

CHAPTER III

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VEGETABLES

My Mother and most of the women in her family were very good cooks, and they had pretty much mastered the cooking techniques and recipes of their day. A lot of what they cooked and ate back then is no longer considered to be “fashionable” cuisine today, and so it is available only in one’s memory. However, one thing that was eaten then and is still served and eaten today is vegetables. I’m talking about the basics; broccoli, asparagus, cauliflower and green beans. But the way my Mother’s generation cooked vegetables was very different from the way we are accustomed to preparing them today...roughly three hours of cooking time different! The cooks of today make it a point to take vegetables off the stove and serve them while they still have lots of color and a bit of crunch. However, vegetables prepared by the previous generation were required to be cooked until the natural color and most of the nutrients were removed and so that they could be “gummed” quietly and crunchlessly. I spent months (yes, that’s right, months!) researching the history on this, and I found that with my Mother’s generation the words “vegetable” and “overcooked” were never (and I do mean *never*) used in the same sentence! In fact, the joke in our house when our kids were growing up was that on Thanksgiving Day my Mother started to cook the green beans at least an hour before the turkey! Get the picture?

Broiled Tomatoes with Herb Crumb Topping

- 4 medium tomatoes (cut in half)
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 3 cloves crushed garlic
- 2 tbs. finely chopped fresh parsley
- ½ tsp. basil
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. dried chives
- salt & pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup melted butter

Mix all ingredients except tomatoes. Spread mix on cut side of tomatoes. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until cooked. Immediately before serving, place tomatoes under broiler and broil until slightly browned. (Editors Note: Be careful! These babies can remove more layers of skin from the roof of your mouth than a mozzarella laden pizza fresh out of the oven!)

Zucchini Pie

Sometime in the 1970s my mother and her friends discovered zucchini. To them it was much like Columbus discovering the new world because it seemed to open up a whole new world of cuisine dedicated to a vegetable that now days everyone grows for the sole purpose of giving it away! Although I have no official research to back this up, I have no doubt that the sudden emergence of zucchini was due largely to the frustration of zucchini growers all over the country as to what use to make with their bountiful harvest each year. This is probably when

the zucchini cult was formed and when the great cooks of America went into their kitchens and didn't come out until they had developed a million and one ways to prepare zucchini. My Mother was one of the first zucchini devotees, and I was shocked, if not horrified, by the large number of zucchini recipes I found in her box of recipe cards. Here are just a few of them. Zucchini may be a very versatile vegetable, but it isn't necessarily always an edible one!

Baked Zucchini

- 3 cups cubed zucchini
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1 cup Bisquick
- 4 eggs (slightly beaten)
- ½ cup oil
- ½ cup parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried parsley
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper

Combine all ingredients in a pie dish and bake at 350 degrees until golden brown.

Zucchini and Spaghetti Sauce (*Ruth Dickstein*)

- 1 medium zucchini sliced in the narrow direction in ¼ inch slices
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- Grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a 10 inch square baking dish put a little sauce to barely cover bottom of dish. Add the slices of zucchini and top them with more sauce. Add a sprinkling of parmesan cheese to each layer, continue layering zucchini with more sauce to each layer. Season with salt and pepper to taste and bake at 350 degrees until tender and brown.

Zucchini with Tomato & Green Pepper

- 2 small zucchini cut into thin slices
- 1 can Italian peeled tomatoes (or plum tomatoes)
- 1 large onion sliced
- 2 stalks celery
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste
- Oregano to taste
- Basil to taste
- 1 green pepper cut into chunks

Sauté green pepper and celery until slightly tender and onions until translucent. Add tomatoes, zucchini slices, and seasonings and simmer for about 20 minutes or until zucchini is tender.

Zucchini Casserole

2 medium zucchini cut lengthwise into thin slices
1 large onion coarsely grated
1 cup ragout sauce
2 tbs. butter or margarine
½ tsp. oregano
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
Garlic powder to taste
Coarsely grated mozzarella cheese
Cheddar cheese

Sauté onion in a large frying pan and then add zucchini and cook until barely tender. Add sauce and then transfer to a casserole dish. Sprinkle with mozzarella and cheddar cheese, and bake at 350 degrees until cheese melts and bubbles (about 20 minutes).

