



EVERY DAY GOURMET COOKBOOK

a culinary adventure that lasts a lifetime

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FOREWORD

We love to cook, develop recipes, and entertain. We also enjoy collecting recipes from others and trying them.

What a treat to use marinades, rubs and sauces made from ingredients grown throughout the world to slow-cook a pot roast, sauté vegetables or grill fish. You just can't beat using fresh, quality ingredients – we do it whenever possible.

Because we entertain often, we're always on alert for a good recipe. We've begun documenting some of the recipes that get rave reviews from our guests so we can share them with others.

We think you'll have fun trying this eclectic recipe collection – especially with friends.

Articles discussing a number of ideas related to food preparation and entertaining follow the recipe section. You'll note our writing style and approach are different than 'traditional' cookbooks in that we use a more conversational tone – an approach as if you were sitting at our kitchen counter and we were discussing food, politics, art, wine, or any number of subjects.

If you have a recipe you'd like to submit, please e-mail it to us at: info@theleadershipcenter.com

Bon appétit!



Authors and self-proclaimed 'foodies', Bill Griffin (left) and Louise Walters (right) at the Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris. The couple develops and tests all recipes. They routinely host dinner parties for 2 to 20.

INTRODUCTION

Every Day Gourmet is a work of love in progress. We began it in 2009 and will continue working on it as long as we can cook and entertain friends.

This is a **multi-faceted book** (just like cooking, it's a 'little of this' and a 'pinch of that').

This is a recipe book. When we try a recipe in our own kitchen and it's especially tasty, we write it up and add it to the book. Some of these recipes we created. Some recipes were given to us by other people.

This is a menu book. Some of the sections provide an entire menu for a lunch or dinner.

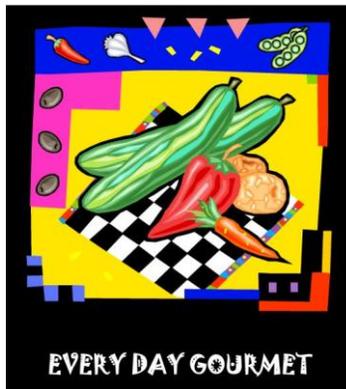
This is a resource book. It includes ideas and tips about how to find good ingredients. The scope of this book is intentionally broad. Our cooking philosophy is not limited to a particular type of cooking -- such as cooking for a diet. Rather, it ranges from simple recipes to complicated ones. It discusses quick recipes and slow ones. Our criterion on whether to write up a recipe or menu is: "Does it taste really good?"

This is a philosophy book. Our approach to cooking centers around friends and the patience, creativity, and flexibility both take.

We believe the most important requirement of good cooking is using good ingredients. You may find yourself growing them, making them, or buying them.

Cooking is fun for us. We do not regard cooking as work. Cooking gives us an opportunity nearly every day to use our culinary skills and creativity. In turn, we enjoy learning more about cooking and food.

Every good cook has learned how to combine flavors and spices. That is really the secret to making food taste good. Some cooks learn this from books. Some cooks learn by doing. Some cooks have a superb sense of smell combined with an excellent taste memory. There is no single right way to learn how to make things taste good; you use trial and error and it often takes years to learn how. We both started cooking before we were ten years old. So this book contains the results of over 100 years of cooking experience. We are still learning and enjoying this culinary adventure. If you are unsure about where to start, then begin with the simple recipes.



RECIPES

Dynamite Pasta Sauce

We have an imaginary dog named Dynamite. We named this recipe after him. It has a strong flavor, and it is quite delicious. It takes about 15 minutes to make.

There are several ingredients:

- Asiago cheese (Italian style, shredded, purchased in a bag at Safeway) ½ cup at room temperature.
- Beemster cheese (from England), ½ cup. We shredded it. At room temperature.
- Garlic, one clove of fresh garlic, chopped fine
- Red onion, ¼ cup chopped small
- Sweet cream butter, three tablespoons
- Juice of one half lemon
- Chicken stock, one cup
- Powdered milk, two tablespoons
- Whole nutmeg. Grate a whisper from the nut (a sixteenth of a tablespoon)

Start with the butter in an eight inch sauté pan (non stick). Heat the butter and melt it until it is bubbly. Add onion and sauté for a minute. Add garlic and sauté for two minutes. Add the cup of chicken stock and bring it to a medium boil. Heat the liquid until it has lost half its volume (4 – 5 minutes). Add the lemon juice. Add powdered milk. Use a wire whisk to stir the powdered milk and break up the lumps. Add the cheese. Turn off the heat under the pan. Use a wire whisk and stir the chicken stock and cheese until the cheese is melted. Now it is ready to serve.

OTHER THOUGHTS

We have served it over ravioli. You could make your own. We have also used Buitoni brand pasta, which is sold in refrigerated (not frozen) containers at most supermarkets. The Wild Mushroom Agnolotti includes two kinds of wild mushrooms, two kinds of cheese, and garlic.

We also served French bread and red wine with this dish.

There are a couple of variations that would be good. One is to substitute heavy cream for the powdered milk. Another would be to add fresh basil. Chop it into thin strips and serve it on top of the pasta and sauce. We might try this sauce poured over chicken or beef filets.

Buffalo Shank Pot Roast

One of the nice things about our butcher shop is it has things that are not ordinarily sold in a supermarket. One of those things is a variety of cuts of bison. We were at Cutting Edge Meats in Piedmont, SD, and saw bison shank in the freezer. We bought a package of two shanks -- about 1.5 pounds.

Shank can be tough, whether you cook lamb shank (for osso bucco), beef shank, or bison shank. However, if you use a slow, wet cooking process, you can make the meat tender.

Bison is leaner than beef or lamb. Consequently, you do not need to include a step where you remove grease.

- Two bison shanks
- One yellow onion, chopped into pieces about one inch long
- One half pound of potatoes, cut into one-inch pieces
- Two carrots, cut into one-inch pieces
- Tomato sauce (about a half pound)
- Half cup of red wine
- Spices: table salt, garlic or granulated garlic, dry spice mix or rub for red meat
- Optional: two celery stalks cut into one-inch pieces

Place the bison shanks, frozen or thawed, in a medium size crock pot. We added a half pound package of home made tomato sauce (We make this during harvest season from fresh tomatoes that are roasted with garlic and onion and then frozen). Eight or ten ounces of canned tomatoes (we prefer peeled and diced) would work nearly as well; try to use a product that includes no added sugar. To the crock pot add a half cup of chopped onion and a half cup of red wine. Cook it overnight on the "low" setting. The next morning, we cut carrots and potatoes into one-inch pieces and added them to the crock pot. We also added some spice: about a tablespoon of table salt, a tablespoon of granulated garlic, and a tablespoon of dry spice mix that is intended for red meat. If we had had some celery in the refrigerator, we would have chopped some and added it. We cooked this mixture on "low" for another two hours. Then it was ready to eat.

OTHER THOUGHTS

Fortunately, this recipe made enough for four portions, so we were able to enjoy it for two dinners. It produced some of the best tasting gravy we have ever had (there was no need to add flour). When we ladled it from the crock pot, it was somewhere between pot roast and beef stew. Very tasty!

