

Today's Women

Once again — back to cooking for the fun of it

By CHARLENE KAISER
Democrat Staff Writer

Growing up an only child has its disadvantages — one is never learning to cook. Inez Hawkins said that her father was one of those men who didn't think anyone but her mother could cook. So she steered clear of the kitchen as a result.

"When I got married there was only one thing I could cook," she said. "That was angel food cake. I had a boyfriend in high school who loved angel food cake, so I had perfected that recipe."

Inez Hawkins always thought she would like to go to work, but there was never time. She was too busy with her seven daughters. And a lot of housework that doesn't exist today.

"There were no mixes in those days," Mrs. Hawkins said. "Everything was made from scratch. And it took forever to iron clothes — that was a real chore, especially starching and ironing my daughters' pinafores with all the ruffles. By the time you got the house cleaned up, dinner cooked and the washing and ironing done, the day was gone."

Mrs. Hawkins is still busy, but she does make things easier on herself these days with prepared mixes. Her secret is doing things to the mixes to make them taste homemade.

"I made a pineapple supreme cake from a mix and took it to a dinner at church," she said. "But I added a lot of things to the mix: I mixed vanilla instant pudding with a cup of water and spread on each layer. Next, I spread a layer of drained, crushed pineapple, followed by a layer of prepared whipped topping and finally a layer of shredded coconut. One of the women at church wanted to take a piece home to her husband. After eating it, he said: 'One thing's for sure. This isn't a cake mix.'"

Mrs. Hawkins just laughed when she heard that story. She said she had had her problems in the cooking area. Pie crust was the biggest challenge. "I finally learned to make a good pie crust, and now I can tell by the feel of the dough if it's just right," she said. "I do a lot of my cooking by just knowing the right amount of an ingredient to toss in."

She said her major cooking problem these days is the adjustment from cooking for a family of nine, to cooking for two again. "I'm learning, but there are some things, like cakes, that are impossible to cut down for two people."

It's more rewarding to cook for a crowd, and Inez Hawkins' biggest fans in that department are her sons-in-law. One of them, Jim Massey, works in the advertising department of the Arkansas Democrat and persuaded his mother-in-law to enter the Democrat's first annual cooking contest.

"I'm not very creative and most of the recipes were those I had had for a long time and knew were good and reliable," Inez Hawkins said. Her meat dish, Cranberry Meat Balls, was runner-up in the meat section of the cooking contest.

Mrs. Hawkins said she never learned to type, and that the recipes in the Democrat's contest had to be typed, so she was on the verge of backing out of the contest. "But my son-in-law insisted, and my daughter insisted on typing the recipes, so I entered one in each category," she said.

"I learned a lot at the cook-off," she said. "Most important was the importance of eye appeal. One of the finalists, Sherry Little, had arranged her Autumn Supper Salad in neat little rows on a silver serving platter, with salad dressing in a cut crystal cruet."

Harry Hawkins is retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and being an engineer means moving all over the state when there's another dam to be constructed or a new project to work on.

"Harry was with the Corps about 32 years," Mrs. Hawkins said. That meant a lot of moves in between, and Inez Hawkins bears out Thomas Wolfe's belief — "You can never go home again."

"I've lived in so many different places," she said. "And I have gone back to each place, but it's never the same. The Corps people are mostly gone, and others I knew have moved on." North Little Rock has been the couple's home for 20 years, and it's the only home they want to go home to. The others are in the past.



Valentine's Day dinner for two

Meat ball dish — a versatile winner

Cranberry Meat Balls

1-1/2 pounds extra lean ground beef
1-2 pound ground pork
2 eggs, well beaten
2 slices bread, crumbed
1-4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 medium onion, chopped
1-3 cup catsup
1-4 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
1 teaspoon salt
SAUCE:
1 can (1 pound) jellied cranberry sauce
1 12-ounce bottle chili sauce
3 tablespoons firmly-packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Combine all meat ball ingredients and mix well. Form into balls about the size of golf balls. Arrange balls in sauce, brown sugar and lemon juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring until well blended and cranberry sauce is melted. Pour the hot sauce over meat balls. Bake uncovered in 350 degree oven for 45 minutes. Serve over rice.

NOTE: If meat balls are to be served as cocktail serving, form into walnut-sized balls, then add pineapple chunks and cubed raw green pepper to sauce the last 20 minutes of cooking period.

Japanese Fruit Pie

1 cup sugar
1 stick oleo, melted
Pinch salt
2 eggs, beaten
1 tablespoon vinegar
1-2 cup flaked coconut
1-2 cup chopped pecans
1-2 cup seedless raisins
1 9-inch unbaked pie shell

Mix sugar, butter, salt, eggs and vinegar. Add coconut, pecans and raisins. Pour into unbaked pie shell. Bake at 325 degrees for 35 or 40 minutes until firm and lightly brown on top.

Tomato and Squash Salad

4 yellow squash 4 to 5 inches long
1 teaspoon salt
Boiling water to cover squash
MARINADE:
1 clove garlic
1-4 teaspoon Tabasco sauce
1 teaspoon salt
1-3 cup cider vinegar
2 teaspoons sugar
3-4 cup salad oil
1-2 teaspoon dry mustard
5 green onions
Sliced tomatoes
Parmesan cheese

Place whole squash in saucepan. Cover with boiling water to which the salt has been added. Boil 8 to 10 minutes until tender but firm. Drain and cool, add the following marinade and let stand 6 hours or overnight.

