot, pushing it down into the sauce and ladling sauce over it. Cover and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes, or until the chicken is tender, turning the pieces occasionally. Adjust seasonings to taste. Serve the chicken on a bed of rice, and sprinkle with slivered almonds on top.

SEAFOOD ORZO SALAD

Servings: 4

This recipe comes from McIl- henny Company Great Tabasco® Recipes, published by Brimar publish- ing Inc., 1996.

- 1 cup orzo (rice-shaped pasta)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/2 pound bay scallops
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped dill
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco® pepper sauce

Prepare orzo according to package direc- tions. Drain.

Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat.

Add shrimp, scallops and garlic and cook 5 minutes or until seafood is tender, stirring occasionally.

In a large bowl, toss seafood mixture, orzo, green onions, dill, lemon juice, salt, Tabasco pepper sauce and 1 tablespoon oil until well-mixed. Serve immediately or refrigerate to serve cold.

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