

GAIL'S FAVORITE RECIPES FROM AROUND THE WORLD COOKBOOK

All recipes in this document Gail has made and they are her favorites. Those with *** after the name of the recipe were made many, many times! Gail always omitted the hot spices in the recipes and made a milder version of the recipe.

ITALIAN CUISINE

CHICKEN SOUP WITH PASTA AND CHEESE or Zuppa di Pollo

Light but filling, this soup is good year-round. Leftover chicken can be added to the dish to turn it into a satisfying main course. Best of all, it takes only a few minutes to prepare.

Egg substitute equivalent to 2 eggs, or 2 eggs
4 C low-sodium chicken broth
1 C pastina or any crushed macaroni
1/4 C grated Parmesan cheese
1 tbsp. Chopped fresh parsley

Whisk the egg substitute in a small mixing bowl until thoroughly blended. Set aside.

Bring the broth to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the pastina and return the broth to a simmer. Simmer until pastina is tender, about 10 minutes. Whisk in egg substitute and continue to cook for 1 minute.

Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle with Parmesan and parsley.

TOMATO-MOZZARELLA SALAD or Insalata di Pomodori

One of the delights of summer, this salad is perfect as a light lunch or supper for those days when it's just too hot to cook.

1 medium red onion, very thinly sliced
4 large tomatoes, preferably vine-ripened or greenhouse, sliced about 1/2 inch thick
1/2 lb. Nonfat or part-skim mozzarella, thinly sliced or shredded
1/4 C chopped fresh parsley
2 tsps. Finely chopped fresh basil
3 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
Black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp. Red wine vinegar, or to taste

Place a layer of onion in a glass or ceramic serving dish. Cover with a layer of tomatoes and a layer of mozzarella. Sprinkle with some of the parsley, basil, garlic, and pepper. Drizzle with a little oil and a splash of vinegar. Continue layering the rest of the ingredients (the number of layers will depend on the size of your dish). Refrigerate until well chilled.

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BAKED FISH STEAK WITH CAPERS or Pesce Arragosto con Capperi

This foil-wrapped fish works wonderfully well on a grill. If you then eat the fish al fresco, you can close your eyes and almost feel the Neapolitan sun on your face.

- 4 fish steaks, such as tuna (about 4 oz. each)
- 1 tbsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 slices lemon
- 1/4 C capers, rinsed and drained
- 1 tbsp. Chopped parsley
- Vinegar, balsamic vinegar, or lemon juice
- 1/8 tsp. Salt
- Black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F or start fire in grill.

Rinse fish steaks and pat dry with paper towels. Lay each fish steak on a square of baking parchment if baking or foil if grilling. Drizzle with olive oil. Season each piece with a slice of lemon, 1 tbsp. Capers, parsley, a dash of vinegar, a pinch of salt, and pepper.

Fold the bottom and top of each parchment sheet toward the center. Then fold in the sides until fish is completely enclosed. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes, or until packets puff up from the trapped steam or fish flakes easily with a fork. Or grill foil packets about 4 inches from heat over gray, ash-coated coals for about 10 minutes per side.

COOK'S TIP: If your parchment or foil won't enclose the fish properly, lay a second square on top of the ingredients. To make each package, roll up each of the four sides of the two sheets of parchment or foil.

MUSSELS STEAMED IN WINE or Frutti di Mare

Coastal Mediterraneans have gleaned shellfish from the sea for eons. Exposed on the rocks at low tide, mussels were easy pickings--a succulent morsel for the wealthy and a reliable meal for the poor. This simple dish presents the delicate flavor of mussels at their best. With bread and a salad, it makes a light meal.

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- 2 lbs. Mussels in shells
- 4 quarts cold water
- 1/3 C salt
- 2 tbsps. Acceptable margarine
- 3 shallots, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 C dry white wine or 3 tbsps. Lemon juice
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 tsp. Dried thyme, crumbled
- 1/2 tsp. Black pepper

Scrub mussels under cold running water. With your fingertips, remove any black, stringy beards. Discard any mussels that do not close when tapped --when picking mussels and clams, they should not have an offensive odor and should be tightly closed. They may open and close periodically before being cooked, though. They are alive if the shell closes when tapped. When you cook them, discard any that do not open (they were dead, and therefore no good, before they were cooked)--.

In a large stockpot, combine water and salt. Add the mussels and soak for 15 minutes. This allows the mussels to clean out any sand or mud, if present, and freshens their flavor. Drain the mussels and rinse in fresh water. Set aside.

Wipe out the pot with paper towels. Add margarine to the stockpot and melt over medium heat. Saute the shallots and garlic until softened, about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the wine, bay leaf, thyme, and pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat and add the mussels. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 5 to 10 minutes, or until shells open.

Remove pot from the heat and, using a slotted spoon, transfer the mussels to a serving bowl. Discard any mussels that have not opened. Spoon some of the juices over the mussels and serve immediately.

COOK'S TIP ON MUSSELS: Most Americans haven't grown up eating mussels, so they are unsure of how--and even whether--to eat them. A great pity, because mussels are the sweetest of the shellfish and are perfectly acceptable as a finger food. Simply pick up a cooked mussel in your fingertips and pull the halves of the shell apart. Use the empty half like a spoon to scoop the mussel out of the other half, then eat it right from the shell. Or scoop the meat out of all the mussels onto the plate and then proceed with more "civilized" utensils.

CHICKEN PICCATA or Pollo Piccata***

- 6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 4 oz. each)
- 1 tsp. Extra virgin olive oil
- 8 green onions, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
- ½ C all purpose flour
- 2 to 3 tsps. Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsps. Low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tbsps. Fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsps. Capers, rinsed, drained, and chopped if very large
- 2 tbsps. Dry white wine (optional)
- 2 tbsps. Dry sherry (optional)
- black pepper to taste
- 1 small lemon, thinly sliced (optional)
- 2 tbsps. Chopped parsley (optional)

Rinse the chicken breasts and pat dry with paper towels. Place between sheets of plastic wrap and flatten slightly with a meat mallet or rolling pin. Set aside.

Heat a large skillet over medium heat, add 1 tsp. Olive oil, and saute the green onions and garlic just until tender, about 2 minutes. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Put the flour on a plate and lightly coat both sides of the chicken. Shake off excess flour.

Lightly brown chicken in the skillet over medium heat, adding a small amt. of oil as needed. Return the green onions and garlic to the pan. Add the broth, lemon juice, and capers, and the wine and sherry, if using. Saute over high heat until heated through, about 2 minutes. Stir in the pepper.

Serve on a warmed platter and garnish with lemon slices and chopped parsley, if using.

TURKEY ROLLS WITH PROSCIUTTO AND CHEESE

This dish traditionally uses chicken breasts, but our convenient method uses turkey cutlets (sliced turkey breast). After you roll them up with the prosciutto and mozzarella inside, all you need to do is quickly cook them with some meaty portobello mushrooms. Serve with a vermicelli pasta for a sumptuous and elegant feast.

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4 turkey cutlets (8 oz.) or 4 small boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (8 ounces), all visible fat removed (you can parallel cut 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breast halves to make 4 pieces)

2 tsps. Chopped fresh rosemary or ½ tsp. dried, crushed using mortar and pestle
1/8 tsp. Black pepper
4 thin slices part-skim mozzarella cheese (1 oz.)
4 thin slices prosciutto or lean ham (1 oz.)
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour
egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg
½ C plain dry bread crumbs
Water as needed
8 oz. Dried vermicelli
1 tbsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
½ tsp. Dried oregano, crumbled
½ tsp. Dried basil, crumbled
4 oz. Portobello mushrooms, sliced
2 tbsps. Marsala wine, white wine, nonalcoholic white wine, or low-sodium chicken broth
2 tbsps. Water

Rinse turkey and pat dry with paper towels. Place cutlets on a flat surface. Cover with a sheet of plastic wrap. With the smooth side of a meat mallet, lightly flatten the cutlets, being careful not to tear the meat. Sprinkle the top of each cutlet with chopped rosemary and black pepper. Place a slice of cheese and prosciutto in the center of each cutlet. Starting at a short end, roll up each cutlet, jelly-roll style. Fasten seams with wooden toothpicks.