Beef Stew: Three Ways

We like beef stew. On a cold day it is warm and filling. If you feel sick, it is usually a good thing to eat. Because everything in it is cooked, it is, in a sense, partially digested, so it is easy on your stomach. Because it contains vegetables, meat and starch, beef stew is a well rounded, nutritious meal. Another thing nice about beef stew is you can put almost anything into it while you prepare it. And don't forget that you can make it in a big batch, then use it for several meals.

FAST COOK METHOD

The first recipe is for a stew that is not cooked for very long. The objective is to cook the vegetables for a short time so they will retain a fresh flavor and crispness. Avoid simmering the stew for an extended period. If you want to make this type of stew, you will need to get some sort of beef that is tender (i.e., not cheap beef). If you want to buy tough meat, this recipe will not cook it long enough to make it tender.

As usual, we start with a trip to the grocery store. We look for fresh ingredients. Here is what we might come home with.

- One pound of lean (93/7) hamburger, or one pound of rib eye steak (bought on sale at half price)
- Two large carrots, cut into one-inch slices.
- Four stalks of celery, cut into one-inch pieces
- One bell pepper, cut into one-inch pieces
- Four small red potatoes, cut into one-inch cubes
- One yellow onion, chopped into small pieces
- Sliced mushrooms (one half cup)
- One 12-ounce jar of medium green salsa (based mainly on tomatillos, not green chilies)
- Corn meal
- Fresh dill
- Fresh garlic
- Spices (I used cumin seeds, table salt, poultry seasoning, and a commercial spice mixture "rub" made for salmon)

Cover the potatoes in one inch of water in a large pot. Start cooking them. The potatoes are the slowest thing to cook, so you start them first.

If you use steak, remove all of the fat and gristle from the steak. Cut the steak into one-inch cubes. Sauté the steak and onions in oil. We use olive oil. Only cook the steak on the outside. The intent is to seal the flavor in. After the steak is sautéed, set it aside.

If you use ground beef, roll it into one inch balls. Sauté the hamburger with the onions. If you use 93/7 hamburger, you probably will not have any grease to drain off.

Add the vegetables, mushrooms and meat to the water in which the potatoes have been boiling. Add spices to suit your taste. Add liquid. I use 12 ounces of red wine and one bottle of beer (12 ounces). You will need to add enough liquid to nearly cover the meat and vegetables. Add several tablespoons of corn meal as a thickener. Boil slowly until the vegetables are cooked but still crispy and fresh tasting. It should be ready to eat in no more than 30 minutes. It might be done as soon as 15 minutes.

SLOW COOK METHOD: STOVE TOP

You can make beef stew from the inexpensive “stew beef” that is sold in grocery stores. This meat is often tough, so you will need to cook it for a long time to make it tender. Using the slow cook method, we recommend you use a crock pot. Put in all the ingredients and let them cook on “low” for several hours (say, all day while you are away at work). You can use a stewpot on the stove top, but you may find that, even on the “simmer” setting, your stove is too hot and will burn the stew. So we use a crock pot when we slow cook. We do not cook on a stovetop when we are out of the house.

SLOW COOK METHOD: OVEN

Sauté the stew meat. Then put all ingredients into an iron stew pot with an iron lid. Cover the ingredients with liquid. Put it in the oven and cook at about 350 degrees for two or three hours. This method seems to be effective at getting your meat to absorb flavors. Put aluminum foil under the stew pot, because it may boil over.

OTHER THOUGHTS

This recipe has potatoes in it, so it already contains a starch. Nevertheless, we like the stew served in a bowl over rice.

This recipe works equally well with lamb or pork instead of beef. Use lean meat.

Sometimes we add sausage to stew when we use the slow cook method. Aside from the meat content, the spices in the sausage migrate out into the stew.

Other vegetables can be good in stew. Try frozen corn or corn cut off the cob.

We often put fresh tomatoes or canned tomato products into beef stew, especially if we are using stew beef. The tomato flavor is compatible with beef, and sometimes it acts as a tenderizer. We also add our homemade tomato sauce.

Baked Beans and Meat

This is an easy dish. You use a crock pot, canned baked beans, some kind of meat, and anything else you want to add. Ingredients:

- Baked beans. One large can (28 ounces) or two small cans
- Meat. One pound of something that will taste good in a sweet recipe.
- Optional ingredients: the usual suspects: onions, carrots, celery, tomato (all chopped in pieces no larger than one inch) and spices

Canned baked beans are a popular prepared food. There are many brands on sale in your grocery store, and some brands offer several styles of beans. We start with a big can of baked beans (Bush's brand baked beans are good, but so are others). Into the crock pot it goes.

Add some kind of meat. We have tried beef (use a cheap, lean cut, and slice it into one-inch pieces), whole pork chops, whole chicken breasts, sausage (sliced into "coins"), and combinations of these. Cook this for several hours. Start it on "high" for an hour. Then switch to "low" for several hours. The taste of the beans will soak into the meat.

You can add other ingredients. Remember, the baked beans are essentially a sweet food, so any spices you add should be compatible with a sweet taste. We have tried onions, tomatoes and spices. If you like stew, you could add things like carrots and potatoes.

OTHER THOUGHTS

You can serve this in several ways. Sometimes we dish out the meat and shovel beans on top. Sometimes we serve the beans alongside the meat. Sometimes we serve the beans and meat with rice.

This is one of those recipes that works well as leftovers. Sometimes it tastes better after it has been in the refrigerator overnight. If you prepare the dish in bulk (say, six servings), you will have enough to serve for your first dinner, perhaps a lunch, and perhaps a third dinner a few days later. We often work late, and we sometimes arrive home too tired to cook a meal from scratch. So it is very helpful to have something in the refrigerator to warm up. This baked bean dish never disappoints.

Bean Soup Daniel

Is it possible for someone to be the smartest person you know and also the nicest person you know? Yes. That's Daniel. So we dedicate this recipe to him. Sometimes we get ideas while we are cruising the supermarket. And so it was that we were exploring the meat section at our local Safeway. In the refrigerator case we spied something labeled as "smoked pork shank." There was about two pounds of pork in the package, and the price was \$1.59 per pound. We said, "Bet this would make some good soup!" So we tossed it into our cart. Louise found some bean soup mix. This included dried beans (about eight types of beans) and a seasoning packet (\$1.29). We purchased some fresh vegetables (carrots, onions and celery). We bought one yellow onion. We would not need anything else. So, our basic ingredients are:

- One to two pounds of smoked pork product. We used smoked pork shank. Ham would work well. Smoked shoulder would work well too.
- One bag of dried beans for bean soup. We bought a bag that included eight kinds of beans. The bean package includes an envelope of spices.
- One yellow onion, chopped into one-inch pieces
- Optional: two carrots and two stalks of celery, each cut into one-inch pieces



The "hard work" of making this bean soup is in the waiting. The assembly time is only about 15 minutes, but it takes one or two days to complete it. Start by soaking the beans overnight in salt water. Make sure to use a large vessel and submerge the dry beans under several inches of water, because the beans will absorb water and expand. Next, pull out your 4-quart crock pot. Cut the pork into one-inch cubes. You can put the bones in, but you will need to fish them out later. Chop the onion into

big pieces. Cover the pork with the onions. Cover the pork and onions with the beans. Add water until everything is submerged under about an inch of water. Cook this for several hours in the crock pot. We start it on "high" until it boils, then move it to "low" for several hours. When you get within an hour of eating time, add a few things. Add the spice packet. Add other

spices if you wish. Cut three carrots into one-inch pieces. Cut three celery stalks into one-inch pieces. Add them to the crock pot. Cook on high for about an hour. Then it is ready to serve.

