



THE OLD
FARMER'S ALMANAC
READERS'
BEST RECIPES



AND THE STORIES BEHIND THEM
COMPLIMENTS OF



STUFFED FRENCH TOAST

TESTER'S COMMENTS

When I served this to my family for brunch, it was a big hit. The French toast was easier to assemble than I expected. The filling kept the bread slices together, and dipping the three layers of bread in the egg mixture went without a hitch. Baking the French toast in the oven instead of frying it on top of the stove makes a lot of sense; you use less butter and it's less messy. I used one mashed banana in half of the filling and 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries in the other half. Both fillings were very good. —M.A.J.

Filling:

2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
½ cup sour cream or plain yogurt
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
2 ripe bananas, mashed, or fresh strawberries, or red raspberry or strawberry preserves
24 slices raisin bread

French toast:

1¼ cups milk
8 eggs
2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar, plus more, if desired
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
warm maple syrup, for serving

Preheat oven to 350°F. Generously grease a 15x10x1-inch baking sheet.

For filling: In a bowl, combine cream cheese, sour cream, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, and bananas.

Spread filling evenly on one bread slice, then top with another slice. Spread filling evenly on second slice, then top with third slice. Repeat with remaining filling and bread.

For French toast: In a bowl, combine milk, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla. Beat until well blended.

Pour egg mixture into a shallow bowl. Dip prepared bread layers into mixture, turning to coat both sides evenly.

Place on prepared baking sheet. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes. Flip and bake for 8 to 10 minutes more, or until golden brown. Dust lightly with additional confectioners' sugar, if desired. Serve with warm maple syrup.

Makes 8 servings.

Almanac favorite



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

HEALTHY MORNING MUFFINS

TESTER'S COMMENTS

What a great way to start the day! –C.S.

BREAKFAST

1¼ cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup ground flaxseed
½ cup packed brown sugar
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
2 large carrots, shredded
1 ripe banana, mashed
2 eggs
⅓ cup milk
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 tablespoons peanut butter
½ cup pecan pieces

Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a 12-cup muffin tin or line with papers.

In a bowl, combine flour, flaxseed meal, brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder, nutmeg, cinnamon, and salt. Mix well.

In another bowl, combine carrots, banana, eggs, milk, oil, and peanut butter. Add flour mixture and pecan pieces. Stir just until combined. Do not overmix.

Fill muffin tins two-thirds full. Bake for 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

Makes 12 muffins.

I made this up because I love to have muffins first thing in the morning or available for an easy snack, but I don't love how much sugar many muffins contain. This recipe has protein and fiber and just the right amount of sweetness. I especially enjoy putting these muffins in my toaster oven the day after they are baked, then spreading peanut butter on them. Yum!

Marisol Maddox, Big Indian, New York

The word "muffin" likely comes from an Old German word, *muffe*, meaning a small cake.

🍪 BROWN BUTTER GRANOLA 🍪

TESTER'S COMMENTS

Two thumbs up! The variety of textures among the seeds, oats, wheat germ, and nuts gives this a fun-in-your-mouth chew, and the cranberries are a wonderful tart counterpoint to the sweetness. Straight out of the bowl or with yogurt for breakfast, it's delish! –D.T.



2 cups old-fashioned oats
½ cup sunflower seeds
½ cup sesame seeds
½ cup dried cranberries or raisins
⅓ cup finely shredded unsweetened coconut
⅓ cup chopped pecans
2 tablespoons chia seeds
⅓ cup butter
½ cup honey
2 tablespoons milk
½ cup wheat germ

Preheat oven to 300°F. Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray.

In a bowl, mix together oats, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, cranberries, coconut, pecans, and chia seeds.

In a saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Lift pan and swirl several times to ensure even cooking. The butter will begin to foam and deepen in color. Stir constantly. When butter smells nutty and is golden brown, remove from heat. Pour into a glass bowl and stir for 1 minute.

In a separate pan, heat honey and milk to boiling, then set aside to cool. Stir in browned butter. Cool for 1 minute, then pour over oat mixture and stir. Stir in wheat germ.