Lightly sprinkle flour over each roll; pat flour into surface of turkey with your hands. Pour egg substitute into a shallow bowl; spread bread crumbs onto a plate. Dip each roll into egg substitute and then lightly coat with bread crumbs. Set aside.

Following manufacturer's directions, cook vermicelli. (Don't add salt or oil, however.)

Meanwhile, heat a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil, garlic, oregano, and basil. Cook for 30 seconds. Brown the turkey rolls on all sides (approximately 1 minute on each side). Reduce heat to medium-low. Add mushrooms and cook for 1 minute. Add marsala and 2 tbsps. water; cook, covered, for 3 to 4 minutes, or until turkey is no longer pink when tested with a knife (do not overcook).

Remove skillet from heat. Pull toothpicks from rolls. Let cool slightly and slice crosswise. To serve, place 1 cup cooked vermicelli on each serving plate. Place the turkey slices from one roll on top or to one side, and top with a quarter of the mushrooms or place them to the side. Repeat with remaining pasta, turkey, mushrooms.

COOK'S TIP ON PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS: Portobello mushrooms are very large, dark brown, and meaty tasting. Grilling is an easy way to fix these flavorful favorites. Clean 8 ounces of portobellos as you would button mushrooms--wipe with a clean, damp cloth or brush gently with a mushroom brush. Lightly spray them with vegetable oil spray or olive oil spray; sprinkle

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with 1 to 2 tbsps. chopped fresh herbs (basil, oregano, or your own favorite) or 1 to 2 tsps. dried. Grill over medium-hot coals for 3 to 4 minutes, then turn and cook on the other side for another 3 to 4 minutes. Serve hot or cold with your favorite main dish.

TWO-SAUCE TURKEY CANNELLONI or Cannelloni

This perennial favorite gets an update but keeps its familiar highlights. Homemade pasta filled with rich-tasting turkey and ricotta cheese bakes under not one sauce, but two. This savory sensation is even better when made ahead, then reheated the next day.

Pasta Dough

½ C all-purpose flour
½ C semolina flour or all-purpose flour
egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg
2 tbsps. Skim milk

Seasoned Turkey

8 ounces ground skinless turkey breast (fat free) or 8 oz. Boneless, skinless chicken breast, all visible fat removed, finely minced.
Vegetable oil spray
1/4 C finely chopped onion (about ½ medium)
1 clove garlic, minced (about ½ tsp.)
1 tbsp. Marsala or nonalcoholic white wine
1 tsp. Cornstarch
½ tsp. Dried oregano, crumbled
1/4 tsp. Fennel seeds
1/8 tsp. Black pepper

Filling

1 C fat-free ricotta cheese (8 oz.)
½ C chopped fresh spinach (about 1 oz.)
Egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg

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Tomato Sauce

Vegetable oil spray
1/4 C chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
1/4 tsp. Crushed red pepper flakes
15-oz. Can no-salt-added crushed tomatoes
1/2 tsp. Dried oregano, crumbled
1/2 tsp. Dried basil, crumbled
1/2 tsp. Sugar
1/8 tsp. Black pepper

Pimiento-Bechamel Sauce

1 C skim milk
2-oz. Jar sliced pimientos, rinsed and drained
1/8 tsp. Black pepper
3 tbsps. Water
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour

Vegetable oil spray
2 tbsps. Parmesan cheese

For the pasta dough, place all-purpose and semolina flours in a medium mixing bowl. Add the egg substitute and milk. Stir with a fork until mixture is moistened. With your hands, form mixture into a ball. On a lightly floured flat surface, knead dough until smooth and elastic, about 2 to 3 minutes. Place dough back in bowl and cover with a dish towel. Let dough rest about 15 minutes. Roll dough out on a floured surface to a 15-inch square. With a sharp knife, cut square into quarters; cut each quarter in half (you will have 8 rectangular pieces of dough). Cover with plastic wrap and set aside. (Dough can be kept, refrigerated in an airtight plastic bag, for up to 10 hours.)

For the seasoned turkey, cook ground turkey over medium heat in a medium nonstick skillet, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes, or until no longer pink. Place turkey in a colander, rinse under hot water, and drain. Set aside in a nonmetallic bowl. Wipe skillet with paper towels, coat lightly with vegetable oil spray, and heat over medium heat. Saute the onion and garlic in the hot skillet for 2 to 3 minutes, or until onion is tender. Add to bowl with ground turkey. Add marsala, cornstarch, oregano, fennel seeds, and black pepper and mix well. Cover bowl and let sit for 15 to 20 minutes. (You can prepare sauces while turkey mixture sits.) Add filling ingredients to turkey mixture and mix with a spoon. Set aside.

For the tomato sauce, spray a medium nonstick saucepan with vegetable oil spray. Heat pan over medium heat. Saute onion, garlic, and red pepper, stirring constantly, until onion is tender, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add remaining tomato sauce ingredients. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and set aside.

For the pimiento-bechamel sauce, place milk, pimientos, and pepper in a small saucepan.

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Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Place water and flour in a container with a tight-fitting lid. Shake mixture until smooth. Stir flour mixture into milk mixture. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until mixture thickens, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

To assemble dish, spray a 9 X 13 baking dish with vegetable oil spray. Ladle ½ C tomato sauce into the dish; spread evenly to coat (mixture may not cover the bottom entirely). Spoon 1/4 C turkey mixture down the middle of a piece of pasta dough. Roll pasta up and place seam side down in prepared baking dish. Repeat with remaining pasta and filling. Spread the pimientobechamel sauce evenly over pasta rolls. Spread the remaining tomato sauce over all. Cover pan with aluminum foil and bake for 1 hour, or until pasta is tender to the bite. Remove from oven and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

COOK'S TIP: Because of the many steps required in this dish, here are some suggestions to make preparation a bit easier. For the pasta: You can substitute 8 ounces manicotti shells, cooked and cooled according to package directions. (Don't add salt or oil, however.) This will yield about 3 shells per serving. Prepare baking dish as directed above. Fill shells using about 3 tablespoons filling for each. Top with sauces and bake as directed, except cut baking time to 40 minutes. For the filling: If you have 1 cup of plain cooked turkey or chicken, mix it with the ingredients for the seasoned turkey (omit cornstarch) and combine with the filling ingredients. For the tomato sauce: You can substitute 1 3/4 C of your favorite low-fat, low-sodium prepared spaghetti sauce.

POT-ROAST-STYLE STEAK WITH TOMATOES or Manza Stufato

Since this dish is cooked for a short time, the flavors of the meat and seasonings remain distinct. You can also stew the meat for a much longer time, melding the flavors to create a melt-in-your-mouth feast.

- 1 ½ tsps. Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb. Sirloin or lean steak of choice, all visible fat removed, cut into serving size pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
- 2 Italian plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tsp. Fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. Dried oregano, crumbled
- Black pepper to taste
- pinch of salt

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat and sear the steak pieces until they reach the desired doneness, about 10 minutes for rare. Transfer the meat to a serving platter and cover with foil or a lid to keep warm. Set aside.

Add the garlic to the skillet and saute over low heat until golden, about 2 minutes, being

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careful not to burn it. Add the rest of the ingredients except the meat. Cook over medium heat until the tomatoes are tender but still have texture, about 5 minutes. Return the meat to the skillet, along with any juices, and cook gently for a few minutes to combine flavors.

Transfer meat and sauce to the platter and serve immediately.

COOK'S TIP: Keep in mind that the meat will continue to cook slightly both when covered on the platter and when returned to the sauce. If you like your steak on the pink side, you might want to undercook it a bit to ensure desired doneness.