(Editor's note: In the interest of good taste and human decency, I have limited to four the number of zucchini recipes presented. However, there are more than "several" unpublished zucchini recipes remaining in the Ruth Dickstein collection which will remain under protective custody.)

Broccoli Roll (*Hilda Blume*)

Broccoli in *roll* form may not set you to salivating, but when the name Hilda Blume is attached as the source, it's probably worth a second look.

½ cup melted butter or margarine
1 small onion (finely chopped)
¾ cups flour
1 cup warm milk
4 egg yolks (beaten)
1 ½ cups broccoli (pureed)
salt and pepper to taste
½ cup parmesan cheese
bread crumbs

Day before:

Add chopped onion to the melted butter and cook on low heat until glazed. Add flour and stir until well blended. Remove from heat and add warm milk stirring and simmering until the mixture becomes very thick. Cool for 5 minutes, and then beat in egg yolks very gradually until well blended. Add broccoli and salt and pepper. Refrigerate over night.

Next day:

Fold in 4 stiff beaten egg whites and parmesan cheese. Line cookie sheet with foil hanging over edges. Butter foil well and sprinkle with bread crumbs. Spread fresh broccoli (not the mixture from previous day) over the bread crumbs about ½ inch or so thick. Bake for about 12 minutes at 350 degrees until mixture begins to shrink from sheet. Spread filling (from previous day) and roll up wide side. Bake another 5 to 10 minutes at 300 degrees and serve.

Carrot Zimes

If ever there was a dish that yelled “eastern European” or “Jewish”, Zimes is it. I have seen it spelled both as “Zimes” and “Tsimes”, and so I have given both their due in the recipes provided. As far as pronunciation, try “Simus”, but also try to spit and put a little bit of a T in front when you say the first S. In most Jewish households in the first half of the 20th century, Zimes was a staple dish most often served on Friday night, Shabbos, or on Jewish holidays. When it was in the oven, it’s sweet and hearty aroma filled the house, but that smell was the only part of the dish I really enjoyed. In my younger days I was put off by one ingredient, prunes, a dried fruit which in recent times has probably undergone more persecution than any food should be subjected to. My prejudice against prunes was probably rooted in two things; their dark brown and shriveled appearance and, of course, what they were really known for...nature’s most effective laxative. However, as I now take a second look at this old time favorite (I mean Zimes, not prunes!), I think I’d be willing to give it another shot, but without the prunes. I’m not suggesting the dish be made without prunes, for I’m sure the prune flavor is essential to the dish’s success, but rather that I’d be willing to take the time to pick the prunes out of my individual serving. (Who say’s I’m not flexible!) My personal prejudices about prunes aside, this really is a classic dish and a Jewish comfort food in the oldest of traditions.

2 lb. carrots
¼ cup margarine
1 tbs. flour
2/3 cup water
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. instant chicken bullion
3 tbs. sugar
3 tbs. honey
2 tsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. fresh grated lemon rind
½ cup raisins
½ cup pitted prunes
½ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. ground clove

Peel carrots and cut into 1/8 inch thick slices. Melt margarine in large shallow pan on stove. Add carrots and sauté lightly. Sprinkle 1 tbs. flour, stir and then remove from heat. Add

remaining ingredients, return to heat and bring to boil. Stir once and lower heat to bring ingredients to a gentle simmer. Cover and continue to simmer for another 50 minutes. Check occasionally, and add a little water as necessary to keep mixture moist and serve. The next day, if the person who made the Zimes went heavy on the prunes, you might be well advised to say close to a bathroom.

Eggplant Parmesan

1 eggplant
2 eggs
salt
pepper
parmesan cheese (grated)
mozzarella cheese (grated)
1 can tomato sauce
Seasoned Italian breadcrumbs

Wash and cut eggplant into thin slices. Lightly salt and pepper each slice, stack and place heavy weight on top to help force out bitter juices. Let stand for at least 1 hour or overnight refrigerated. Dip first in beaten egg then in seasoned bread crumbs. Fry on stove in skillet, remove and allow to drain on paper towels.

