

A Cook's Journal – hello, gorgeous! part 2

I could probably write two or three more columns about garden veggies but the cool weather will be moving in soon. Here are the recipes from my latest column in the Aroostook Republican and the Star-Herald. Then I've posted a few bonus recipes here: stuffed eggplant, grilled green tomatoes, and a variation on ratatouille (with bacon!). Click to follow me so you never miss a new post, and get a printable version of all my recipes.

horseradish cream & bacon-topped brussels sprouts

These tangy horseradish-cream-topped brussels sprouts are just the thing to serve with corned beef and potatoes, or alongside a baked ham or turkey. Look for sprouts with tight, firm, small deep-green heads; if they're still on the stalk, so much the better. To prepare, peel off outer leaves and trim the stems.

ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 4 strips crisp-cooked bacon, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

directions

1. Place a steamer basket in a large saucepan, add 1 inch of water, and bring to a boil. Put brussels sprouts in the basket and steam until tender, 6 to 8 minutes.
2. Mix bacon, sour cream, horseradish, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Add brussels sprouts and toss to coat.

cabbage & cheddar pie

This unusual combination is delicious and can be made ahead of time, refrigerated, then baked when needed.

ingredients

- Your own basic pie pastry or 1 pkg. prepared, rolled pastry
- 2 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 2 Tbs. canola oil
- 1 large onion, halved, thinly sliced
- 7 to 8 cups thinly sliced green cabbage (about 3/4 of one head)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/4 cup low-fat sour cream
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 cup grated sharp Cheddar cheese

- 1/2 cup dry breadcrumbs or cracker crumbs

directions

1. Warm oil in Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion, sprinkle with a bit of salt, and cook, stirring often, 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Add cabbage, reduce heat to medium-low, cook cabbage, partially covered and stirring often, 15 to 25 minutes, or until very soft. Add the sugar and more salt and pepper to taste. (If mixture seems too dry, add water as needed by teaspoonfuls.) Remove from heat; mix in sour cream and mustard.
3. Place pastry in the bottom of a deep dish pie pan and crimp edge. Refrigerate 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 375°.
4. Add cheese to filling, and stir gently. Spoon filling into pie shell, smoothing top. Sprinkle with crumbs. Bake 40 minutes, or until golden brown. (If top starts to over-brown, cover with sheet of foil.) Garnish with fresh thyme or mint from the garden. Let cool 5 minutes.

green tomato chutney

A great way to use up your green tomatoes, this can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks or frozen for many months. This makes about 2 cups of a wonderfully fragrant and delicious relish to serve with meats and egg dishes or even in a grilled cheese sandwich. I love it dabbed on top of cheddar cheese spread and crackers. Fabulous!

ingredients

- 1 herb sachet (1 bay leaf, 1 thyme sprig, 3 cardamom pods, and 1/4 teaspoon mustard seeds tied together in a square of cheesecloth)
- 1 cup champagne (or white) vinegar
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons olive oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon minced jalapeño pepper (seeds optional)
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 4 cups green (unripe) tomatoes--peeled, cored, seeded, and diced
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded and diced
- Salt to taste

directions

1. In a small saucepan, combine herb sachet with vinegar, white wine, water and sugar. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook until syrupy and reduced by two-thirds, about 40 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

2. In a medium saucepan, heat 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Add shallot, ginger, jalapeño and garlic and cook over medium heat until softened, about 2 minutes.
3. Add tomatoes and syrup with the sachet. Cover saucepan and simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.
4. Stir in mustard powder and cayenne. Cover saucepan and continue cooking over medium-low heat until tomatoes are tender, about 10 minutes longer. Remove saucepan from heat. Discard the sachet.
5. In a medium skillet, heat remaining teaspoon of olive oil. Cook bell peppers, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 8 minutes. Fold into the chutney. Season with salt, transfer to a lidded container, and let cool to room temperature before using.

TIP - You can make larger batches and put up in jars for gifts, but eliminate the oil and cook red bell peppers in the pot with the tomatoes.

veggie stuffed eggplant

This is an easy to prepare dish that sticks to your ribs !

ingredients

- 1 medium eggplant
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mushrooms
- 1/2 cup chopped zucchini
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 3/4 cup seeded chopped tomatoes
- 1/4 cup toasted wheat germ (or you can use bread crumbs or tempeh)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Dash crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

directions

1. Cut eggplant in half lengthwise; carefully remove pulp, keeping a 1/4-in.-thick shell in tact. Cube pulp; set shells and pulp aside.
2. In a large nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray, saute onion and garlic until onion is tender. Add the mushrooms, zucchini, red pepper and eggplant pulp; saute for 4-6 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.
3. Stir in the tomatoes, wheat germ, parsley, thyme, salt, pepper and pepper flakes; cook for 1 minute.
4. Divide mixture evenly between the eggplant shells; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 20-25 minutes or until shells are tender. Yields 2 servings.

grilled green tomatoes

These are a fine accompaniment to steak or chicken, and fabulous alongside scrambled eggs.

ingredients

- 4 large green tomatoes
- 2 Tbs Dijon Mustard
- 1 Tbs balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil

directions

1. De-stem and slice tomatoes in lengthwise slabs about ½-inch thick. Marinate 1 hour at room temperature.
2. Heat grill or broiler on high. Cook tomatoes 5 minutes on first side; flip and cook on other side 4-5 minutes.
3. Serve hot. Yummy!

baked bacon ratatouille

I love ratatouille; I love eating it; I love making it as it is so colorful, so easy and makes you look like you've been cooking all day. This involves slightly browning and softening vegetables in bacon fat before baking so a bit of caramelization occurs and deepens the flavor. This version is even easier than the pot-watching kind I've always made and it involves bacon! How can it get more delicious?

ingredients

- 4 slices thick bacon chopped into ½-inch pieces
- ¼ cup olive oil, plus more as needed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small eggplant, chopped
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 1 pepper (red, green, or yellow), chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 small tomatoes, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, pressed
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- 3 or 4 leaves fresh basil, chopped
- Splash red wine or balsamic vinegar

directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°. In a large oven-proof pan or dutch oven*, cook bacon till crisp; remove and set aside draining on a napkin or paper towel.
2. Cook the vegetables in the bacon fat one at a time over medium high heat, separately, for 5 to 7 minutes, adding a little more oil as needed and seasoning with salt, in the following

order: eggplant, zucchini, pepper, onion, and tomatoes (remember the order by using the acronym EZPOT, a credo of many famous chefs). As each vegetable is slightly browned and softened, remove from pan and set aside.

3. Add tomatoes last and scrape up all the brown bits in the pan. When tomatoes are done, add garlic and cook, stirring till fragrant. Add the thyme and basil, and season with salt and pepper. Place all of the other cooked vegetables back in the pan in reverse EZPOT order (onions, peppers, zukes, and eggplant on top).
4. Place in oven and cook for 55 minutes till bubbling. Remove from oven, stir gently to mix, add vinegar splash, and top with bacon. Serve grated mozzarella on the side. Serve with crusty Italian bread or French baguettes. Can be eaten hot, warm, or cold.

**TIP: Never use a pot or lid with a plastic handle or a Teflon pan made for stovetop cooking in your oven. Cast iron or enamel pans work best going from stovetop to oven seamlessly.*

Visit me on the web at <http://acooksjournalblog.wordpress.com> for more great recipes.