OTHER THOUGHTS

This recipe makes about six large bowls of soup. The cost is one to two dollars per bowl. It is a thick soup, and it is filling. You may not need to eat anything else with it, although we enjoyed croissants. Delicious.

Incidentally, Daniel is Jewish, so he probably would not eat a pork dish like this.

Chicken Little Piece

We call this “Chicken Little Piece” because Louise says, “You eat this dish in little pieces. You want to savor every morsel.”

This is a casserole dish that tastes good the first time you eat it, and it also tastes good when you serve it as a left-over. So you should make enough for at least two meals.

We refer to it as a “wet recipe,” because you cook the chicken and vegetables in liquid. Chicken becomes absorbent as it cooks, so it will absorb the spices and flavors from the liquid.

Ingredients.

- Three or four boneless chicken breasts
- One cup of chopped onions
- Two zucchinis (about ten inches long)
- Optional: cucumber
- 20 pitted black olives
- One tablespoon capers
- Two fresh tomatoes
- One small can of green chili peppers
- One cup salsa
- One half cup white wine
- One fourth cup fresh basil

We use a large casserole dish or pot, one that has a lid. Place three or four boneless chicken breasts on the bottom of the dish. Add chopped onions. We used fresh onions from our garden. Add a zucchini chopped into pieces a half inch long. They will look like coins. We have added a cucumber sliced into “coins.” We used a pale green cucumber that has a skin that is not bitter like standard dark green cucumbers. Chop up two fresh tomatoes and add them. Add ten or twenty pitted black olives, chopped into slices (we used Kalmata olives). Add a tablespoon of capers. Add a small can of chopped green chili peppers. Add one cup of salsa (we like to use Victoria brand Salsa Suprema, medium). We add some basil from our garden. Because this is a wet recipe, we add a half cup of white wine.

Cook this covered for 60 to 90 minutes in an oven set at about 400 degrees. Make sure it has begun to boil before you remove it from the oven.

OTHER THOUGHTS

There is another variation that you can experiment with. When we ate this for the second time (as leftovers), we dumped grated cheese into the casserole dish. The cheese melted as we reheated the casserole dish in the oven.

One other variation would be to use pork instead of chicken. Some kind of boneless pork should work. You could use pork cutlets or boneless pork chops. You could buy pork tenderloin and slice it into one-inch thick pieces. Trim all fat off the pork before cooking.

We enjoy this dish with light red wine. It would probably also be good with beer or fruit juice. Bill often drinks cranberry juice as a substitute for red wine.

White Bean & Chicken Chili

Bill worked in a company that had a nice cafeteria. One of the things they served was white bean chicken chili. It was always delicious. We decided to try making it ourselves. Our chili was delicious too. There are many ways to make it. The only essential ingredients are chicken and white beans. Everything else is optional.

Two ingredients are required.

- White beans. At the grocery store, find the section that has canned beans, and you will see things like “northern white beans,” “white kidney beans,” or “cannellini.” Any of these will be acceptable.
- Chicken. Cut it into one-inch pieces. We usually use left over chicken.

You will need to add some other things. Exactly what you add is up to you. Here are some things that we have used.

- Onion. Cut up one yellow onion.
- Green sauce. You can use a jar of green salsa or a can of chili verde. Or, you can make your own green sauce. It can be based on green chilies or tomatillos. Here is how you would do it with fresh tomatillos. Remove the “paper” wrappers from the tomatillos. Grind the fruit in a blender. Cook the tomatillo puree until half of the liquid has evaporated. You can add half of this to sauce to your chili. Save half of it for use during another meal as a sauce on pork or chicken.
- Peppers. I recommend you use red, yellow or green peppers. I buy them at the farmers market or grocery store. Don’t use jalapeno or habanero peppers unless you want chili that is very hot.
- Corn meal. Use several tablespoons full.
- Spices. Use whatever you like.

INSTRUCTIONS

Place all ingredients in a cooking vessel. Heat it until everything is cooked. (1) Use a sauce pan or pot if you wish to cook it on the stove top. Cook everything for 30 minutes or more. (2) If you wish to cook it in an oven, you can use a casserole dish or iron pot with a lid. That usually means an hour or more in the oven.

OTHER THOUGHTS

Some people serve chili plain. Some people serve it with rice. Bill’s mother served it with macaroni. She called it “chili mac.” (Chili is great as a left over.)

Flaming Rooster

This is a spicy chicken recipe. You cook it wet. It is good to eat on the day you cook it, and it is good as a left over. This is an informal dish, not fancy food.

Raw chicken is not absorbent, so processes like marinating are not very effective with chicken. However, chicken becomes increasingly absorbent as it cooks, so you can use the cooking process to infuse flavors. When you finish cooking this recipe, the chicken will be spicy hot, inside and out.

- One whole chicken, about three pounds
- One jar of medium heat taco sauce
- Optional: onions, carrots, tomatoes, celery, cut into pieces no larger than one inch.

Place the chicken in a cast iron stew pot. Submerge it in medium taco sauce. If you like, you can add vegetables like onions, carrots or tomatoes. Place the lid on the pot. Place the pot in the oven at 350 to 400 degrees. The cooking time is usually about 90 minutes to two hours. If you are cooking a larger chicken, you might need additional cooking time. Cook until the chicken is soft, but not completely falling apart.

OTHER THOUGHTS

We usually serve this with rice, but it goes well with almost anything that fits spicy food (pasta, couscous).

Because it is spicy, we recommend you serve it with a medium to strong red wine. We also enjoy it with beer or fruit juice.

We tried cooking this recipe in a crock pot on “low” heat, with a cooking time of eight hours. It did not taste as good, and it was more difficult to eat, because the chicken was completely falling apart, making it difficult to find the bones.

You can adjust the spiciness in this recipe. We recommend you use medium taco sauce the first time you cook this dish. You can decide for yourself whether you want more spice or less spice the next time you cook it. To increase the spice, use “hot” taco sauce. To decrease the spice, use “mild” taco sauce.

Anthony's Turkish Chicken

One of the TV shows that we enjoy is “No Reservations.” The star is Anthony Bourdain, a chef who is associated with three restaurants in New York. The show is broadcast on the Travel Channel. Bourdain’s show includes travel, food, and sometimes other things, especially great scenery. We were watching a show that featured the food of Istanbul, Turkey. They described a dish that included meat, raisins, pine nuts, currants, turmeric, and other goodies. We decided to try to imitate the recipe.

Of course, we did not have all of the official ingredients, but we decided to “do the best we can.” We looked in our cupboards and refrigerator, and here is what we found. Our meat would be chicken. Our spices would be cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger. Our fruit would be dried apricots, dried pineapple, and fresh blueberries. Our nuts would be peanuts and other nuts from a package of trail mix. We also included olive oil and cranberry juice.