To prepare marinade, crush garlic and add other ingredients. Pour over squash. To serve, place squash in center of plate, surround with sliced tomatoes. Drizzle a little marinade over all and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serves 6.

Barbecued Meat Balls

2 pounds ground chuck or extra lean beef
3-4 cup oats
1 medium onion, chopped
1-2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon black pepper
2 tablespoons catsup
1-2 cup milk
SAUCE:
1 cup catsup
4 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1-2 cup chopped onions
8 tablespoons vinegar
8 tablespoons brown sugar

Mix ground chuck, oats, chopped onion, salt, black pepper, catsup and milk together and form into balls. Place in baking dish and pour sauce over them.

Mix sauce ingredients together and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes. Pour over meat balls and bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

Fireside meal for two of you

February is the time of year so right for a cozy at-home evening meal in front of the fireplace. And Feb. 14 is a good night for such a dinner with just the two of you. The menu can be simple yet unique with Burgundy Beef en Croute. It's a small beef loaf made extra moist by the addition of quick or old fashioned oats that hold in meat juices.

Burgundy Beef En Croute

MEAT LOAF:
3-4 pound ground chuck
1-3 cup quick or old fashioned oats, uncooked
1-3 cup Burgundy
1 egg
2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
1-2 teaspoon thyme leaves, crushed
OATS PASTRY:
2-3 cup all-purpose flour
1-3 cup quick or old fashioned oats, uncooked
1-2 teaspoon salt
1-4 cup vegetable shortening
2 tablespoons cold water
MUSHROOM SAUCE:
1-1-3 cups water
One 2 1-2 ounce can mushroom slices, drained
2 beef bouillon cubes
1-8 teaspoon thyme leaves, crushed
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons cold water
1-3 cup Burgundy

For meat loaf, combine all ingredients; mix well. Shape to form 5 1-2 x 3-inch loaf; place in shallow baking pan. Bake in preheated 425 degree oven ten minutes. Remove from oven; cool about 15 minutes.

For pastry, combine flour, oats and salt. Cut in shortening until pieces are the size of small peas. Sprinkle water over mixture, stirring with fork until dry ingredients are moistened and mixture forms ball. Roll out dough between 2 sheets of wax paper to form 12x9-inch rectangle; peel off top sheet of wax paper. Cut 2-inch strip of dough from narrow side of rectangle; reserve.

Place meat loaf upside down in center of pastry; fold edges around loaf, sealing tightly. Remove wax paper; place pastry covered loaf, seam side down, in shallow baking pan. Decorate top of loaf with shapes cut from reserved pastry; brush with beaten egg, if desired. Continue baking in 425 degree oven 25 minutes or until golden brown. Slice to serve.

For mushroom sauce, combine water, mushrooms, bouillon cubes and thyme in small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring until bouillon cubes dissolve. Dissolve cornstarch in cold water; add to bouillon mixture. Continue cooking over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture is thickened and clear. Reduce heat; simmer about 1 minute. Stir in Burgundy; heat. Spoon over meat loaf to serve. Makes 2 to 3 servings.

Tuna Potato Salad

2 cans tuna
2 cups cooked, cubed potatoes
3 hard cooked eggs
2-3 cup grated carrots
2 tablespoons chopped onion
2-3 cup salad dressing
Salt and pepper to taste
Toss ingredients together and serve on lettuce leaf. Garnish with salad tomatoes cut into fourths.

Apple Pudding

1 cup sugar
1-4 cup butter
1 egg
1 cup flour
1 1/2 teaspoon soda
1-2 teaspoon nutmeg
1-2 cup nuts, chopped
4 apples, peeled and diced
1-2 teaspoon vanilla
Cream butter and sugar. Add egg. Sift together flour, soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Add to mixture. Stir in diced apples, nuts and vanilla. Baked in greased square pan at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. To serve, cut into squares, add whipped topping and top with a cherry.

Cottage Cheese and Onion Salad

1 3-ounce package lemon jello
1 1-2 cups boiling water
1-2 teaspoon salt
1-4 cup sugar
1 small jar or about 3 tablespoons pimientos
1-4 cup green pepper, chopped
1-4 cup green onions, chopped
1-2 cup celery chopped
1 8-ounce container small curd cottage cheese, mashed with potato masher to mix well
3-4 cup salad dressing
Mix jello, water, salt and sugar together and let stand in refrigerator until it begins to jell. Have the other ingredients ready, mixed well together, and add to jelled mixture. Pour into mold and let chill until firm. Unmold on shredded lettuce. Makes about 1 quart of salad.

Frozen Fruit Salad

2 3-ounce packages cream cheese
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup whipped cream
2 1-2 cups small marshmallows
1-2 cup drained maraschino cherries, quartered
1 No. 2 1-2 can (3 1-2 cups) fruit cocktail, well drained
1-2 cup chopped pecans

Soften cheese, blend in mayonnaise, fold in remaining ingredients. May be frozen in square pan or any desired mold. Mrs. Hawkins often freezes in two cans which have been carefully opened, being sure not to leave any rough edges, and freezes for at least six hours.

This keeps well in the freezer for several weeks. To serve, cut in slices or squares and serve on lettuce with 1 teaspoon mayonnaise and cherry on top. Serves 16.



There was a time when Inez Hawkins had no times for hobbies such as ceramics.

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—INEZ
HAWKINS

Democrat photo by Robert Lee Thomas