PASTA PRIMAVERA ***

Pasta primavera simply means spring pasta, and the only criterion is that you use fresh vegetables when you assemble your choices. You can easily modify this simple recipe to accommodate 2 to 20.

3 ounces dried pasta, such as rotelli, penne, ziti, or radiatore

1 tsp. Extra-virgin olive oil

1 clove garlic

6 oz. Fresh mixed vegetables, such as shredded zucchini or other summer squash, shredded carrot, broccolo florets, cauliflower florets, thinly sliced red bell pepper, snow peas, or sliced mushrooms

2 tsps. Fresh lemon juice, or to taste

Black pepper to taste

Cook pasta according to package instructions until desired doneness is reached. (Don't add salt or oil, however). Add a cup of so of cold water to stop the cooking process; allow pasta to remain in hot water until needed.

Heat 1 tsp. oil in a large skillet over medium heat and saute the garlic until golden, taking care not to let it brown. Add the vegetables and cook until just tender, about 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with lemon juice and pepper.

Drain the pasta and add to the skillet. Stir and toss until the pasta is blended with the vegetable mixture. Transfer to a plate and serve.

COOK'S TIP: Leftovers make a delicious cold pasta salad, so you might want to make extra!

PEAS WITH PINE NUTS or Piselli con Pignoli***

If you think you don't care for peas, try them this way. We think you'll change your mind! You can find pine nuts, or pignoli, in larger supermarkets and most Italian grocery stores.

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½ C low-sodium chicken broth
½ medium onion, sliced
½ tsp. Sugar
3 lbs. Fresh peas, shelled, or 20 ounces frozen peas
1 tsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 C pine nuts (about 1 oz.)
1 tsp. Dried rosemary, crushed using a mortar and pestle, or Italian seasoning, crumbled
1/4 tsp. Salt
Black pepper to taste

Bring broth, onion and sugar to a boil over high heat in a medium saucepan. Add peas and cook until tender, about 5 minutes for fresh peas or 3 minutes for frozen. Drain. Discard liquid and onion slices. Set peas aside.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the pine nuts and cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes, or until golden. Add rosemary, then peas, and saute until heated through, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

COOK'S TIP ON FROZEN PEAS: If you use frozen peas, don't bother to thaw them. A few seconds in the pan is all it takes.

FETTUCINE ALFREDO

Thanks go to Alfredo DiLelio for his 1914 creation of the classic dish known as fettuccine Alfredo. No thanks to him, though, for all the fat it usually contains. This lightened version is considerably lower in fat than the traditional version. Nevertheless, you need to eat low-fat accompaniments with it for balance.

1 C evaporated skim milk
1tsp. Acceptable margarine
1/4 C reduce-fat cream cheese
8 oz. Dried fettucine
2/3 C grated Parmesan cheese
Black pepper (freshly ground preferred)

In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, combine milk and margarine. Cook over medium heat until milk mixture simmers, about 7 minutes. Add cream cheese. Cook and stir with a wire whisk until cream cheese melts and mixture is smooth, about 3 to 4 minutes. Cover and remove from heat.

Meanwhile, cook fettuccine in a large stockpot of boiling water according to package directions or until desired doneness. (Don't add salt or oil, however.) Drain thoroughly.

Add fettuccine to pan with milk mixture. Cook over low heat, tossing fettuccine until well coated, about 1 minute. Add Parmesan cheese and season with pepper. Toss lightly to combine.

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Remove from heat, cover, and let stand 1 to 2 minutes (this gives liquid a chance to be slightly absorbed into the pasta). Serve immediately.

HERBED BATTER BREAD or Pannetone Piati***

This easy bread tastes wonderful toasted. If there's any left, it makes terrific bread crumbs once stale.

1 package (1 tbsp.) Active dry yeast
½ C warm water (105 degrees F)
1 C skim milk
2 tbsps. Acceptable margarine
Egg substitute equivalent to 2 eggs, or 2 eggs, lightly beaten
3 tbsps. Honey
2 tbsps. Nonfat plain yogurt
1 tbsp. Italian seasoning
1 tsp. Salt
4 C all-purpose flour
Vegetable oil spray

Combine yeast and warm water in a large mixing bowl. Set aside.

In a small saucepan over low heat, heat milk and margarine just long enough to melt margarine.

Add egg substitute, honey, yogurt, Italian seasoning, and salt to yeast mixture and blend thoroughly. Stir in the flour. When combined, beat at least 100 strokes by hand or for 1 minute with an electric mixture. Please note that this is a batter, not a solid dough.

Cover with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place until the batter is almost tripled in bulk, about 1 hour. Spray 4 --5 ½-in. Loaf pans with vegetable oil spray. Set aside. Stir the batter down and divide evenly among the loaf pans. Cover and let rise until almost to top of pans, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bake for 35 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted near the center of the loaf comes out clean. Let cool for about 15 minutes before removing from pan. Cut into 8 slices per loaf and serve hot, warm, or cool.

FRENCH CUISINE

CHICKEN WITH 40 CLOVES OF GARLIC or Poulet aux Quarante d'Ail***

Don't worry! As the chicken cooks, so does the garlic, rendering a sweet flavor and soft texture. Be sure to save the garlic to spread on crusty bread, which makes a nice accompaniment to the chicken.

3 pounds chicken pieces (breasts, thighs, and drumsticks), skinned, all visible fat removed
40 cloves garlic, separated from head and unpeeled (3 to 4 heads)
Vegetable oil spray
½ C dry white wine or low-sodium chicken broth
1 ½ tsps. Chopped fresh thyme or ½ tsp. Dried thyme, crumbled
About 1/3 C low-sodium chicken broth, if needed
1/4 C low-sodium chicken broth or water
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour

Rinse chicken pieces and pat dry with paper towels. Set aside.

Place cloves of garlic in a medium saucepan. Add enough water to cover garlic. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes; drain. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Spray a Dutch oven with vegetable oil spray. Place over medium-high heat. Add chicken to hot Dutch oven and brown on all sides, turning chicken as necessary. This should take about 7 to 10 minutes.

Add wine, thyme, and garlic to Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over high heat. Bake, covered, for 40 to 45 minutes, or until chicken is tender and no longer pink on the inside.

Transfer chicken and garlic to a serving platter and keep warm. Measure cooking liquid. Add enough chicken broth, if necessary, to measure 1 C. Return liquid to Dutch oven, bring to a boil over high heat, and reduce heat to medium. Stir together 1/4 C broth and the flour. Add to liquid in Dutch oven. Cook and stir constantly until thickened and bubbly, about 3 to 5 minutes. Cook and stir 1 minute more. Spoon over chicken.

COOK'S TIP: Although the classic French dish uses 40 cloves of garlic, you may prefer to use only 1 or 2 heads. Less garlic won't significantly alter the flavor of the recipe.

BEEF BURGUNDY or Boeuf Bourguignonne

This rich, hearty stew is one of Burgundy's most famous dishes. Now that wild mushrooms are more readily available, give them a try. Their exotic flavors add that extra touch of sophistication.

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3 slices turkey bacon, chopped (optional)
1 lb. Round steak, all visible fat removed, cut into ½-in. Cubes
1 C chopped onion (about 2 medium)
4 large cloves garlic, peeled and left whole
1 tbsp. Acceptable margarine
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour
½ C water
1 ½ C dry red wine or nonalcoholic red wine
1 C low-sodium beef broth, plus more if needed
1 C coarsely chopped carrots (about 1 ½ medium)
1 C frozen pearl onions (about 4 oz.)
8 oz. Chanterelle, shiitake, or button mushrooms, or a combination (coarsely chop any large mushrooms)
¼ C Cognac or brandy (optional)
1 tbsp. Dark brown sugar
1 tbsp. No-salt-added tomato paste
1 tsp. Dried rosemary, crushed using mortar and pestle
4 tps. Chopped fresh thyme (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In an ovenproof Dutch oven, cook bacon over medium heat for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from Dutch oven and set aside.