Here is how we cooked it. We cut boneless chicken breasts into pieces about two inches by two inches. They went into a casserole dish that we would be covering. We added the fruit and nuts. We added a bit of olive oil. We added a half cup of fruit juice (cranberry juice). We covered the casserole dish. We placed in the oven at, say, 400 degrees. Once it began to boil (in about 30 minutes), we waited five minutes more and removed it from the oven.

OTHER THOUGHTS

We made enough for two meals. First, we served it immediately after cooking. The dried fruit and nuts were only partially softened by the 30-minute cooking process, so the dish had an interesting crunchy texture. We circled back two days later and finished off the casserole. The nuts and fruit had softened, thus the texture was changed. However, the taste was still excellent.

We served it with rice. We tried it with a mixture of Jasmine rice and Basmati rice. We also tried it with Basmati. Both were good.

The taste of this dish is mildly sweet, not extremely sweet. If you want to experiment with other spices after the meal is on the plate, you might try adding curry. We enjoyed that. We also tried it with sweet soy sauce (kecap manis, available from Asian grocery stores).

When we try this again, we might use official ingredients like pine nuts, currants and turmeric. sweet onions might also be good.

Many thanks to Anthony Bourdain and his wonderful show.

Chicken Ruth

Ruth is a dear friend of ours. She is from Bolivia. Ruth and her mother are grand hostesses. They make you feel welcome, and they feed you so well. We named this dish in honor of Ruth. This is a casserole dish. From beginning to end, it takes only an hour to assemble and cook.

Ingredients:

- One pound of boneless chicken, cut into one-inch pieces
- One jar of medium taco sauce
- Four tablespoons of corn meal
- One half of a large yellow onion, chopped
- One quarter pound of cheese, sliced (try Colby-jack)
- One quarter pound of a different type of cheese (try Vermont cheddar)
- Tomato sauce (12 to 16 ounces)

The following recipe will feed about six people. We start with a casserole with a lid. Ours is a square glass casserole dish, about 12 inches by 12 inches wide and about four inches deep. Place one half of a jar of medium taco sauce in the bottom. Cut up a pound of boneless chicken into one-inch pieces. We used chicken tenders. You could also use chicken breasts. Place the chicken pieces on top of the taco sauce. Sprinkle corn meal on top of the chicken. We used about four tablespoons. Cut up half of a large yellow onion. Place it on top of the chicken. Add a layer of cheese. We used Colby jack and sharp white Vermont cheddar. We used sliced cheese. On top of this place a layer of tomato sauce (say 12 to 16 ounces). We use our homemade tomato sauce. You can use grocery store sauce, but make sure it contains no sugar. Place the lid on the casserole, and shove it in the oven for about 45 minutes. Once you see the liquid boiling, it is ready to remove from the oven. This dish is mildly spicy. The flavor is wonderful. The corn meal gives it an interesting texture.

OTHER THOUGHTS

We served this in different ways. First, we served it over linguine pasta. Two evenings later, we served it over rice. Both were good.

Next time we might add cream cheese to the other cheeses. We might add the cream cheese after the Chicken Ruth is on the plate.

We might add sour cream on top of the cheese before baking. We might add the sour cream after the meal is on the plate.

We might add a second meat. Tiny pieces of ham might be nice.

We might use it as a filling for corn tortillas.

Shrimp Sauté

Here is an easy shrimp recipe. It yields spicy shrimp and a complimentary onion sauce. It might be described as a scampi, because it is sautéed. This recipe serves two people. Total time of preparation is about 30 minutes. Once you get in practice, you could do the whole thing in 20 minutes (i.e., work at restaurant speed).

A few comments about shrimp. Smaller sizes are less expensive. Bigger sizes are easier to eat with your hands. You probably will be eating this recipe with your hands, so we recommend larger sizes of shrimp. We usually buy raw, frozen shrimp in the shell. When you look in the grocer's freezer cabinet, you will typically see several sizes of shrimp. The bags are usually marked with a numbering system. If the package says 16/20, that means there are 16 to 20 shrimp per pound. If the package says 8/10, that means 8 to 10 shrimp per pound, and they will be twice as heavy as the 16/20 shrimp. We usually buy shrimp in two-pound or five pound bags. We keep a bag in the freezer. We usually cook a half pound or pound at a time. Shrimp are easy to thaw in a few minutes. Put a half pound in a bowl or pan of warm water. Get them separated. When they are soft, you can remove the shells. We usually leave the tails on, because that makes it easier to eat the shrimp with our hands. If you prefer to eat with knife and fork, you can remove the shells and the tails before you cook them. Now that you have cleaned them, they are ready to cook.

Ingredients:

- Onions (yellow are probably best)
- Olive oil. Sometimes we add butter, too.
- Some kind of spiced oil if you have some. For example, try hot sesame oil. If you do not have spiced oil, use some red pepper or chili powder.
- Spices. We use curry, ground cumin, fresh garlic (or garlic salt). You will use some kind of salt, such as table salt, sea salt, or soy sauce.
- Shrimp. A half pound is enough for two people.

Start with the onions. Use a medium to large fry pan. Put in some olive oil. Add some of the spiced oil. Begin heating it. We cook at medium heat. Slice the onion (say, a half cup) and add it to the oil.

Do the same thing with the garlic. Cube enough fresh garlic to make two tablespoons full. If you don't have fresh garlic, you can use garlic powder or garlic salt (say, a half teaspoonful).

As your onions and garlic are cooking, add your spices. We use curry powder and cumin. You may use some other spices that you enjoy with shrimp.

Stir the onions, garlic and spices. When the onions are half way cooked (they should have turned from white to clear), add the shrimp. Stir once every minute. Turn the shrimp at least once, making sure they are well coated with the onion/garlic mixture. Cook until the shrimp are done. This usually takes about six minutes at the temperature that we use. At this point, you want your onions to be light brown (tan in color with no crisp edges). Do not cook the onions until they are crispy and dark brown or black, because that yields a bitter taste.

We serve this on a plate with rice. The onion sauce from your pan can go alongside the shrimp or on top of the rice. Spicy shrimp taste good with an interesting salad or antipasto.

OTHER THOUGHTS

If you want to have a smaller meal, use a bowl. Insert rice, shrimp, and onion sauce, in that order.

We like sautéed shrimp with red wine, white wine, or fruit juice.

If you like shrimp cocktail, you can prepare the shrimp using this same recipe. Instead of a half pound of shrimp, sauté a full pound using the recipe above. Serve half the shrimp as a scampi with rice and salad (as above). Put the other half of the shrimp in the refrigerator. A day or two later, serve the cold shrimp with cocktail sauce. The shrimp scampi are coated with a residue from the onion sauce that blends well with cocktail sauce.

Baked Stuffed Shrimp or Lobster

This recipe came from a friend. We have cooked it perhaps a dozen times, and the results have always been excellent. It is a very pretty dish to look at. It is a light dinner, yet luxurious and delicious.

SHRIMP

Let's start with the recipe for baked stuffed shrimp. Buy the biggest shrimp that you can find. If you try to do this recipe with small shrimp, it will be more difficult to do, and it will not yield as pretty a presentation. If the jumbo shrimp are ten to a pound, you will need only three or four shrimp per person.