Place cooked eggplant in a shallow casserole dish and add a thin layer of tomato sauce. Sprinkle with grated parmesan and mozzarella cheese, and repeat process for a second layer. Cook in oven at 350 degrees for about 1 hour.

Carrot Soufflé *(Dorothy "Dottie" Rosenberg)*

Dottie and Ben Rosenberg were good friends of my parents. Mr. Rosenberg was a tall very distinguished looking man who just so happened to be the regional manager for Paramount Theaters which, in those days, was one of the largest movie theater chains in the country. What was back then Wilkes-Barre's Paramount Theater is today, after millions of dollars in renovation and restoration work, the very popular Kirby Center, Luzerne County's center for the arts. One of Mr. Rosenberg's jobs was to determine which films would be shown in the theaters in his region, but in order to do that he had to see the films first, and to accomplish that the theater housed a private screening room with about twenty five of the most comfortable seats you could imagine. A few times a year, on a Friday or Saturday night, I would accompany the Rosenberg's and my parents to the screening room for a private showing of a new movie. By the way, in those days a movie was in a theater for only a week, not a month or so as is now the case. One year for my birthday we had the party in the screening room where my friends and I were treated to the new Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis movie weeks before it came to the theaters. By the way, Mr. Rosenberg was always quite liberal with free passes.

¼ lb. margarine
½ cup sugar (scant)
1 egg

1 heaping cup of grated carrots
1 ¼ cup sifted flour
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. warm water

Cream margarine and sugar and add egg. Mix well. Add grated carrots a little at a time. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Bake in greased 1 qt. ring mold at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Refrigerate for several hours and remove from refrigerator 1 hour before serving.

Stewed Tomatoes

I've always been a tomato fan, but for some reason I could never convince myself to indulge in stewed tomatoes. Maybe it was because of the *stewed* prunes association. Who knows, but my aversion to them never stopped my Mother from serving them to me on many of my meal visits to her home. They were a particular favorite of hers with fish, and since every Tuesday was fish night, you could be sure to find stewed tomatoes on the table. After my step father passed away in 1984, every Tuesday night became dinner at Mother's for me. Fish night was merely the excuse to get together, and it gave us a chance to get caught up and for me to pay her bills and balance her checkbook. This was a tradition that we continued until 2000 when she finally moved from her home into assisted living.

3 large tomatoes (about 1 ½ lb.)
1/3 cup onions finely chopped
2 tbs. green pepper finely chopped
1 tbs. sugar
½ tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper
¼ cup soft bread crumbs

Cut off stem end of tomatoes. Remove skin and cut into small pieces. Put all ingredients except bread crumbs into a sauce pan, cover and heat to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer and cook until onion and green pepper are tender (8 – 10 minutes). Add in bread crumbs.

Butternut Squash

1 butternut squash
1 small can crushed pineapple

Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
1 tsp. margarine or butter
Lemon juice to taste
Cinnamon to taste
Nutmeg to taste
Sour cream
Chopped pecans

Cut up squash in chunks and boil in salted water until tender. Mash cooked squash and add pineapple and seasoning ingredients. Place in casserole dish and top with sour cream and chopped pecans.

Throughout this book are a number of names which are associated with many of the recipes. I don't really know if these people actually came up with the recipe with which their name is associated, or if their name is attached merely because they passed it along to others. However, what I do know is that you won't find people under 90 years of age with those names walking the streets of the US of A anymore. Names like Rose, Esther, Ethel, Mildred and Sadie are from another era and have been replaced today by Stephanie, Tina and Amber. But this little bit of history doesn't apply to just women's names. It holds true for men as well. How many men under 90 years of age do you know today named Morris, Abe, Isadore or Rubin? Go ahead and count them. I'll wait!