Increase heat to medium-high. Brown beef in Dutch oven, half at a time, until brown on all sides, about 5 to 7 minutes per batch. Remove meat from Dutch oven and set aside. Reduce heat to medium and add onion, garlic, and margarine. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir in flour.

Add turkey bacon, browned beef, and remaining ingredients except thyme. Bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat. Bake, covered, about 1 ½ hours, or until meat is tender, stirring occasionally and adding more beef broth, if necessary. Garnish each serving with chopped thyme, if desired.

COOK'S TIP ON TOMATO PASTE: What do you do when you need only a small amt. of tomato paste and don't want to waste what remains in the can? Freeze the rest in tablespoon-size batches on waxed paper or in the compartments of an ice tray. Then store them in a freezer bag for up to 4 months. Any time you need more, just reach into your freezer.

MEATLESS CASSOULET or Cassoulet***

A typical French cassoulet, named after an earthenware pot called a cassole, is a stew of white beans and meat. There are as many versions of this stew as there are cooks who make it. This unique version preserves the superb flavor of the stew yet omits the high-fat meats that are commonly used.

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8 oz. Dried Great Northern beans or other dried white beans
8 oz. Dried black beans
6 C water
Vegetable oil spray
1 ½ C chopped carrots (about 2 medium)
1 ½ C chopped celery (about 3 stalks)
1 large green bell pepper, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
2 8-oz. Cans no-salt-added tomato sauce
10 ½-oz. Can low-sodium chicken broth
½ C dry white wine or nonalcoholic white wine
¼ C molasses
2 bay leaves
1 ½ tsps. Dried fennel seeds, crushed using a mortar and pestle
½ to ¾ tsp. Crushed red papper flakes
½ tsp. Salt
½ tsp. Dried thyme, crumbled

Rinse the beans. In a Dutch oven, combine the beans and the water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Cover and let stand 1 hour. Or place beans and water in a large mixing bowl, cover, and let stand for 6 to 8 hours or overnight. Drain beans in a colander and rinse. Set aside.

Dry Dutch oven and spray with vegetable oil spray. Add carrots, celery, bell pepper, onion, and garlic. Cook over medium heat for 20 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in beans and remaining ingredients.

Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 2 ½ to 3 hours, or until beans are tender, adding water if necessary and stirring occasionally. Discard bay leaves.

COOK'S TIP: This hearty bean entree gets even better when it is made ahead, allowing the flavors to blend. If desired, the recipe can be halved.

ROASTED ASPARAGUS WITH DIJON VINAIGRETTE or Roti Asperges aux Dijon
Vinaigrette***

The Loire Valley is called the garden of France, thanks to its abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit. Even the prized white asparagus grows there. This easy side dish is equally delicious with green asparagus (which is much easier to find). It goes nicely with roasted poultry and red potatoes.

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24 fresh asparagus spears
Vegetable oil spray
1/4 tsp. Grated lemon zest
1 tbsp. Fresh lemon juice
1 tbsp. Low-sodium chicken broth
3/4 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/2 tsp. Olive oil
Dash of black pepper
2 large lettuce leaves

Preheat oven to 500 degrees F.

Snap off and discard woody bases of asparagus spears. Arrange asparagus in a single layer on a baking sheet. Spray asparagus with vegetable oil spray. Bake asparagus for 10 minutes, or until crisp-tender and lightly browned. Remove from oven.

Meanwhile, combine remaining ingredients except lettuce in a screw-top jar. Cover and shake until well-combined.

To serve, place asparagus on a lettuce-lined serving plate. Drizzle vinaigrette over asparagus and toss gently to coat. Serve at once, let cool, or chill.

GERMAN CUISINE

CHILLED ASPARAGUS WITH LEMONY GARLIC DRESSING or Spargel mit Knoblauchsauce

Germans love asparagus almost as much as they love their beer! This recipe features chilled asparagus tossed with a creamy low-fat dressing.

Dressing

2 tablespoons nonfat or low-fat sour cream
1 tbsp. Low-fat buttermilk or skim milk
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp. Grated lemon zest

24 fresh asparagus spears, woody bases snapped off and discarded

Poppy seeds (optional)

In a small mixing bowl, stir together sour cream, buttermilk, garlic and lemon zest. Cover and chill until serving time.

Cook asparagus in a large saucepan or skillet in boiling water for 5 minutes, or until crisp tender. Drain. Rinse with cold water and drain again. Cover and chill until serving time.

To serve, gently toss asparagus spears with dressing. Sprinkle lightly with poppy seeds, if desired.

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GERMAN POTATO SALAD WITH BABY CARROTS or Kartoffelsalat mit Karotten***

This classic warm German potato salad is flavored with a low-fat combination of vinegar, turkey bacon, onion, broth, and seasonings. This recipe can be easily halved.

2 lbs. Red potatoes, scrubbed
1 C baby carrots (about 4 oz.)
3 tablespoons balsamic or cider vinegar
1/4 tsp. Salt
1/8 to 1/4 tsp. Black pepper

Dressing

Vegetable oil spray
4 slices turkey bacon, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
1/2 C low-sodium chicken broth
2 tbsps. Balsamic or cider vinegar
2 tbsps. Chopped fresh parsley

Place potatoes and carrots in a large saucepan, cover with water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until tender, 25 to 30 minutes for medium potatoes, 15 to 20 minutes for tiny potatoes. Drain. When cool enough to handle but still warm (about 7 minutes), cut potatoes into 1/4-in.-thick slices. (Leave baby carrots whole.)

In a medium mixing bowl, layer warm potato slices and carrots, sprinkling the 3 tablespoons vinegar, the salt, and the pepper between layers. Let stand at room temperature while preparing dressing.

For dressing, spray a medium skillet with vegetable oil spray. Cook turkey bacon over medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Add onion. Cook, stirring constantly, for 5 minutes, or until onion is tender.

Add chicken broth and 2 tablespoons vinegar to skillet and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat and pour over potato mixture. Add parsley and toss gently to coat. Serve warm.

BUNDLED TROUT AND VEGETABLES or Forelle und Gemüse

Trout is served quite often in Bavaria, where ice-cold streams provide an ample supply of this tasty fish. This version is seasoned with basil and oregano, nontraditional German herbs. Serve with cooked rice or noodles.

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- 1 C small broccoli florets (about 6 ounces)
- 1 medium carrot, cut into matchstick-size strips
- ½ C yellow summer squash, thinly sliced or cut into matchstick-size strips
- 2-pound rainbow trout, sea trout, or pike
- ½ tsp. Dried basil, crumbled
- ½ tsp. Dried oregano, crumbled
- ¼ tsp. Salt
- 1/8 tsp. Black pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Cook broccoli, carrots, and squash in a saucepan in a small amt. of boiling water over high heat for 1 minute. Drain and set aside.

Rinse fish and pat dry with paper towels. To assemble fish bundle, tear off 1 or 2 pieces of foil large enough to encase the fish. Place fish in the middle of the foil

In a small bowl, combine basil, oregano, salt, and pepper. Sprinkle half the herb mixture inside the cavity of the fish. Arrange vegetables inside and around the fish. Sprinkle with remaining herb mixture.

Bring foil up and around fish and seal tightly. Place fish bundle on a baking sheet. Bake about 40 minutes, or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

To serve, unwrap fish, place it on a serving platter, and arrange vegetables around fish.

TURKEY "MEATBALLS" IN SQUASH SHELLS or Königsberger Klops***

Named after the German city of Königsberg, this dish has a slightly tart flavor, which is common in German cooking.