Ingredients:

- Eight ounces of the largest shrimp you can find
- Cream cheese ("hard" is better than "soft" or "whipped")
- One small can of canned crab (about five ounces)
- Spices: a bit of hot sauce or hot pepper; table salt or soy sauce



The stuffing is easy to make. You can use one can of crabmeat. Drain the liquid from the can (you may want to save the liquid). As an alternative, you could buy a one or two king crab legs and remove the crabmeat. Place the crabmeat in a mixing bowl. Place a package of cream cheese in the bowl. We prefer "hard" cream cheese that is sold in a rectangular block. We usually add some sort of spice at this point. A little bit of hot sauce or red pepper would be effective. You want the shrimp to have a bit of spice in the flavor. You do not want the dish to be spicy hot, because that would overwhelm the taste of the crab, cream cheese and shrimp. You may want to add salt or soy sauce. Mix these ingredients in the bowl. You should have about 12 ounces of stuffing mix.

Clean the shrimp. We remove the shells except for the tails. Then cut the shrimp along the spine. Do not cut all the way through. Cut through about three quarters of the way. Then

spread each shrimp along the cut and insert the stuffing. If you are working with six jumbo shrimp, you will insert about two ounces of stuffing into each one.

Place the stuffed shrimp in a baking dish. We use a bread pan with tall sides. You need to position the shrimp upright (with the stuffing side up); otherwise the stuffing will drain out. The high sides of the bread pan can help keep the shrimp upright. You may need to use toothpicks to keep the shrimp upright.

Sometimes we place a quarter inch of liquid in the bottom of the baking dish. That might be the juice from the canned crab, melted butter, white wine, lemon juice, or some combination of these. Some of the stuffing and juice from the shrimp will drain into the dish while it is baking. That will mix with the liquid and form a sauce.

We bake this in a conventional oven. Shrimp cook rather fast. We watch them until they turn from translucent gray to solid white. We wait two more minutes, then remove the dish from the oven. If you have pre-heated the oven to, say, 400 degrees, the shrimp will be cooked within ten or fifteen minutes.



OTHER THOUGHTS

We like to serve the shrimp with rice. Make the shrimp the centerpiece of your presentation. We put the shrimp in the center of each plate. Place the rice on one side. If you like, add some of the sauce to the rice. Place the salad or some fresh fruit on the opposite side. Shrimp taste good with many kinds of fruit, such as apple, orange or pineapple. Fresh ripe sliced tomatoes would also be good.

You might want to include curry in the stuffing. Some other things that might work well are chopped fresh garlic, granulated garlic, chopped chives, and chopped onions. Celery seed sometimes goes well with shrimp.

We have also made the stuffing without crabmeat.

Some supermarkets sell cream cheese with chives. This might make a good stuffing.

LOBSTER

Now let's discuss the recipe for baked stuffed lobster. Our local grocer sells frozen lobster tails. Sometimes they are on sale and very affordable. You can use small lobster tails for this recipe.

Make one for each person. You will leave the shell on the lobster while it is baking. Lay the lobster tail on its back. The legs will be facing up. With a sharp knife, make an incision along the “tummy” of the lobster. You can cut down through the meat to the lower shell, but do not cut through the lower shell. Spread the lobster apart along the incision and insert the stuffing. Place the lobster onto a pan or dish. Be sure the belly is facing up so that the stuffing does not melt and run out while it is baking. Bake the lobster until the shell is red-orange, wait two minutes, then remove it from the oven. Place the lobster in the middle of the serving plate. It is a beautiful presentation. On one side put rice or equivalent. On the other side, place salad, fruit or vegetable.

Cheese Pie

We love cheese. We love to shop for it. Sometimes we buy it faster than we can eat it. We open the refrigerator, several blocks of cheese are sitting there, and we become concerned that they will spoil before we can eat them. So we make a cheese pie. It's easy. Assembly takes five or ten minutes. It's in the oven for ten or fifteen minutes. You can be eating it in less than a half hour.

In your grocery store, there are at least two kinds of pie crust on sale. One kind comes with the crust already installed in an aluminum pie pan. The other kind comes in a box with two crusts rolled up in long plastic bags. If you buy the second type of pie crust, you will need to place it in the bottom of a pie pan. You do not need to put any crust on the top of this pie.

If your cheese is in blocks, you will need to slice it or grate it. We usually make a cheese pie in layers. Let's say we have four kinds of cheese available: sharp cheddar, pepper jack, Swiss, and asiago. Put a layer of sharp cheddar on the bottom. Then a layer of pepper jack. Then a layer of Swiss, and then a layer of asiago. If you have any cheese left, build more layers. Do not fill the pie pan above the edge; otherwise, the cheese will run over when it melts.

We heat it in a conventional oven. The main objective here is to melt the cheese. There is no reason to "cook" the pie unless you add something raw like an egg. We find that heating it for ten or fifteen minutes is usually enough. Don't heat it for so long that you burn it or get it too dried out on top.

How do we eat cheese pie? We usually warm it up in the oven or microwave. When do we eat cheese pie? With a salad, it can be a base for a light dinner. Sometimes we eat it for breakfast. It is a great snack on weekends when our eating schedule is irregular.

There are several ways you can store it. It can be stored in the refrigerator, in a bread box, or on the countertop.

OTHER THOUGHTS

Sometimes we add a raw egg at the end of the assembly process. This makes the cheese pie somewhat like a quiche. Remember to cook the pie until the egg is cooked.

Sometimes we add meat, especially ham. We place a layer of ham between layers of cheese.

We recently made a cheese pie where one of the cheeses was a hot cheese dip. It was a combination of Pace brand salsa and Pace brand four-cheese alfredo pasta sauce/cheese dip. This was spicy and worked well with the other cheeses.

We prefer the cheese pie when at least one of the cheeses is spicy, such as pepper jack.

Reuben Pillow

We like Reuben sandwiches. Typically they are grilled, like grilled cheese, or they are steamed. The ingredients usually include bread, pastrami or corned beef, cheese, sauerkraut, and possibly Thousand Island dressing. We developed a derivation of this that you might enjoy. It's easy to prepare and it tastes great. It has the flavor of a Reuben with the texture of a pot pie. It looks like a pillow.

- One pie crust. Buy it in the supermarket or make your own
- Meat: corned beef, pastrami, or some other meat that you might enjoy. Ask the people at the deli counter to slice it thin.
- Sauerkraut. The supermarket probably sells sour, sweet, and in-between. Pick something that you like.
- Cheese. Sliced Swiss is good. You might want to experiment with something else. Sliced or shredded cheese is easiest to work with.
- Thousand Island dressing is the standard. We prefer to use Dijonnaise sauce (Best Foods makes this product. See the mustard section in your supermarket).

We start with a pie crust. We buy them at the grocery store. They come two in a box. Each is rolled up and stored in a plastic bag. Follow the directions on the box about letting the crust warm up a bit before you remove it from the bag and begin working with it. Place an 18-inch piece of aluminum foil on the kitchen counter. Remove one pie crust from a plastic bag. Unroll it on the foil. You will be looking at a circle of pie crust.