Spread mixture on prepared baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes. Stir, then bake for 10 minutes more, or until lightly brown and beginning to crisp. Cool on baking sheet and store in airtight bags or containers.

Makes about 5 cups.

This recipe came from my mother-in-law originally, and I made modifications to it (added the browned butter, chia, and cranberries and switched out another nut for pecans). She passed away more than 6 years ago, so when I make any of her recipes (and I make many), it is very comforting and brings back warm memories, especially for my husband. It is also so special to be able to share “Grandma Jean’s” recipes with her grandchildren. She would have loved that!

Terri Gilson, Calgary, Alberta



If honey isn't handy, you can use pure maple syrup for a maple-y flavor.

☞ MOM'S GORTON SPREAD ☜

TESTER'S COMMENTS

I make gorton often, and although this recipe differs from mine, it is still a good one. –L.R.



2 to 3 pounds pork butt or blade
2 to 3 medium onions, divided
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
¼ to ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
2 to 3 teaspoons ground allspice, or to taste
1 to 2 teaspoons ground cloves, or to taste

Cut pork into large chunks and place in a large pot. Cover with water. Chop one onion and add to pot. Stir in salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat for 1 to 2 hours, or until pork is cooked through. Remove pork and set aside to cool. Reserve cooking liquid. Skim off any fat.

Grind pork with cooked onions and add 1 to 2 raw onions. Return pork to reserved cooking liquid. Add allspice and cloves. Taste and add more salt and pepper, if desired. Cook over medium heat for about 1 hour, or until all liquid evaporates. Taste periodically for seasonings and adjust to taste. Serve on toast or crackers or as sandwich filling.

Makes about 6 cups.

This dish (sometimes called cretons) is of French-Canadian origin, and countless cooks have added their own special touches to the recipe. This is my mother's and the best I've ever tasted. Some of the measurements are guessed, but the ingredients stay the same. The measurements were never written down. It's a case of trial and error. Everything is "to taste"!

Anonymous





photo: Fanfo/shutterstock

🐸 BLACK BEAN SALSA 🐸

TESTER'S COMMENTS

Six people ate all of this in one sitting. While it's very good as is, for sharper flavor, increase the spices and/or add chopped cilantro or green onions. -D.T.



1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
1 can (15.25 ounces) whole corn, drained and rinsed
2 medium tomatoes, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 green bell pepper, diced
½ cup diced red onion
1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chiles, drained
¼ cup lime juice
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
⅓ cup olive oil
⅓ cup red-wine vinegar
dash of hot sauce

In a bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes, peppers, onions, and chiles.

In another bowl or jar with lid, mix lime juice, salt, cumin, cayenne, olive oil, vinegar, and hot sauce. Add to bean mixture. Stir, cover, and let sit in refrigerator overnight before serving. Serve with tortilla chips.

Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Years ago, a friend fixed this for a potluck. I make it every time we have a casual gathering. It can be served as a salad, too!

Margaret Hill, Louisville, Kentucky



To get more juice out of a lime or lemon, put it in the microwave for 15 to 20 seconds before juicing.

🦐 SHRIMP DIP 🦐

TESTER'S COMMENTS

Simply delicious. Mix all of the ingredients in a bowl, chill the dip for a few hours (or overnight), and serve. Instead of finely chopping all of the shrimp, I left a few bigger chunks for texture. –M.A.J.



2 pounds freshly boiled shrimp, peeled, deveined, and finely chopped
2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
1 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons chili sauce
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 medium yellow onion, finely grated
juice of 1 to 2 lemons, to taste
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a glass bowl, mix together shrimp, cream cheese, mayonnaise, chili sauce, Worcestershire sauce, onions, lemon juice, and salt and pepper. Refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours before serving.

Makes 3½ to 4 cups, depending on shrimp size.

My sister-in-law gave me this recipe about 35 years ago. It was so delicious that I had to have it. I adjusted the original recipe to my liking. I make it for every family event. It is so good, some just get a bowl and eat it by itself! Good to dip with vegetables fresh from your garden or your favorite chip. A very simple recipe that should only take 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

Cindy Walker, Mobile, Alabama



In the grocery store, chili sauce is usually found near the ketchup.