But the one thing that separated men's names from women's names back then was the common use of nicknames some of which were quite powerful in their roots and descriptive meaning. For example, my Father had many friends with colorful nicknames. One of the best of those nicknames was "Hack" Ginsburg (I honestly don't remember his real first name) so named for his easily identifiable cough, the result of smoking at least three packs of cigarettes a day since his third birthday. He had the gift of being able to do anything while smoking. He'd simply leave the cigarette in his mouth while going about his regular business. But the real gift was his ability to smoke a cigarette more than half way down without losing the ash. You just don't see true talent like that anymore.

Some of the other nicknames were equally colorful, and while they also may have had meaningful origins, I really can't say what the origins of most of them were. But what I can say is that those names were more recognizable and used more often than their real names. There was "Mush" Herman, "Sheeps" Popky, "Artie" Rubenstein (Artie wasn't even his first or middle name, only his nickname!), "Roxy" Hinerfeld and "Hattie" Gerstein, so named because he owned a hat store.

Roxy Heinerfeld was a bit of an enigma to me, a real mystery man who would appear out of nowhere and then after a few minutes return back to nowhere. My Father never mentioned his name except when he bumped into him, and I have no idea what he did for a living or even how Dad knew him, but whenever their paths crossed was occasion for one of the strangest interactions between two people you'll ever see. Without saying a word, not so much as "Hi," they would stop. Each would pull a quarter from his pocket and then flip the coin in the air catching it and immediately transferring it to the top of the other hand where it remained covered by the first hand. When both "flips" had been completed they would remove the hand covering the coin, and the winner would take the other person's coin and continue on his merry way. Talk about a strange

ritual! As I said, not a word or facial expression was exchanged, and I have no idea how they determined who was the winner. But Dad did answer one troubling question for me. “What do you do if you don’t have a quarter?” I asked.

Dad looked at me as if I had just asked the dumbest question posed. “You *always* have a quarter,” he said, still in disbelief that I would ask such a question. Either they both made it a point to always carry a quarter tucked away somewhere on their person, or he was putting me on as he often did to me and many others. Most likely, it was probably both!

* * *

This section could be referred to as the Jewish section because just about everything in it is associated with eastern European and German Jewish cooking. There is actually a Hebrew word meaning “taste” which has worked its way into the English language and is now quite commonly used. The word is “cholesterol”, and I’m sure you’ve heard it used, for example, in the context of “low cholesterol” which simply means “low taste”, or “high cholesterol” which means “great taste”. Jews are notorious for the amount of cholesterol we can fit into a single dish. I’ve heard it said that if the Jews had a “spice” of their own, it would undoubtedly be butter and their chosen “herb” would be egg yolks! In other words, Jewish cooking is all about high cholesterol. In many of the dishes featured herein butter and eggs, and lots of both, are the main ingredients. These are foods of substance that really stick to the ribs and sometimes even stick to a few more things! A lot of the noodle dishes in particular were made with truckloads of egg yolks, and that seemed to be the base ingredient for a number of eastern European dishes favored by Jewish cooks of yesteryear. In fact, most of their husbands were dead by their late fifties or early sixty from heart attacks. Hmm... I wonder why?

Ruth’s Classic Noodle Pudding (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

Great, excellent, fantastic, the best of the best! You really can’t describe in words just how good this one is. There are many recipes for noodle pudding, but this one is head and noodles above all the rest. It’s great as a side dish with meat or fish, or warm or cold for breakfast, lunch or dinner. If there was a restaurant that served this recipe, I’d move in and max out my AMEX Gold Card. While the destiny of many food leftovers is to slowly rot away in the refrigerator until they are finally thrown away, that will never happen with this noodle pudding. I know what you’re thinking, “I don’t like noodle pudding”, and that means that you probably never tasted a really good noodle pudding. So put your prejudices aside and try this one out. I promise you’ll come back for more!