2 small acorn squashes (about 1 lb. each)
2 tbsps. Water (if microwaving squash)
1 C plain soft bread crumbs (about 2 slices bread)
1/4 C finely chopped onion
Egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg, or 1 egg
1/2 tsp. Anchovy paste
1/8 tsp. Salt
1/8 tsp. Black pepper
1 lb. Ground skinless turkey or chicken breast
1 1/2 C dry white wine or nonalcoholic dry white wine
1/2 C water
4 black peppercorns
3 whole cloves
1 bay leaf
Low-sodium chicken broth or water
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour
2 tps. Capers, rinsed and drained
Chopped fresh parsley

To cook squashes, cut them in half and remove strings and seeds. If using a microwave, place the squash halves, cut side down, in a microwave-safe baking dish. Prick skin several times with a fork. Add 2 tbsps. Water. Cook, covered, on 100% power (high) for 15 to 20 minutes, or until squashes can be easily pierced with a sharp knife. Give dish a half-turn twice during cooking. Drain. To bake squashes, preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place halves, cut side down, in a baking dish. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Turn cut side up and bake for 20 minutes or more, or until tender.

Meanwhile, in a medium mixing bowl, combine bread crumbs, onion, egg substitute, and anchovy paste, salt, and pepper. Add ground turkey and mix well. Shape into 24 balls.

In a large skillet, combine wine, 1/2 C water, peppercorns, cloves, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat to low. Add turkey meatballs. Simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove meatballs and set aside.

Strain liquid from skillet into a 1-cup measuring cup. Add enough chicken broth or water to equal 1 cup. In a small bowl, stir about 1/4 C liquid into flour until smooth. Return remaining liquid and flour mixture to skillet. Stir to mix well. Cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes, or until thickened and bubbly, stirring often. Add capers. Continue to cook and stir for 1 minute. Return meatballs to skillet with sauce. Spoon sauce over meatballs. Cook over low heat for about 2 minutes, or until meatballs are heated through. To serve, spoon meatballs with sauce into squash halves. Sprinkle with parsley.

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BLACK FOREST CAKE or Schwarzwälder Gebäck

This luscious chocolate dessert comes from the Black Forest region in southern Germany. Although the recipe involves several steps, it is relatively easy to make and can be assembled, except for the garnish, up to 24 hours in advance.

Filling

16-oz. Can water-packed tart red cherries
1/4 C sugar
2 tbsps. Cornstarch
2 tbsps. Cherry or orange liqueur (optional)

Cake

Vegetable oil spray
2 tbsps. All-purpose flour
1/2 C unsweetened cocoa powder
1 C water
1/2 C acceptable vegetable oil
2 tsps. Vanilla
1 1/4 C all-purpose flour
1 C sugar
1/2 tsp. Baking soda
1/2 tsp. Baking powder
1/8 tsp. Salt
3 egg whites
1/4 tsp. Cream of tartar
3 tbsps. Sugar

Garnish

1 C frozen light whipped topping, thawed
Unsweetened cocoa powder (optional)
Maraschino cherries (optional)

To make the filling, combine undrained cherries, 1/4 C sugar, and cornstarch in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thickened and bubbly, about 5 minutes, stirring often. Continue to cook and stir for 2 minutes. Stir in liqueur, if desired. Let cool. Cover and chill thoroughly without stirring.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray two 8-in. Round baking pans with vegetable oil spray. Dust pans with 2 tbsps. Flour; tap out excess. Set aside.

Place cocoa powder in a medium mixing bowl. Whisk in water until smooth. Stir in oil and vanilla.

In a large mixing bowl, combine 1 1/4 C flour, 1 C sugar, baking soda, baking powder,

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and salt. Add cocoa mixture and stir until well combined.

Beat egg whites in a medium mixing bowl with an electric mixer until foamy. Add cream of tartar and beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add 3 tbsps. Sugar, beating on high speed until stiff peaks form.

Fold egg mixture into chocolate mixture. Divide batter evenly between pans. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Let pans cool on wire racks for 10 minutes. Invert cakes onto racks and let cool completely.

To assemble, halve cakes horizontally. Place one layer on a serving plate. Spread 1/3 of the filling (about 2/3 C) on first layer. Place second cake layer on top. Spread with 1/3 of the filling. Place third cake layer on top. Spread with remaining filling. Top with last cake layer. Cover with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator until serving time.

At serving time, cut cake into 16 wedges. Dollop each serving with whipped topping. Sprinkle lightly with cocoa powder and garnish with cherries, if desired.

COOK'S TIP: This cake cuts so easily you can get 18 slices--or even 24--if you're really watching your fat and calorie intake.

PUFFED PANCAKE WITH APPLE-CRANBERRY SAUCE or Pfannkuchen Grundrezept mit Apfelsauce

Like French souffles, German pancakes should be served as soon as they are removed from the oven because they won't stay puffed for very long. This dish would make an impressive addition to your next brunch menu.

Vegetable oil spray

2 tsps. Acceptable margarine

Egg substitute equivalent to 3 eggs

½ C all-purpose flour

½ C skim milk

1/8 tsp. Salt

2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced

¾ C no-sugar-added apple juice

½ C fresh or frozen cranberries or fresh or frozen no-sugar-added blackberries (about 2 ounces)

1/4 C sugar

1/4 tsp. Ground cinnamon

1 tbsp. Cornstarch

2 tbsps. No-sugar-added apple juice or water

Sifted powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Spray a 10-in. Ovenproof skillet with vegetable oil spray. Add margarine. Place skillet in oven for 3 minutes, or until margarine melts.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine egg substitute, flour, milk, and salt. Beat with an

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electric mixer or wire whisk until smooth. Immediately pour egg mixture into hot skillet. Bake, uncovered, for about 25 minutes, or until puffed and well browned.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, combine apples, 3/4 C juice, berries, sugar, and cinnamon. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for about 10 minutes, or until fruit is tender, stirring occasionally. Place cornstarch in a small bowl. Stir in apple juice. Add cornstarch-juice mixture to apple mixture. Cook for about 2 minutes, until thickened and bubbly, stirring often.

To serve, sprinkle pancake with powdered sugar. Cut into wedges and spoon warm sauce over each serving.

COOKS' TIP: The apple-cranberry sauce can be made ahead and reheated in a small sauce-pan over low heat, stirring occasionally. Or place sauce in a microwave-safe cup or bowl, cover loosely with plastic wrap or waxed paper, and reheat on 100% power (high) for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring twice.

COOK'S TIP ON COOKING APPLES: Among the best cooking apples are Rome Beauty, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Jonathan, and Winesap.

GREEK CUISINE

FISH SAUTEED WITH TOMATOES AND CINNAMON or Psari Kapama

This versatile recipe adapts well to just about any fish, so feel free to experiment with what's freshest and most appealing to you.

3 tbsps. Extra-virgin olive oil
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
4 large cloves garlic, crushed or minced
1 lb. Italian plum tomatoes, chopped
1 medium carrot, sliced thinly
1 bay leaf
½ tsp. Black pepper
1/4 tsp. Salt
1/4 tsp. Ground cinnamon
6 small fish fillets (about 1 ½ lbs.) Rinsed and patted dry
2 to 3 tbsps. Fresh lemon juice, to taste
Chopped parsley, for garnish

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add celery, onion, and garlic to skillet. Saute for about 2 minutes, stirring constantly, adjusting heat if necessary so mixture doesn't brown.

Add tomatoes, carrot, bay leaf, pepper, salt, and cinnamon and cook for 5 minutes. Adjust pepper and cinnamon, if desired. Make 6 depressions in the mixture; place fish in

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depressions. Spoon hot vegetables over fish to cover. Cook over medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes, or until fish is opaque all the way through.

Sprinkle the lemon juice over all, cover the skillet, and remove from heat. Let the skillet sit for about 5 minutes before serving so the flavors can permeate the fish. Remove bay leaf and garnish with parsley.

COOK'S TIP: Good fish fillet choices for this recipe include sole, flounder, haddock, cod, orange roughy, and catfish. A combination of fish is also tasty.

SAVORY CHICKEN PATTIES or Keftedes***

Throughout the Mediterranean, seasoned ground meat patties are served as appetizers, main courses, and snacks. Street carts appear at lunchtime, their charcoal burners creating a trail of mouth-watering scents through the streets and alleys. Made from any variety of meat, this variation, using chicken, can be prepared ahead and reheated when needed.