LOW COUNTRY CHOWDER

TESTER'S COMMENTS

A chowder made from leftovers invites variations, which is always a convenience. Andouille sausage was handy; it worked fine and gave a lovely smoky flavor. Crab claws require steaming and provide big chunks of crab, but canned crab stood in nicely. Common seafood seasoning is Old Bay; 1 teaspoon, not ¼ teaspoon, was ideal for the tasters and me—probably because my ingredients were not the remains of a boil. —C.S.

2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
½ onion, chopped
1 cup sliced mushrooms
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
1 cup milk or half-and-half
1 teaspoon hot sauce
¼ teaspoon celery salt
¼ teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
12 bite-size pieces kielbasa or smoked sausage
4 red potatoes, cooked and cut into quarters
4 to 6 crab claws or equivalent meat from
body or 1 can (8 ounces) claw crabmeat
(optional)
12 shrimp, cooked, peeled, and deveined
corn kernels from 2 cooked ears and scrapings
from cobs

Melt butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Add onions, mushrooms, and garlic. Cook until onions are translucent. Add mushroom soup, milk, seasonings (generally go heavier on pepper), sausage, and potatoes. Cook on medium-low until well blended and small bubbles appear. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10 minutes. Add crab (if using), shrimp, and corn. Cook for a few minutes, or until heated through. Remove promptly from heat and serve.

Makes 4 servings.

My husband and I were raised near the coast and have always enjoyed Low Country boils. Almost always, there are a number of shrimp, some crab, some sausage, potatoes, and corn left over. These just don't taste as good cold, and trying to heat crab and shrimp by themselves is, um, well, kinda unappetizing. I hated throwing away the leftovers, so I made this chowder, and it is very tasty! If using ingredients from a boil, there is nice flavor from the seafood boil seasoning as well. You can adjust the amount of soup and milk (or half-and-half) to accommodate the amount of leftover boil ingredients, seasoning to taste before serving.

Michele Holloway, Augusta, Georgia



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

❧ EASY BACON SAUSAGE CHILI ❧

TESTER'S COMMENTS

This is a great recipe and couldn't be simpler. Chocolate? Coffee? What surprises! I give it a 10! –L.R.



3 tablespoons olive oil	1 to 2 teaspoons ground cumin	1 can (15 ounces) light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
2 cloves garlic, minced	1 teaspoon dried oregano	
1 onion, diced	½ teaspoon cayenne pepper	1 can (15 ounces) cannellini (white) kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 carrot, shredded	sriracha sauce, to taste	1 can (15 ounces) corn, drained
1 bell pepper, diced	½ cup strong coffee	1 to 2 cups beef broth or water
1 pound ground beef	1 pip chocolate (from a Hershey bar)	salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 pound bacon sausage	1 can (15 ounces) diced tomatoes, with juice	
1 jalapeño, stem removed, seeded, and finely diced	1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce	
3 to 4 tablespoons masa (corn flour)	1 can (15 ounces) dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed	
2 to 3 tablespoons chili powder		
1 to 2 tablespoons paprika		

Heat olive oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Add garlic, onions, carrots, and bell peppers and cook until fragrant, or just translucent. Add beef and sausage and cook until browned. Add jalapeño, masa, chili powder, paprika, cumin, oregano, cayenne, and sriracha sauce and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and

simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Makes 10 to 12 servings.

Warning!! This is a chili that many people can't stop eating. It has a perfectly sweet, spicy goodness. The shredded carrot adds flavor, sweetness, and texture.

James Magueflor, Palmer, Alaska



Look for bacon sausage at specialty meat and butcher shops.
Or substitute with your favorite type of sausage.



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

GRAMMA'S VEGETABLE BEEF SOUP

TESTER'S COMMENTS

An absolutely delicious, flavorful soup, loaded with vegetables. The chuck roast comes out nice and tender. I halved the recipe, and it made a very generous amount. I did not add salt because both the V8 and bouillon cubes contain it. —C.S.