2 apples
12 oz. package of noodles (cooked and drained)
½ pint sour cream less 2 tbsp.
¼ cup milk
3 eggs
Grated lemon rind
1 cup sugar (scant)
½ tsp. cinnamon
1/8 cup butter or margarine

Boil noodles in salted water. Drain noodles and then in same pot melt the butter and add cooked noodles back in with butter. Cook in butter until butter is absorbed by noodles. Beat eggs well (until they yell, “Please, no more!”), and add half of the sugar and beat again. Add sour cream and milk. Pour half the custard over the cooked noodles. Spread half the noodle mixture in a greased 9 inch by 9 inch Pyrex dish. Slice the apples and layer over

noodles in dish. Mix cinnamon with remaining sugar and sprinkle half of mixture over apples. Add remaining noodles. Sprinkle remainder of cinnamon and sugar mixture over top, and then pour over the remaining custard. Cover loosely with foil and bake in a water bath at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Can be frozen for use at later date.

Potato Kugel (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

Potato kugel is nothing more than potatoes on steroids. It brings together texture, taste, cholesterol and comfort all in one food. Like most Jewish foods, it's made with a lot of eggs and either butter or chicken fat, so you know it's "healthy"! My Mother tended to make this recipe rather than potato pancakes probably because you throw it in the oven and bake it instead of standing over a grease spattering frying pan as is required with potato pancakes. She also made this same dish in muffin tins so that each serving was an individual portion.

5 potatoes grated
3 eggs
1 large onion grated
pepper and salt to taste
1 pinch baking powder
4 slices white bread, soak in water and squeezed out
Chicken fat (or shortening or butter)

Grease 9 inch by 13 inch Pyrex dish well with butter or chicken fat. Mix all ingredients together, place in dish and bake at 350 degrees until knife inserted in middle comes out clean (probably around 50 minutes).

Potato Pancakes

Eggs, onions, salt, shortening, fried. You tell me...could this be bad?

5 potatoes grated
2 eggs
1 large onion grated
pepper and salt to taste
1 pinch baking powder
2 tbs. flour (or matzo meal)

Combine all ingredients and mix. Spoon mixture into a hot skillet with melted shortening, cook side until brown, and then flip and cook other side. Drain on paper towels. May be kept warm in oven or reheated to serve. (Some folks like their potato pancakes with sour cream and others with applesauce.)

Potato Latkes

What's the difference between pancakes and latkes? I think they're one in the same, so what we've got here is two different approaches (recipes) for the same thing. There were no names on either of these recipes, so I can't say which one might be better. Try 'em both!

2 cups grated raw potato (4 – 5 potatoes)
1 medium onion
2 eggs
½ tsp. scant baking powder
¾ tsp. salt
Dash of pepper
¼ cup matzo meal
Peanut oil

Peel vegetables and grate finely. Add eggs, baking powder, salt, pepper and matzo meal. Drop with a spoon into a skillet with hot peanut oil deep enough to barely cover pancakes. Fry over moderate heat and turn pancakes until brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels before serving.

Dishes like potato latkes, tsimes and noodle pudding were almost always reserved for Friday night. Shabbos dinner was always special, and because it fell on Friday night, Friday became a special day, and all day long I looked forward to dinner. It was always a very relaxed and leisurely meal during which the family talked and told stories about their day. But the meal was the centerpiece, and every bite of every dish was savored and thoroughly enjoyed. Well, that was true until sometime around the September following my twelfth birthday. That was when Friday night's underwent a change...a very dramatic change.

To understand what happened to Friday nights you have to understand my parents and most parents of that generation. Mom and Dad were very much traditionalists, but especially my Mother. In her mind there was a preset way to do everything, and if there was not a preset way for something to be done, then whatever it was, you probably shouldn't be doing it! One of the things she felt very strongly about was that boys and girls should all be taught the basic social graces which included table manners, social manners and of course, any twelve year old boy's personal favorite, ball room dancing. Yes that's right, ball room dancing! But it was so much more than just plain old dancing. The girls wore party dresses and white gloves, and the boys jackets with white shirts and ties. And what's even worse, we had to act "civil" and be pleasant to each other!