Yogurt Sauce

1 C nonfat or low-fat plain yogurt
1 tbsp. Chopped fresh cilantro
Generous pinch of dried dill weed
Black pepper (optional)

Patties

2 slices firm white bread
3/4 lb. Ground skinless chicken breast
2 tbsps. Egg substitute
1 tsp. Dried dill weed
1/2 tsp. Ground cumin
1/4 tsp. Salt
Black pepper to taste
Pinch of ground anise (optional)
Water, if needed
1/2 C all-purpose flour
Vegetable oil spray
1 tbsp. Extra-virgin olive oil

To prepare sauce, combine yogurt, cilantro, and pinch of dill weed in a small bowl; season, if desired, with pepper. Cover bowl and refrigerate sauce.

Trim off and discard bread crusts. Crumble bread into a large bowl. Add ground chicken, egg substitute, 1 tsp. Dill weed, cumin, salt, and pepper, and anise, if desired. Mix thoroughly. Add a little water if the mixture is too dry. Roll into a log and cut into 16 equal portions. Form each into a patty. Sprinkle some of the flour on a platter. Set patties on platter.

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Sprinkle more flour on tops of patties. Lightly spray a large skillet with vegetable oil spray and drizzle with a few drops of olive oil. Fry the patties over medium heat for about 3 minutes on each side or until a quick-read thermometer inserted in the center of a patty registers 165 degrees F.

Remove patties from skillet. To serve, drizzle each patty with yogurt sauce. Serve with your choice of side dishes or tucked into fresh pita bread and eaten as a sandwich.

HERBED BRAISED BEEF WITH TOMATOES or Brazoles***

You don't need to buy expensive steak for this recipe. It's an excellent budget dish that isn't frugal on taste.

- 1 ½ lbs. Lean steak of choice, such as round steak
- 1 tbsp. Ground coriander
- 2 tsps. Dried oregano, or to taste, crumbled
- 1 tsp. Dried sage
- ½ to 1 tsp. Black pepper, to taste
- ½ tsp. Garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. Ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. Salt
- 6 medium Italian plum tomatoes
- 1 tsp. Sugar
- ½ C low-sodium beef broth
- Chopped fresh parsley or cilantro (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Trim all visible fat from the steak. Cut steak across the grain into 6 equal portions. Set aside.

In a small bowl, mix coriander, oregano, sage, pepper, garlic powder, cinnamon, and salt; rub some of the seasoning mixture into steaks. Set aside remaining seasoning mixture. Place steaks in a baking dish just large enough to hold them.

Slit tomatoes lengthwise, cutting only about halfway through. Pinch to open them slightly so flavors can penetrate. Nestle them between the steaks. Add sugar to remaining seasoning mixture and sprinkle on the slit tomatoes. Pour broth into the dish, being careful not to wash off the seasoning mixture.

Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Baste. Bake for 30 minutes more, or until meat is tender, basting occasionally. Sprinkle with chopped parsley or cilantro, if desired.

COOK'S TIP: Lean pork chops are a good substitute for beef in this recipe.

GYROS ***

Gyros are as common to the streets of Athens as the bean pot is to the streets of Cairo. Towers of meat sizzle next to charcoal ricks, and thin strips are sliced off for each sandwich as it's ordered. At lunchtime, the tantalizing aromas draw hungry patrons like lemmings. Although you can make a quite passable facsimile in your oven, the flavor improves dramatically if the loaf is at least seared on a grill. If you don't like the flavor of lamb, use beef in its place.

Tzatziki Yogurt Sauce

1 C plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt
1/4 C grated cucumber, peeled or unpeeled (about 2 oz.)
1/4 C grated onion (about 1 small)
1/4 tsp. Garlic powder, or to taste

Gyro Loaf

1 lb. Lean beef, finely ground
1 lb. Lean lamb, finely ground
1 small onion, grated
1 tbsp. Black pepper
3 to 4 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
2 tsps. Dried oregano, crumbled
1 tsp. Dried marjoram
1 tsp. Dried thyme, crumbled
3/4 tsp. Salt

Pita bread, Greek style, not pocket style
2 medium tomatoes, sliced or chopped, or to taste
1 medium onion, thinly sliced, or to taste
Lettuce leaves (optional)

Combine the sauce ingredients in a medium mixing bowl and set aside.

Preheat broiler or prepare grill.

In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly combine gyro loaf ingredients. Shape into a flattened loaf about 2 inches thick.

To broil, place on broiler pan and broil 4 inches from heat, turning occasionally, for 5 to 10 minutes per side, or until a meat thermometer inserted in the center registers at least 155 degrees F. Remove pan from broiler. Let loaf rest for 10 minutes, then slice as thinly as possible.

To grill, prepare loaf as directed above. When coals are ready (they'll be lightly coated with a layer of ash), place loaf about 4 inches above coals. Cooking takes about 5 to 10 minutes per side, depending on your grill and your preference.

Assemble each sandwich by placing a few slices of meat in a pita and adding some tomato, a few onion rings, and lettuce, if using. Drizzle on some of the sauce. Fold up and

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fasten each sandwich with a toothpick. Serve with plenty of napkins.

SAUTEED SUMMER SQUASH or Briami

This quick-and-easy method of cooking squash brings out its best flavor without using a lot of other ingredients to mask its natural goodness.

- 1 lb. Zucchini, yellow crookneck squash, or a combination
- 1 tbsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 1/8 tsp. Black pepper, or to taste
- 1 to 3 tbsps. Fresh lemon juice, to taste

Trim the ends of the squash. Cut squash into matchstick-size strips. Heat a large skillet over medium heat until quite hot. Add the oil, followed immediately by the squash. Stir continuously until the sizzling slows down somewhat. Season squash mixture with salt and pepper. When the squash is just barely tender, about 2 minutes, add the lemon juice. Taste for seasoning. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, or until squash is crisp-tender. Serve hot or cold.

COOK'S TIP: For a zippy change of pace, add a tbsp. of rinsed capers when you add the lemon juice to the squash. If you're on a sodium-restricted diet, however, be aware that capers contain about 100 milligrams of sodium per tsp.

GARLIC POTATOES or Patates Skortou***

This country-style recipe, flavored with garlic, makes a fine accompaniment to many types of entrees. Depending on whether you use boiling (waxy) potatoes or baking potatoes, your results will be creamier or fluffier, respectively. Don't be tempted to make this in a food processor--this is one recipe that should be homey and have lots of texture.

- 2 lbs. Boiling or baking potatoes
- 6 large cloves garlic
- 1 tbsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tps. Fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Balsamic vinegar (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. Chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/2 tsp. Chopped fresh oregano
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 1/4 tsp. Black or white pepper

Bring a large stockpot of water to a boil

Meanwhile, scrub potatoes and cut in half. Peel garlic. Place potatoes and whole garlic in the boiling water. There should be enough water to cover them. Boil for about 30 minutes, or until the potatoes are soft all the way through when tested with a knife.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer the potatoes to a large mixing bowl and remove garlic. Set the potato water aside. Press or mash the garlic cloves, add to the potatoes, and combine lightly with a potato masher or large fork.

Stir in the remaining ingredients, adding a little hot potato water to adjust consistency, if necessary.

COOK'S TIP: For a taste change, substitute other fresh herbs for the rosemary and/or oregano. Parsley and sage are just two possibilities.

MIDDLE EASTERN CUISINE

LEMON CHICKEN or Farrouh Limuna (from Yemen)***

A Yemenite tang of lemon brings out the taste of chicken in this simple recipe. To cut the strength of the lemon, you can omit the grated lemon peel.

2 lemons
3 to 4 cloves of garlic, crushed or minced
2 tsps. Hot paprika
black pepper to taste
3-lb. Whole chicken
vegetable oil spray

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Grate the lemons. Juice the lemons and save what's left of the rinds. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine grated zest, garlic, paprika, black pepper, and enough lemon juice to make a paste. Set aside.