½ cup vegetable oil
1 chuck roast (1 to 2 pounds)
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
garlic powder, to taste
onion powder, to taste
6 beef bouillon cubes
2 cups diced onion
2 stalks celery, with leaves, diced
1 pound cabbage, chopped
1 can or bottle (46 ounces) regular V8 juice
2 cups peeled and diced potatoes
1 large carrot, diced
1 can (15.5 ounces) green beans, drained
1 can (15.5 ounces) baby green lima beans, drained
1 can (15.5 ounces) peas, drained
1 can (15.5 ounces) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
1 can (15.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, with juice
1 cup elbow macaroni
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
1 can (15.5 ounces) corn, with liquid

I do this the same way every time, in the order listed. Any other way, and some vegetables will overcook.

Warm oil in a soup pot over medium-low heat. Season roast with salt and pepper, garlic powder, and onion powder. Add to pot and brown on all sides. Add water to just barely cover meat, about 4 cups. Add bouillon cubes and bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 1 hour, or until meat is ready to fall apart. Transfer to a plate. Set aside to cool.

To broth, add onions, celery, cabbage, and V8 juice. Return to a boil, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes, or until cabbage is almost tender. Add potatoes, carrots, green beans, lima beans, peas, pinto beans, and tomatoes. Return to a boil, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes.

In a saucepan, cook macaroni according to package directions. Rinse under cool water and drain.

Cut meat into bite-size pieces.

Taste soup and add salt and pepper. Add corn, meat, and macaroni. Stir well. If it's too thick, thin with beef broth (1 cup hot water to 1 cube bouillon) and/or a few tablespoons of vegetable oil, and stir well.

Turn off heat and let rest for a few minutes. Stir well before serving.

To reheat leftovers, add more broth. (The veggies tend to soak up broth overnight in the fridge.)

Makes 12 or more servings.

I tried for years to replicate my grandmother's homemade vegetable soup recipe by how I remembered it looking and tasting. This is the end result. Family members agree that this is very close to Gramma's soup.

Rhonda Sine

👁️ WHITE CHICKEN CHILI 👁️

TESTER'S COMMENTS

This is different from my usual chili recipes. It's an excellent one. I'd make it again. –L.R.



2 pounds skinless chicken (1 pound bone-in thighs, 1 pound boneless breast)
2 large or 4 small chicken bouillon cubes
¼ cup (½ stick) butter
1 bunch celery, with leaves, finely diced
1 onion, finely diced
2 packages (1.25 ounces each) McCormick White Chicken Chili seasoning
1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
1 can (15 ounces) navy beans, with liquid
1 can (15 ounces) great northern beans, with liquid
1 can (15 ounces) cannellini (white kidney) beans, with liquid
1 can (15 ounces) whole kernel corn, with liquid
1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
salt, to taste
sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese, chopped scallions, and/or cooked white rice, for garnish (optional)
tortilla chips (optional)

Place chicken in a 6-quart Dutch oven, add water to cover, and bouillon cubes. Simmer gently with lid askew for 1 hour, or until meat is falling off bones. Remove and let chicken cool. Strain and reserve stock.

Melt butter in a soup pot over low heat and add celery. Cook for 5 minutes. Add onions and cook for 5 minutes more. Add chili seasoning, stirring to dissolve. Cook for 2 minutes, then add reserved stock. Add black beans and simmer for 10 minutes.

Debone chicken and dice the meat.

Add navy, great northern, and cannellini beans to pot. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add diced chicken and corn and simmer for 5 minutes more. Add evaporated milk and ½ can water. Return to simmer; do not boil. Taste for seasoning and add salt.

If desired, serve topped with sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese, chopped scallions, and/or a scoop of white rice. Or serve with tortilla chips.

Makes 8 servings.

I saw the white chili seasoning packs in the store once several years ago and thought that they sounded interesting. I made it just as the package directed, and it was OK, but I thought that I could do better. A few more tries, and this was the end result. It's a big hit with everyone who eats it, and many people have requested this recipe over the years.

Rhonda Sine



🍴 HOT BEAN SALAD 🍴

TESTER'S COMMENTS

Make sure not to overcook the beans. They still need to crunch when you bite into them. —M.A.J.