Place the meat on the center of the pie crust, making a rectangle of meat about eight inches long and four inches wide. Place a layer of cheese on top of the meat. Place a layer of sauerkraut on top of the cheese. We put Dijonnaise sauce (a mixture of mayo and Dijon mustard) on top of the sauerkraut.

Now fold things into a pillow shape. Start at the ends of the rectangle. Fold the short ends of the pie crust on the top of the meat/ cheese/ sauerkraut filling. Next, fold the larger ends of the pie crust on top of the meat /cheese/ sauerkraut filling. You should try to fully enclose the filling.

Place the pillow into a conventional oven. Leave the foil under the pillow and place it on a cookie sheet. If you heat the pillow at 350 degrees, cooking should be done in less than 30 minutes. Because your filling is all made from cooked food, you do not need to cook this for a long time. Your objectives in the heating process are to melt the cheese and cook the pie crust

dough to make it crispy. Heating also allows the meat, cheese, sauerkraut and dressing to meld.

OTHER THOUGHTS

This recipe makes enough for four people. You might serve this on a platter. Perhaps slice it into four pieces and put some on a plate for each person. Your guests can try eating it with their hands like a sandwich; however, we found that it is sloppy, so it works better to eat it with a knife and fork. We suggest you serve it along with something else, perhaps a salad or fruit.

You might try Thousand Island dressing instead of Dijonnaise.

We might try making smaller pillows and serve them as finger food.

If you like a shiny crust, brush egg whites on the crust before you place the pillow in the oven.

Lillehammer: Bill's Favorite Dessert

Bill doesn't usually eat dessert, because he would rather take his calories in the form of protein, fresh vegetables, and ethanol (like wine, beer, and scotch). But there are exceptions. Bill was in his favorite Italian restaurant in Laguna Beach, CA. The food was always excellent, and the waiters were especially friendly, so this lowered his resistance. The waiter came by and said, "We have a special dessert tonight. Incredible. We call it the Lillehammer." So Bill replied, "Let's do it!"

Lillehammer was the site of the Winter Olympic Games in Norway several years ago. We believe the dessert was named after the town. The restaurant served this dessert in a tall parfait glass with a long spoon. There are three ingredients. First into the glass goes vanilla ice cream. Use the best you can find. Second in the glass goes fresh fruit, preferably some kind of berries. At various times we have enjoyed it with raspberries, blackberries, strawberries and blueberries. Third in the glass goes cherry liqueur. You don't need to submerge the berries and ice cream. You only need to add enough liqueur to coat the berries and ice cream (say, three ounces of liqueur). This dessert is beautiful, festive, and delicious.

OTHER THOUGHTS

There are many opportunities for alternatives. Louise adds a fourth ingredient – she drips honey on top of the other three ingredients. Other types of ice cream would probably work, as long as they do not have too strong a flavor. We believe the fruit needs to be the strongest of the three flavors, ice cream, fruit and liqueur. We suspect that other fruit liqueurs or Kahlua would be delicious. We might try adding cashews or pine nuts.

Lynn's Indiana Mint Brownies

Lynn is a special friend. Louise has known her for a long time and says she is a wonderful cook. Lynn certainly lived up to her reputation when she brought the most fabulous brownies to dinner one evening. We're fortunate to have her share the recipe with us...

Brownies:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 16 ounce can chocolate flavored syrup (1½ cups)
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup butter or margarine, softened
- Mint cream (recipe follows)
- Chocolate topping (recipe follows)

In a mixing bowl, beat together the sugar, syrup, eggs, butter (or margarine) and flour with an electric mixer on low speed until combined, then 1 minute on medium speed.

Turn mixture into a greased 13x9x2 inch baking pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 – 35 minutes or until top springs back when lightly touched (top may still appear wet).

Let cool in pan on wire rack.

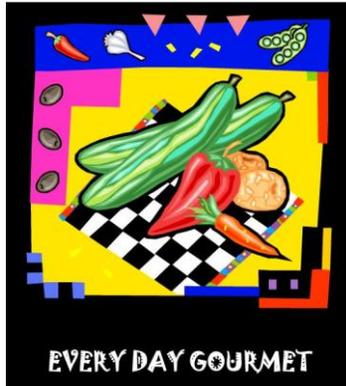
Meanwhile, prepare mint cream and chocolate topping (allow chocolate topping to cool 10 – 15 minutes before spreading on brownies).

Spread mint cream over the cooled brownies.

Pour slightly cooled chocolate topping over mint layer. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour. Store the brownies in the refrigerator. Makes about 50 small brownies.

Mint Cream: In a small mixing bowl, beat together 2 cups sifted powdered sugar, ½ cup softened butter (or margarine), 1 Tablespoon water, ½ teaspoon mint extract and 3 drops green food coloring (optional). Beat until smooth.

Chocolate Topping: In a small, heavy saucepan, combine 1 cup semisweet mint flavored chocolate pieces or semi-sweet chocolate chips and 6 tablespoons butter (or margarine). Cook over low heat until chocolate melts. Or, in a small microwave safe bowl, microcook on 100% power (high) for 1 – 1½ minutes or until chocolate melts, stirring occasionally.



MENUS

Summer Dinner Party

We entertained two other couples for dinner. About the beef, Louise said afterward, “That is the best steak I have ever eaten.” How did we prepare it? We started with the local butcher, Cutting Edge in Piedmont, SD. We asked the butcher for six beef tenderloin filets, each two inches thick. They weighed about ten ounces each.

We mixed up a marinade that included the following ingredients:

- Olive oil
- Madera wine
- Balsamic vinegar
- Red wine
- Sweet soy sauce (kecap manis; this is a brown sauce that they make in Indonesia and sell in the US at Asian grocery stores)
- Hot chili oil
- Powdered spice mix from the butcher (It seems to consist mostly of salt and white pepper)
- Everyday Grillin’ (a powdered spice mix from Tastefully Simple)
- Table salt. We prepared about a pint of the marinade. We soaked the filets in a flat bottom casserole dish. They were in the refrigerator for about 36 hours. We flipped them over once during the marinating process.

We marinated these steaks for at least 24 hours.

Here is how the dinner party played out.

When the guests arrived at 5:00 pm, we put out some nibbles. Let's call them "first appetizers."

- Dried pineapple
- Fresh spring onions from our garden
- Fresh cucumber slices soaked in juice from green olives

We took a walking tour of our vineyard, vegetable garden and flower garden.

At about 6:00 pm we were seated in our open kitchen. We served a second appetizer, crostini (which means "crusty bread"). It included five ingredients:

- Fresh tomatoes from our garden
- Cheese (we used soft goat cheese, but you could also use mozzarella)
- Fresh basil from our garden
- Balsamic vinegar
- Panetini crackers (from the grocery store)

We assembled this by putting the cracker on the bottom, cheese on top of that, a slice of tomato on top of that, a basil leaf on top of that, then drip some balsamic vinegar on top of the pile. We served it on small plates with napkins. You eat this with your fingers.

A third appetizer was homemade bread, still warm from the bread machine (made with white flour and fresh fennel from our garden). We served it with butter and softened goat cheese.

We moved to our patio around 6:30 pm.