In a small bowl, combine grated zest, garlic, paprika, black pepper, and enough lemon juice to make a paste. Set aside.

Add the remaining lemon juice to a bowl of cool water and use the lemon water to rinse the chicken, inside and out. Pat dry with paper towels. Use your fingers to work under the skin and gently separate it from the breast meat of the chicken, being careful not to tear through. If you're careful, you can even work down the thighs and back of the bird. Rub the seasoning paste under the skin, directly onto the meat. Pat the skin back into place.

Lightly spray a roasting pan with vegetable oil spray. Put the chicken in the pan and place the reserved lemon rinds inside the cavity of the chicken. Roast for about 1 ½ hours, or until a thermometer in the thigh registers 165 degrees F. Remove pan from the oven and let the chicken rest for about 10 minutes. Cut the chicken into 4 portions. Remove and discard the skin and all visible fat. Serve chicken hot with the pan juices.

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STUFFED ZUCCHINI --throughout the Middle East***

Zucchini is an ancient vegetable that stands alone or serves well as a backdrop for other flavors. In this case, the flavors come from a savory stuffing that doesn't overpower the zucchini's own delicate aroma and flavor.

- 3 large zucchini (about 10 ounces each)
- 1 C plain dry bread crumbs
- 1 tsp. dried oregano, crumbled
- 1/4 tsp. Black pepper
- 3 large Italian plum tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tbsps. Fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsps. Grated Romano or Parmesan cheese
- 1/3 C low-sodium chicken broth

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Cut zucchini in half lengthwise. Using a spoon or melon baller, scoop out a hollow down the length of the zucchini and discard the pulp.

Place bread crumbs, oregano, pepper, tomatoes, and lemon juice in a medium mixing bowl; squeeze with your hands to moisten the mixture thoroughly. Divide the mixture evenly among the zucchini halves. Sprinkle with the cheese. Transfer to a casserole just large enough to hold the zucchini; pour the chicken broth around the zucchini, being careful not to pour on top.

Bake, uncovered, for about 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center goes in easily and the zucchini are tender. Serve hot, warm, or cold

COOK'S TIP: If a casserole or baking dish of the right size is unavailable, you can improvise by molding aluminum foil around the zucchini, then placing the container on a baking sheet.

PITA BREAD (throughout the Middle East)

Traditional among Middle Eastern peoples, this bread tastes wonderful fresh from the oven but will keep for days and reheats well. Although you can substitute dried yeast, the fresh yeast has more flavor. This pita will be softer and thicker than commercial pita, making it ideal for Gyros.

- 2 cakes yeast
- 2 C warm water (105 degrees F)
- 8 C unbleached white flour
- 2 C whole-wheat flour
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- Unbleached white flour

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In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in the water. Combine the flours in a large mixing bowl. Mix in the salt. Pour in the yeast mixture, and, if necessary, add a little more water. The dough should be very stiff. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth, about 10 minutes. Cover with a clean dish towel and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour. Punch down, then divide the dough into 12 equal pieces.

Roll each piece between your palms until it is smooth. Flatten dough into disks. Place on a lightly floured surface, cover loosely with plastic wrap, and allow to rise for about 1 hour.

Place an overturned baking sheet or baking stones in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 525 degrees F.

On a floured board, roll out one disk of dough into a pancakelike circle 8 to 9 inches in diameter. Carefully place one loaf on the baking sheet in the hot oven. (A flat wooden tool called a baker's peel makes this operation easier.) Bake for about 4 minutes. Keep an eye on the oven, because each loaf takes only a few minutes to bake. Very light brown spots will form on the loaf, and it will puff up quite a bit. Remove it from the oven and transfer to a basket lined with a dish towel. Cover with another towel and stack the loaves as they come from the oven. Eat pita loaves while warm or cover them until cool so they don't dry out.

While each loaf is baking, roll out the next and repeat the procedure.

COOK'S TIP: Make sure your oven is nice and clean before baking the pita, or the high temperature will create a lot of smoke.

HISPANIC CUISINE

CORN, ZUCCHINI AND TOMATOES or Elote y Calabacitas y Tomates (from Mexico)

This colorful side dish is seasoned not only with leafy green cilantro (also known as coriander or Chinese parsley) but also with the seed of the same herb. The seed is also known as coriander. When crushed or ground, coriander seeds taste lemony. They are a wonderful seasoning for meat. Fresh cilantro leaves have a completely different flavor from that of seeds. It is almost like a cross between parsley and fresh basil.

- 1 tbsp. acceptable margarine
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 C fresh or frozen corn (about 8 oz.)
- 1 lb. Zucchini, thinly sliced crosswise
- 2 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and diced
- 1/4 C low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 1/4 tsp. Ground coriander seeds
- 1/8 tsp. Black pepper
- 1 tbsp. Chopped fresh cilantro

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In a large skillet, melt the margarine over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and saute for 2 minutes, or until tender. Add the remaining ingredients except the fresh cilantro. Bring mixture to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook, partially covered, for 4 to 5 minutes, or until vegetables are just tender; do not overcook. Stir in the cilantro and remove pan from heat. Serve warm or cold.

COOK'S TIP ON PEELING TOMATOES: To peel a tomato quickly, drop it into a small pot of boiling water for about 10 seconds, remove, and let cool. The peel will come off easily.

CARIBBEAN CUISINE

SPINACH, CRAB, AND HAM SOUP or Callaloo (from Barbados)

The large, edible leaves of the taro root are known in the Caribbean as callaloo. Since callaloo greens are difficult to find in North American markets, you can substitute spinach, turnip greens, or mustard greens in this flavorful soup. It has many variations and can include sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and cassava root (or yuca root). Also, you can substitute 3 ounces of cooked chicken for the ham.

- 1 tbsp. Acceptable margarine
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 C spinach, turnip greens, or mustard greens, finely chopped (about 2 oz.)
- 3 C low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ C skim milk
- 1/8 tsp. Coconut extract
- 1/8 tsp. White pepper
- 4 oz. Fat-free imitation crabmeat
- 3 oz. low-fat, low-sodium ham, cut into thin strips or 1/2-in. pieces
- 1/8 tsp. Red hot-pepper sauce (optional)

In a large saucepan, melt the margarine over medium-low heat. Reduce heat to low and add the onion and garlic. Cook, covered, for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the spinach and cook, uncovered, for 2 minutes. Add the broth, milk, coconut extract, and white pepper. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the crabmeat and ham, and the hot pepper sauce, if using. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until meat is warmed through. Serve warm.

“OLD CLOTHES” STEW or Ropa Vieja (from Cuba)***

One would never guess that something that tastes so rich and is so tender would be referred to as “old clothes,” but that is what ropa vieja means. This dish is made from an inexpensive cut of meat and cooked until very tender. When the meat is shredded, its appearance evokes the name, but don’t let the name fool you. The succulent meat is usually served with Cuban black beans or could be served wrapped in tortillas.

1 tsp. acceptable vegetable oil
3 lbs. Round steak, all visible fat removed
1 C water
1 bay leaf
1/4 tsp. Salt
1/8 tsp. Black pepper
1 medium onion
1 medium green bell pepper
1 clove garlic
14.5-oz. Can no-salt-added tomatoes
1 tsp. Extra-virgin olive oil
1/8 tsp. Ground cinnamon

In a Dutch oven, heat the vegetable oil over medium heat. Add beef and brown on both sides. Add the water, bay leaf, salt, and pepper and simmer, covered, over low heat for 2 to 3 hours, or until meat is very tender. Remove and discard bay leaf. Remove meat from pan and let cool. Reserve juices in pan.

Meanwhile, slice onion and bell pepper. Mince garlic. Dice tomatoes, reserving juice.