3 strips bacon
¾ cup diced onion
1 pound fresh yellow string beans, preferably,
or green, or a mixture, French-cut or sliced
thinly across
1½ tablespoons apple cider vinegar, or to
taste
1½ cups sour cream
ground white pepper, to taste
3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill (optional)

In a skillet over medium heat, fry bacon until crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels. Reserve bacon drippings. When cool enough to handle, crumble or break up bacon.

Sauté onions in bacon drippings until just soft. Add beans and cook briefly until al dente. Add vinegar and stir briefly. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream. (Do not let sour cream curdle.) Taste, and add more vinegar, if desired. Season with white pepper and chopped dill (if using). Garnish with crumbled bacon. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Makes 4 servings.

This salad comes from the cooking style of a people who had little meat and is probably inspired by German Hot Potato Salad. It came from the mind of my nearly illiterate maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Mohr—"Nana" to me. Nana was born Elizabeth Pfeifer in the village of Zbora, Austria, near the Hungarian border, on January 31, 1886, and escaped with her parents to Winnipeg, Manitoba, on May 24, 1891. After her husband, George Mohr, died, Nana came to Medicine Hat, Alberta, in 1941 to live with and take care of my ailing aunt and her family. Nana died in her sleep while watching television at her retirement home. Her recipes did not die with her, because she had taught her grandchildren to cook. This is a favorite of ours and of every kid who has ever tried it.

Bob Scammell, Red Deer, Alberta



White vinegar can be substituted for apple cider vinegar in recipes.



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

🌿 BAKED BEANS WITH PANCETTA 🌿

TESTER'S COMMENTS

There is nothing like good baked beans, and these are better than good. Every church supper cook has a favorite meat ingredient. Bacon is common. Salt pork is, too, but that has always seemed too fatty to me. Pancetta, or “Italian bacon,” brings a mild smokiness to the dish that the other choices do not. Classic baked bean “garnishes” include ketchup, mustard, and pickle relish, but the only thing that anyone needs to put into these beans is a spoon. —C.S.



2 cups dried beans, picked over
¼ pound pancetta or lean salt pork, cut
into 4 pieces
2 cloves garlic
2 bay leaves
¼ cup molasses
½ teaspoon ground mustard
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to
taste
2½ cups boiling water

Cover beans with warm water. Soak overnight.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Drain beans and discard water. Put one-third of soaked beans into an ovenproof pot with a lid. Add 1 piece of pancetta, 1 clove garlic, and 1 bay leaf. Repeat. Top with remaining beans and 2 pieces of pancetta. Pour molasses over beans.

In a bowl, combine mustard, ginger, salt and pepper, and boiling water. Stir, then pour over beans. Add additional boiling water, if necessary to just cover beans. Cover pot. Bake for 4½ to 5 hours, uncovering pot for last hour. Check liquid occasionally and top up when necessary with boiling water. Do not stir. When done, beans should be tender but hold their shape. Before serving, remove bay leaves and garlic. Serve immediately.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

This recipe is based on one that my 94-year-old aunt sent to her 90-year-old brother when he lost his mother's bean “rule.” Since my Yankee palate has been hopelessly contaminated by a number of years in Italy, I've added some unorthodox garlic and increased the number of bay leaves. My aunt's instructions ended: “You said you lost your recipe, so I put it on a card. This time, tack it up inside the cupboard door.” And that's where I keep it. Almost any bean works well—Jacob's cattle, yellow-eye, soldier, navy, kidney, even Italian cannellini.

Anonymous



👤 ZUCCHINI PEPPER RELISH 👤

TESTER'S COMMENTS

This colorful condiment goes great with crackers and cheese or even vegetable stew. Fair warning: It is a bit sweet. –D.T.



1 medium to large zucchini
6 bell peppers, orange, yellow, red, or a combination, diced
4 sweet onions, diced
3½ cups sugar
1½ cups white vinegar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon ground mustard

Grate or shred zucchini to make 3 cups.