Two side dishes were served with the steak: potatoes and asparagus. The ingredients included:

- Fingerling potatoes
- Fresh rosemary
- Sea salt
- Olive oil
- Fresh asparagus
- Lemon (juice from half a lemon)
- Butter (one half stick)

Fingerling potatoes were slowly sautéed - about 30 minutes - in olive oil with table salt. Near the end we added rosemary and onions from our garden. The potatoes were cooked on the top burner of our propane grill (cooking time about 30 minutes, depending on how thin the potatoes are sliced).

We prepared the asparagus sauce by placing the butter and lemon juice in a cup. We placed it in the microwave oven for, say, 30 seconds until the butter was melted and the sauce was warm. We steamed fresh asparagus in the microwave oven for no more than two minutes. The lemon and butter sauce was placed in a small pitcher which was placed on the dinner table.

We used a propane gas grill to cook the steaks. Everyone wanted their steak temperature “medium rare,” so that made it simple to cook them. Our grill has four burners. We started all four burners on the “high” setting and pre-heated the grill to an indicated 450 degrees Fahrenheit. The thermometer is in the lid of the grill. When it is indicating 450 degrees, the temperature on the grilling surface is higher than that, perhaps 550 degrees. We seared the steaks on each side for two minutes with all four burners on “high.” Then we turned down the two center burners (where the steaks are located), leaving the outer burners on high. This kept the steaks from overcooking or catching fire. It required about six more minutes to finish cooking the steaks (three minutes on each side). The main course was served at 7:00 pm.

Following a European tradition, at 7:45 pm we served a spinach salad. The ingredients included:

- Spinach
- Feta cheese
- Carrots
- Fresh tomatoes
- Cucumber pickles
- Pepperoncini (hot Italian peppers sold in jars)
- Fresh onions from our garden
- We offer a variety of salad dressings to guests; each picks their own.

At 8:15 pm, we served our dessert. The Lillehammer is easy to prepare, very beautiful to look at, and delicious. Try to serve it in tall parfait glasses. There are three ingredients.

- Vanilla ice cream went in first. Buy the best quality available.
- Fresh fruit went in next. We served raspberries and blackberries.
- Fruit liqueur goes in last (perhaps three ounces to impart a flavor. Do not submerge the fruit and ice cream). We used cherry liquor.

During the evening, our guests drank all sorts of things, depending on what they were eating and their personal tastes. We served homemade red wine, commercial white wine, commercial red wine, fruit juice, beer, ice water, and probably one or two other things.

We finished up around 9:00 pm, and our guests headed for home. This was a large dinner; however, by pacing it over four hours, none of our guests got “stuffed” or became uncomfortable.

Sweet Pork Chop Dinner

Sometimes someone visits your house and gives you an interesting food present. It can inspire you to create a nice meal. We invited a friend to a dinner party. Instead of bringing a bottle of wine, he brought a bottle of Kriek. This is a cherry flavored malt beverage made in Belgium. It tastes like cherry wine, but it is foamy like beer. A couple of months after he left this gift, we decided to make it the basis for a dinner concept. The plan was to prepare a dinner that included a combination of sweet flavors. We used pork as the meat, because it works better than most meats with sweet recipes. We used curry powder, because it is a sweet spice. (Curry is not a vital part of this recipe. If you don't like curry, don't use it.)

MEAT DISH

Ingredients for two people:

- Two large boneless pork chops
- Sweet onion
- Sliced mushrooms
- Dates (pitted)
- Curry powder
- Kriek
- Creme fraise

Cut up half of a sweet onion. We use red onion. Sweet Vidalia onion would also work well. Begin sautéing the chopped onion in a large fry pan. We sauté it in olive oil. Add some curry powder. Add the mushrooms. Trim all fat off the pork chop. Sauté the meat along with the onions and mushrooms. After the meat is half way cooked, cut up one or two dates into small pieces and toss them in. Then add some of the Kriek (say, four fluid ounces), with the idea that you will reduce it down a bit and make a sauce. You may want to add some table salt or soy sauce (which is sweeter than table salt). When the pork is nearly done cooking and the liquid reduced, you can add a half cup of crème fraiche to make a cream sauce. This ends up like a Normandy sauce, which is a cream sauce made with apples and hard cider. It takes between 15 and 30 minutes to prepare this pork dish.

We serve it with rice. Pour crème sauce over the pork and rice. It might also be good with egg noodles.

Along with the main course, we served rice and a sweet salad. We used our bread machine to make a nice desert bread.

SALAD

Here is how we prepared a companion salad. Ingredients:

- Fresh salad spinach
- Sliced fresh mushrooms
- Fresh dill
- One red apple
- Fresh blueberries
- Sweet salad dressing (Raspberry vinaigrette dressing is excellent for this salad. Sesame ginger might be good.)

Place the spinach into your salad plates. Add the sliced mushrooms. Cut the apple into one-inch chunks, and add it to the plates. We put the red apple slices around the edge, because it is a pretty color contrast to the green of the spinach and white mushrooms. Sprinkle the blueberries on top. Add salad dressing. This salad takes about five minutes to assemble.

Because the dates and curry give this recipe a Middle Eastern flavor, we listened to Turkish music during dinner.

SWEET DESSERT BREAD

Because we had been eating a sweet dinner, we made a desert that was only slightly sweet. We used our bread machine to make some fresh bread.

Ingredients:

- 1/3 white flour
- 1/3 oat flour
- 1/6 whole wheat flour
- 1/6 almond meal (crushed almonds; you can make it yourself if you can't find it in the store)
- Two teaspoons corn oil (walnut oil or some other nut oil would also be good)
- Water
- Yeast
- Brown sugar (four tablespoons)
- One teaspoon salt

This makes a tan, crunchy loaf. Its texture is more like soda bread or a bran muffin than yeast bread. The almond meal gives it a chewy texture. Enjoy it plain, with butter, cream cheese or jelly. It takes about three hours to make this bread in our machine.

OTHER THOUGHTS

With our sweet pork chop dinner, Bill enjoyed a glass of Kriek. Louise enjoyed a glass of Riesling.

The meat recipe might also work well with meats like veal or chicken, but we have not tried those yet.



RESOURCES, INGREDIENTS

Farmers Markets

If you are lucky, you live in a location that has a farmers market. When we lived in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the local market operated from July to October. It featured several types of vendors. Most of them are from South Dakota. We also met some from Wisconsin and Nebraska.

Early in the season, most of the local produce is not ready yet. But the farmers' stands are open for business. They sell jellies and pickles that they made from the harvest of the prior year. Some of them sell crafts. We see tomatoes grown in greenhouses. We buy home made bread and desserts.

As we get into July, we begin seeing onions, cucumbers and squash (grown outdoors). In August, we see corn on the cob and many kinds of tomatoes. Last year, Louise bought fifty pounds of tomatoes and cooked them into ten packages of tomato sauce.

During the fall season, we continue to see fresh vegetables, but we also see other interesting things. We buy little pumpkins, decorate them, and give them to friends. Some of the farmers sell gourds. We like to buy a dozen, decorate them, and use them for Christmas gifts.