The woman who ran this activity which occurred every Friday night promptly at 7:00 PM, was a woman named Mrs. Stroud. Her first name was "Mrs.," and I have no doubt that her husband and kids also called her "Mrs." In fact, I'd bet the farm it said "Mrs." on her birth certificate. She was in her fifties which is probably the age at which she was born. Her word was law, and even parents were afraid of her. Had she appeared on the Seinfeld show she would undoubtedly have been called the "Dance Nazi".

She ran the two hour dance and etiquette class as if it was a military operation. Whether it was the rumba, the lindy or a waltz, Mrs. Stroud was always nearby to correct your step, posture or behavior. "Louis, don't slouch," or "Louis, stand straight," or "Louis, no talking," I was one of her

favorite targets. In fact after my first year with Mrs. Stroud, my friends and I firmly believed that good etiquette required that you start any sentence with the word, “Louis”!

Most of the parents applauded her firm approach to discipline, and this was probably because she could achieve with their children what the parents themselves had not been able to do. Her iron fisted rule was facilitated by a simple musical device well know in Latin American countries as the “castanet”, two simple pieces of what I believe are sculpted wood connected by string lacing which when used by a trained “musician” create a rapid, rhythmic clicking sound. Like trained dogs, the mere sound of Mrs. Stroud’s castanets caused the entire class to immediately freeze in place. It was as if the earth had stopped rotating on its axis and time itself had come to an abrupt halt. Such was their power that the sound of those castanets could stop world wars. I always thought that Rod Serling missed the boat by not doing a Twilight Zone episode based on those castanets.

Classes started in September and concluded in early June with Mrs. Stroud’s “Grand Cotillion”, a dancing extravaganza which could have been choreographed by June Taylor herself. It featured one hundred or so kids moving in perfect unison much like a fine Swiss watch movement. We’ll that’s what it was supposed to be, but there were always a few instances in which the “watch” lost or gained a few minutes, if you know what I mean. In any event, the parents reveled in the sight of their little daughters attired in formal gowns and their sons in white dinner jackets with black bow ties and tuxedo pants. There was always a large and enthusiastic audience that came to witness this spectacle. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters and coerced brothers all attended.

At the time, my friends and I found the class to be a major nuisance, but I have since come to recognize that I did learn a lot from it. My parents evidently saw that value long before I did because for two years they were willing to shorten our Friday night dinner to accommodate Mrs. Stroud’s scheduling. However, though perhaps producing an overall beneficial result, the sound of those castanets is so imprinted on my mind and memory that even today when I hear the introduction to “Little Darling” by the Diamonds, a song popular back in 1957 which featured castanets in the introduction, I immediately freeze and slowly look over my shoulder. Old habits die hard!

Grated Potato Tsimes (Hilda Blume)

Once again, this is probably worth trying because it’s got Hilda’s name on it. There is another tsimes recipe under “Vegetables”, and I was tempted to put this one there as well, but I really think it belongs more under “Potato & Noodle Dishes” than under “Vegetables”. The word “tsimes” has also been tossed around in another context in a lot of Jewish households where Yiddish, or “pig Yiddish” for those who only pretended to speak it, was a second language used when you wanted to say something you didn’t want your kids to understand. “Tsimes’ was used to describe a situation in which a big deal was make of something that really wasn’t a big deal. For example: “So you chipped a nail. Big deal! Don’t make such a *tsimes* out of it!” Whether the term came before the dish, or visa versa, who knows, and do you really care?

1 lb. unsweetened prunes (It hurts just to type that!)
3 cups water
8 potatoes (peeled)
1/3 cup sugar (preferably brown)
2 tbs. lemon juice

1 ½ tsp. salt
3 tbs. potato starch
2 tbs. melted fat (or shortening)
1/8 tsp. pepper

Slice 5 potatoes and spread out in a 2 qt. casserole dish. Wash prunes and soak for 1 hour, and then bring prunes to a boil in 3 cups of water. Pour prunes and liquid over the potatoes. Add sugar, lemon, juice and 1 tsp. salt, cover and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees.