In a stainless steel pot, combine zucchini, bell peppers, onions, sugar, vinegar, cornstarch, turmeric, and mustard. Heat to a boil, stirring, then maintain a simmer. Stir occasionally, until onions are clear and relish is thick. Remove from heat. Pour into sterilized jars, seal, and process in a boiling-water bath for 10 minutes.

Makes 6 to 7 pints.

I had way too many zucchini in my garden and lots of peppers and wanted to incorporate both for a fabulous flavor. These vegetables are gorgeous in a jar as a gift and can be used on any meat for added flavor.

Susan Lawrence, Ontario



Orange, yellow, and red bell peppers are actually just green bell peppers that were left on the plant to mature.

🍷 ROCKY MOUNTAIN CUBAN PORK 🍷

TESTER'S COMMENTS

This is cooked on the stovetop and requires some attention, but you will be rewarded: It is absolutely delicious. The meat is tender and the thickened citrus sauce wonderful. Every taster had seconds. –M.A.J.

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 pounds lean pork loin, cut into 4 to 6 pieces
4 cups orange juice, divided
1 cup fresh lemon juice, divided
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ground cumin
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
black beans and rice (optional)

In a skillet over medium-high heat, warm 1 tablespoon oil. Add pork and sear.

In a bowl, combine ¼ cup oil, 1 cup orange juice, and ¼ cup lemon juice. Set aside.

When meat is browned, reduce heat to medium. Add garlic, cumin, and salt and pepper. Cook for about 30 seconds. Do not burn garlic. Slowly pour in orange juice mixture. Baste meat with a spoon. Continue basting every 15 minutes for 1 hour. When liquid is reduced and thickened, add remaining oil, 1 cup orange juice, and ¼ cup lemon juice. Continue basting every 15 minutes until pork is tender, adding remaining orange and lemon juices as needed when liquid reduces. Serve with black beans and rice, if desired.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Tampa Bay has a rich Cuban history, and Cuban cuisine was always on the menu at our house. Yellow rice and chicken (arroz con pollo), plantains (plantanos) fried in butter, and black beans and rice (frijoles negros con arroz) were weekly staples. However, my daughter's favorite dish has always been Cuban pork, made with sour orange juice. We had sour orange trees growing in our yard, and we shared the fruit with family and friends, as they were difficult to find in local stores. When my daughter and her husband moved to Colorado, she missed the food that she grew up on in Florida. Since there was no way to get sour oranges in Colorado, she developed this recipe, which is almost identical in flavor to the original.

Barbara Vogel, Gibsonton, Florida



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

🍷 ROASTED RED PEPPER, MOZZARELLA, AND BASIL-STUFFED CHICKEN 🍷

TESTER'S COMMENTS

Browning the chicken (after stuffing but before baking) really kicked this recipe up a notch. I also added a little more cheese to each piece of chicken with fantastic results. This is now a regular feature at the dinner table. —S.L.P.

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning, divided
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 jar (12 ounces) sweet roasted red peppers,
sliced into 1-inch pieces
1 bunch fresh basil leaves
8 ounces fresh mozzarella, cut into 8 slices
¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease a 13x9-inch, broiler-safe casserole.

Butterfly chicken breast halves: Slice through each breast horizontally, leaving ¼-inch “hinge.”

Open chicken breasts and place in casserole. Sprinkle with half of Italian seasoning and salt and pepper. On one side (half) of each breast, layer roasted red peppers, basil leaves, and 1 slice mozzarella. Fold over other side, tucking in fillings. Sprinkle with remaining Italian seasoning.

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink. Remove from oven. Turn oven to broil. Top each breast with 1 slice mozzarella. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Broil until cheese is browned and bubbly, about 5 minutes.

Makes 4 servings.

I am always looking for healthy recipes for me and my family. This is an awesome dish. Serve with roasted asparagus and a side salad.

Barbara Lepley, Meyersdale, Pennsylvania

Originally, mozzarella was made from the milk of water buffalo in Italy. More flavorful than cow's milk mozzarella, you can still get this traditional, softer variety of cheese by looking for the name “Mozzarella di bufala.”



photo: Becky Luigart-Stayner

👤 BETTER-THAN-MOTHER-IN-LAW'S CREAMY MAC AND CHEESE 🍴

TESTER'S COMMENTS

With three kinds of cheese, this is really good creamy mac and cheese. In fact, it's excellent. –C.S.