On busy days at the farmers market, there are two or three meat vendors. Western South Dakota is ranch country. There are cattle ranches, buffalo ranches, and sheep farms. So the farmers market is a good way to buy many kinds of locally grown meat. You may be fortunate to have a couple of local butcher shops that sell buffalo, beef, lamb, elk, pork, sausage, and other meats.

When you go to a farmers market, remember to take a cooler and ice in the car. Then, if you drop by the farmers market during the day, you can buy fruits, vegetables, and meats because the ice-filled cooler will keep things cold until you get home.

The Garden

If you enjoy working with your hands, gardening can be rewarding.

The big advantage of vegetable gardening is that you can eat the results of your work. The flavors are usually better than you can get from grocery store produce. Grocers do the best they can to provide you with fresh, delicious produce, and we are reliant on them throughout the year. But you need to realize that some of grocers' produce comes from a long distance away. Transport over long distances takes time. Consequently, many of the fruits and vegetables that grocers sell are bred for long storage life and long shelf life. In turn, they may not taste as good as fruits and vegetables that you can grow. The other concern with grocery store produce is chemicals. Pesticides are normally used in growing these fruits and vegetables. Also, some of them are coated with chemicals (i.e., wax) to keep them looking pretty on the display counter.

When you have your own garden, you don't need to worry about short shelf life, because you usually eat the item soon after you harvest it. Dig the onion at 6:30 pm. Eat it at 7:00. Pick the tomato at 6:30 pm. Slice it at 6:45. Eat it at 7:00. Delicious.

Marinades

One of the ways to make meat more flavorful is to use marinades. Some marinades also help tenderize meat.

Bill's mother did not marinate meat. She would leave her office at 4:30 pm, stop at the grocery store, buy one big sirloin steak, bring it home, cook it, and the family would eat it for dinner at 7:00 pm. She cooked it in a broiler in an electric stove. Bill's father liked to put garlic salt on his steak. The spices in Bill's childhood home seemed to be limited to salt, pepper, and garlic salt.

In college, Bill's girlfriend was a waitress at a fine dining restaurant. She explained that the chef marinated beef in French dressing. Bill asked her why. She responded, "Two reasons. The tomato in the dressing tenderizes the meat, and the marinade spices the meat to make it taste better."

You can buy meat marinades at your grocery store. They are similar to salad dressings. Some of the store-bought marinades include meat tenderizing chemicals that we don't like to use. So we make our own marinades.

Bill began experimenting with marinades when he made shish kabob. He had noticed that his shish kabob was not as flavorful as the kind that was served at restaurants. He realized that the restaurants were using marinades, so he decided to try them himself. He used Italian dressing from the grocery store. It included oil, vinegar and garlic. It worked very well.

We use three basic types of marinade. One is olive based. One is yogurt based. The other is wine based. Here is how we put them together.

If you like green olives, you probably buy them in glass jars. After you finish eating the olives, you probably throw away the juice. That is a mistake. It is an excellent marinade. The juice is a brine that has been used to preserve the olives (along with pasteurization). It is very salty. It usually includes other spices, like garlic and pepper. We call this "olive juice." It is an excellent marinade for lamb chops or steak. Put the olive juice in a container that is big enough to hold the meat. Sometimes we use a zip-lock plastic bag. Sometimes we use a flat-bottom glass casserole dish. Do not marinate meat in metal containers. Soak the meat in the marinade for at least 24 hours in the refrigerator. Sometimes we soak it for 48 hours. Half way through the marinating process, flip the meat over. You want all sides of the meat to soak in the marinade.

Try marinating with yogurt. Buy plain yogurt. It will tenderize the meat. You will add spices to the marinade. They will flavor the meat. A favorite spice in yogurt is Jamaica jerk. This is a very hot spice that includes red pepper and other stuff. You can make up your own spice

mixtures, such as powdered garlic, salt, pepper, and other spices. Compared to rubbing spices directly onto the meat, you will need to use five to ten times more spices in a marinade. If you want your meat to be spicy hot, your marinade will need to be extra spicy hot.

We make marinades using wine and other foods. The basic ingredients are usually wine, perhaps olive oil, table salt (or soy sauce), and spices. For example, if you want to cook lamb chops or shish kabob and impart a Middle Eastern flavor, you could make a marinade that includes: red or white wine, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, perhaps cumin, and maybe table salt.

Stock

Stock is juice that you stew out of meat and vegetables. You can use it for many things.

- In the summer, Louise makes tomato sauce from fresh tomatoes. When she converts tomato sauce to spaghetti sauce, she adds beef stock. It adds a meat flavor and body to the spaghetti sauce.
- If you need a thickener, stock may be useful.
- We add it to the water when we make rice.
- We use chicken stock in place of cream when we make Alfredo sauce.
- We use it to make gravy.
- We use it as an ingredient in stuffing for birds.
- We use stock as one of our ingredients when we make macaroni and cheese.

With some recipes, you begin by broiling or baking a meat. Then you put them into a pan and create a sauce. Stock can be used in those situations. For example, when we make a cream sauce, we start with cooked stock, cooked meat and olive oil. We usually add onions, garlic, and spices. After everything is cooked (say, five minutes), we add crème fraiche to create a cream sauce. This sauce is good with chicken, pork or veal. We have also enjoyed it with beef fillet.

You can buy beef stock and chicken stock in cans at your grocery store. You can also make your own. Here is how we do it.

First, we collect the ingredients. We save left-over meat and scraps (bones, meat, skin and fat) and vegetables in freezer bags. In our freezer, you will usually find a zip-loc bag full of beef scraps, a bag of chicken scraps, and a bag of pork scraps. We also put vegetable scraps into the bags (e.g., the scraps left behind when you are cutting up an onion).

Once we have accumulated a pound or so of beef scraps, we stew the scraps. We throw them into the crock pot. Cook them on 'low' for several hours (say, overnight). Sometimes we add spices to the crock pot. Use the same basic idea with pork and chicken. For example, we add cloves to chicken. When you are done cooking the scraps, let it cool to near room temperature. Then pour the mixture through a strainer to remove the solids. Catch the liquid in a bowl, and place it in the refrigerator. After it has cooled, the fat will have risen to the top. Skim off the fat and throw it away. What is left is a flavorful liquid: stock. It may have the consistency of gelatin, which is a result of the protein that you have captured from the meat during the stewing process. We pour the liquid into ice cube trays and freeze them. After they have hardened, we remove the cubes from the trays, put them into zip-loc bags and store them in the freezer. So we always have a supply of stock cubes ready when we need them.

Some people would look at these instructions and interpret them as complicated and time consuming. Neither is true. Each step is very simple. Here is a time estimate to make one quart of stock:

- Collect one pound of scraps (three minutes, spread over one month)
- Stew the scraps in a crock pot (three minutes to assemble, 12 hours to cook)
- Strain the stew and place the liquid in the refrigerator (three minutes to assemble, refrigerate for two or more hours)
- Remove the fat, pour liquid into ice trays, and place in the freezer (three minutes to assemble, two or more hours to freeze)
- Move the cubes of frozen stock to a bag for freezer storage (three minutes)

So you would spend about 15 minutes during a 24-hour period to make a batch of stock.

We have four crock pots. So we can make stock in tiny, small, medium and large batches, depending on how much scrap material we have saved.