In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-low heat. Add onion, bell pepper, and garlic and saute for 2 to 3 minutes, or until tender. Add this mixture to the reserved pan juices in the Dutch oven, along with the tomatoes, reserved tomato juice, and cinnamon.

Shred the meat with two forks, removing any fat or gristle. Add shredded meat to the Dutch oven and cook, uncovered, for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve warm with cooked black beans, rice, or tortillas.

ASIAN CUISINE

FOREST MUSHROOM SOUP or Yuk-Tong (China)

This simple soup brings out the warm earthiness of the mushroom. Feel free to use shiitake for all the mushrooms if you enjoy their strong, rich flavor. The homemade chicken stock in this recipe can also be used in other recipes, such as Hot-and-Sour Soup. If you don't want to take the time to make homemade broth, use the commercial low-sodium variety.

Stock

3 lbs. Chicken parts, such as wings, necks, backs, ribs, and breastbones
1 green onion, cut into 4 pieces
2 slices fresh gingerroot, each about the size of a quarter

Soup

2 fresh or dried shiitake mushrooms
6 C chicken stock
2 tbsp. Reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tsp. Fragrant toasted sesame oil
3 tbsps. Dry sherry (optional)
3 tbsps. Cornstarch (optional)
3 tbsps. Water (optional)
2 to 3 drops chili oil
6 to 8 fresh medium mushrooms, any variety, sliced
2 green onions, thinly sliced diagonally

Rinse the chicken parts and pat dry with paper towels. To prepare the stock, place the chicken parts in a large stockpot and add water to cover. Add the green onion pieces and the gingerroot. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce heat to maintain the simmer.

Skim off and discard the foam that rises to the top in the next few minutes. When the foam thins and lightens in color, partially cover the pot, leaving a small vent. Adjust the heat to maintain the barest simmer. Cook for about 4 hours.

Remove the stock from the heat. Strain the stock over a large bowl without pressing on the chicken parts. (Pressing on them causes the stock to be very cloudy.) Discard the chicken parts and chill the broth, tightly covered, overnight. By morning, all the fat will have risen to the top of the jellied broth. Remove and discard the fat.

To assemble the soup, soak dried shiitake mushrooms, if using, in a small amount of boiling water for about 15 minutes, or until soft. Drain. Cut off the woody stems and slice the caps very thinly.

Meanwhile, heat 6 cups of stock in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the shiitake mushrooms, soy sauce, and sesame oil, and the sherry, if using. Simmer gently for 5 minutes. If you want a slightly thicker soup, place cornstarch in a small bowl. Stir in water. Add cornstarch-water mixture to the simmering soup. Stir constantly until it reaches the desired

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thickness. Add the chili oil a drop at a time, tasting after each addition. Add the fresh mushrooms and sliced green onions. Stir once and serve.

COOK'S TIP ON BUYING AND BONING CHICKENS: If you buy whole chickens and bone them yourself, you can save money in two ways. You can store the bones in your freezer to use in making virtually fat-free chicken stock, and you get skinless, boneless chicken meat at about half the store price.

SHREDDED BEEF WITH BOK CHOY AND CARROTS or Hung-Gao-Yuk (China)

This is so good that you may want to double the recipe and have leftovers. Steamed rice is a good accompaniment.

1 lb. Beef flank or skirt steak, all visible fat removed
1 tbsp. Reduced-sodium soy sauce
2 tsps. Grated fresh gingerroot
2 to 3 cloves garlic, crushed or minced
½ tsp. Red chili paste
3 tbsps. Dry sherry (optional)
6 stalks bok choy
5 medium carrots
1 ½ tsp. Canola or peanut oil
1 ½ tsp. Canola or peanut oil, if needed
½ C low-sodium beef broth
1 tbsp. Cornstarch
2 tbsp. Water

Slice the meat across the grain into slices about 1/8 inch wide and place in a large mixing bowl. Place the soy sauce, gingerroot, garlic and chili paste and sherry, if using, in a small bowl and mix thoroughly. Pour marinade over the meat and set aside for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, thinly slice the bok choy; slice the carrots into matchstick-size strips. Set aside.

Remove the beef from the marinade and discard the marinade.

Heat a wok or deep, heavy skillet over high heat, add 1 ½ tsp. oil, and stir-fry the drained beef until just cooked, about 2 minutes. Remove the meat with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Add another 1 ½ tsp. oil if the pan is dry, and stir-fry the bok choy and carrots for 2 to 3 minutes over high heat. When the vegetables are almost cooked but still crunchy, add the reserved beef and the beef broth. Place cornstarch in a small bowl. Stir in water. Add cornstarch-water mixture to the beef mixture, stirring constantly. Cook until the sauce thickens, about 1 minute, and serve.

COOK'S TIP ON SLICING MEAT: Meat is easier to slice thinly when it is partially frozen.

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VEGETARIAN FRIED RICE or Chao-Fan (China/Japan)

This vegetarian version of fried rice gets a large protein boost from the tofu, making it a complete meal. You can leave out the tofu without compromising the flavor, however.

- 1 tbsp. Canola or peanut oil
- 1 C sliced mushrooms (about 3 oz.)
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1 C bean sprouts (about 2 oz.)
- 6-oz. Package firm or soft tofu, crumbled (optional)
- ½ C frozen no-salt-added peas, thawed (about 3 oz.)
- 1 tbsp. Reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp. Fragrant toasted sesame oil
- 3 C cooked rice, any kind (about 1 ½ C uncooked)

Heat oil in a wok or large, heavy skillet over high heat. Add mushrooms and green onion and saute for several minutes, until slightly wilted. Add bean sprouts and cook for another minute to wilt them slightly. Add remaining ingredients except rice, mixing well. Stir in rice and heat through before serving.

FIERY PICKLED VEGETABLES or Yang-Bechu (Korea)

The poor in Asian countries literally live on rice and pickled vegetables, with some tofu now and then. Napa, or Chinese, cabbage is easiest to grow, and therefore the most common, vegetable. Feel free to vary the amount and types of vegetables in this dish to suit your own preferences.

- 1 small head napa cabbage, cut into pieces
- 1 lb. Carrots, peeled, cut into 3-in pieces, and quartered
- ½ lb. Green beans, cut in half
- 1 medium turnip, cut into 1/4-in. Squares
- 2 C white vinegar
- 1 C cider vinegar
- 4 dried chili pods
- 1 oz. Fresh gingerroot, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp. Sugar
- 1 tbsp. Salt
- 2 tbsps. Chinese "white liquor," vodka, grain alcohol, or lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Whole black peppercorns

Put the cabbage, carrots, green beans, and turnip in a 2-quart glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. Set

aside.

Place the remaining ingredients in a medium mixing bowl and stir well to combine. Pour liquid mixture into the jar, making sure the vegetables are covered with the liquid (prepare another batch of marinade if necessary). Put the lid on the jar and shake the jar until the salt and the sugar are completely dissolved.

Let stand for two days at room temperature before refrigerating.

To serve, remove the desired amount of pickles from the jar and drain well. Arrange them in small bowls or serving dishes.

COOK'S TIP: You can add a fresh batch of vegetables to the marinade after you drain it from the pickles. The pickles keep for weeks, and many Asians think the marinade needs a few pickling cycles before it really gets good. Remove the chili pods if the marinade gets too spicy for your taste.

COOK'S TIP ON GINGERROOT: You don't even have to peel the ginger for this dish (though you do for most other recipes). Just wash the gingerroot and cut it into very thin slices. For a stronger ginger flavor, make the slices about 1/4 in. thick; for a milder ginger flavor, make the slices about 1/8 thick.

Select gingerroot with smooth skin and a spicy fragrance. Leftover ginger, unpeeled, will last about a week on the counter. Or wrap the ginger in a paper towel and refrigerate it in an airtight plastic bag for up to 3 weeks. For longer storage, place peeled ginger in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid and cover ginger with dry sherry, Madeira, or vodka. Refrigerate for 2 to 3 months. The liquid will be infused with flavor, making it great for cooking.

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