2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, divided
1 teaspoon salt
1 box (16 ounces) elbow macaroni
3 cups milk
½ cup cubed Velveeta
1 can (10.5 ounces) Campbell's cheese soup
1 cup shredded Colby cheese
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 13x9-inch casserole or baking dish with 1 tablespoon butter.

In a stockpot, bring 8 cups water to a boil. Add salt and macaroni. Cook macaroni al dente, according to package directions, drain, and return to pot.

In a saucepan over medium heat, combine milk, remaining butter, Velveeta, and cheese soup. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until cheese is melted, stirring often.

Pour cheese sauce over macaroni. Add Colby and 1 cup cheddar. Stir to combine. Transfer to prepared casserole. Top with remaining cheese. Bake for 20 minutes.

Makes 8 servings.

My beautiful, perfect mother-in-law makes a great mac and cheese with flour. Every time I followed her recipe, it came out dry. With two skinny kids in braces who found it easy to eat mac and cheese, and not wanting to feed them from a box every night, I combined parts of my mother-in-law's recipe with the creamy texture that the kids liked from the boxes. This recipe stays creamy, never dry, even after reheating it in the microwave. Now, my mother-in-law asks me to make the mac and cheese!

Elizabeth Browning, Lebanon, Ohio



U.S. president Thomas Jefferson is thought to have popularized macaroni (sometimes topped with cheese) by serving it to his guests during his time at the White House.

👑 SLOW COOKER BEEF STROGANOFF 👑

TESTER'S COMMENTS

This dish's flavor is excellent—and the tasters agreed: “We love the beef stroganoff—it was perfectly seasoned. The beef was incredibly tender and along with the onions and mushrooms made for a lovely dinner.” –C.S.



2 tablespoons olive oil
2 to 3 pounds beef tips or chuck roast
1 pound mushrooms, sliced
1 onion, roughly chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup red wine
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 container (16 ounces) sour cream
1 pound egg noodles

In a skillet over medium heat, warm oil. Add meat and cook until browned.

Transfer to a slow cooker. Add mushrooms, onions, garlic, wine, salt, pepper, and coriander, plus water to cover meat and vegetables. Cover and cook on high for 6 to 8 hours. Lift lid 30 minutes before it's done and add sour cream. Stir until mixture appears creamy.

Cook noodles according to package directions, or al dente. Add to slow cooker and stir.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

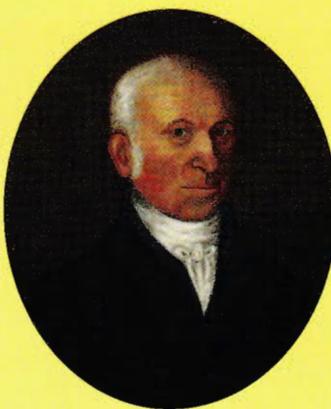
My mom, the chef of the family, called me for this recipe while I was living in Virginia when my oldest son was small.

Kelly Baublitz, Rowlett, Texas



You can substitute grape or cranberry juice for red wine in recipes. For an extra kick, add a tablespoon of red-wine vinegar to the juice.

THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

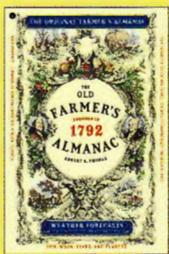


ROBERT B. THOMAS

founder of *The Old Farmer's Almanac*
(1766-1846)

IN 1792, Robert B. Thomas, a bookseller, schoolteacher, and amateur astronomer living near Boston, Massachusetts, began a North American institution when he published the first issue of his *Farmer's Almanac*. (The word *Old* was added in 1832.) He soon distinguished his Almanac from all others, writing in one of the early issues: "We must strive always to be useful, with a pleasant degree of humor." That timeless formula has made *The Old Farmer's Almanac* an indispensable reference for generations of readers.

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The Old Farmer's Almanac

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