Grate 3 remaining potatoes, add potato starch, pepper and remaining salt. Remove cover and spread over top of casserole dish contents. Put cover back on and bake another ½ hour. Uncover and bake an additional ¾ hour and serve. Heat enough oil in Pyrex dish to coat. Grate potatoes in processor and drain. Add grated onion on top and mix. Bake in Pyrex dish for 1 hour at 350 degrees.

Potato Dumplings (*Hilda Blume*)

3 large potatoes
1 cup cooked and mashed potatoes
1 tbs. finely grated onion
2 tbs. Spry (shortening)
1/3 cup matzo meal
½ tsp. salt
Dash pepper and cinnamon

Peel and grate potatoes and drain through a cloth to remove excess moisture. Press with hands. Put the grated potatoes into a bowl, add remaining ingredients and mix well. With hands, shape into dumplings. (If mixture won't hold shape, add more matzo meal) Bake at least one hour at 350 degrees.

Parmesan Potatoes

8 medium potatoes peeled and diced
½ cup flour
2/3 cup Parmesan cheese
½ stick butter
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste

Place potatoes in a plastic bag and add cheese, salt and pepper, and mix well. In a shallow baking dish, melt butter, add potato mix and stir. Bake at 350 degrees until done (1 to 1 ½ hours). Turn at least twice while cooking.

My first recollections of most of the dishes in this section were from when we lived on River St. in Wilkes-Barre which is the home in which I was born. Next door to us lived the Wolovskys whose first child, Billy, was only a few months younger than me. Apparently, our mothers took us for

walks together in our carriages, and as we got older our friendship grew and we became very close. Billy was my first friend and we remained in contact until I went off to military school. After that our lives took different directions, and we only touched base with each other once a year or so. While I was in architectural school, sometime in the mid to late 1960s, and when Billy and I were both in our twenties, he joined the Peace Corps and was stationed either in Ethiopia or Afghanistan (I'm not sure which). It was during that period that I received the very sad news that he had died. While still on station, he contracted some sort of a very aggressive intestinal parasite. The story I got was that after trying unsuccessfully to treat it, they finally flew him to Israel where better doctors and medical facilities were available, but he was too far gone for the treatment to be effective. Even today, I still have such good memories of Billy, but I can't remember him without it being accompanied by a sense of sadness because of his premature death.

* * *

MOLDS & JELLO

Once again, I know what you're thinking. Jell-O! What's the big deal? Well, first of all, this is not the Jell-O of Bill Cosby. This is probably the only place where you will ever find foods containing Jell-O elevated to the level of a serious and sought after food group, but it's for a very good reason. My Mother and her sister, Edith, never did receive proper recognition from the Jell-O folks, but let it be known that they did more for the art of Jell-O mold making than Sikorsky did for the helicopter or the Colonel did for fried chicken. They both produced Jell-O molds worthy of places in the Louvre.

How Jell-O as an art form came about I really can't say, but I suspect that Edith and Ruth took it far beyond what Ed and Bob Jell-O (the folks at Jell-O) had ever imagined. These works of art were made in metal molds with intricate imbedded designs filled, not just with plain old Jell-O, but with fruit sliced with surgical precision, whole berries and nuts, and all arranged in the Jell-O suspension medium as one might arrange flowers or as you might find a lone insect preserved for eternity in a hunk of clear amber. They were made both in small, individual molds and in large molds from which servings would be dispensed. But either way, the attention to detail in their assembling was truly incredible. But unlike art work, the ultimate act of true appreciation was not in the viewing, but rather in the eating. Their light, fruity flavors made them a perfect dessert or an ideal accompaniment to brunch or a main course of hearty beef. You might even call them "edible" art! Removing the finished product from its mold (undamaged) was also an art unto itself, and meals in the Shapiro and Leventhal households was often delayed due to "unmolding" issues.

Red Beet Cabbage Mold (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

2 pkg. lemon Jell-O
2 cups boiling water
½ cup cold water (less 1 tbs. - Talk about precision!))
½ cup beet juice
1 cup mayonnaise
2 cups grated red beets
2 cups shredded cabbage
2 cups grated onion
2 tbs. drained horseradish

Dissolve Jell-O in boiling water. Add ½ cup cold water, beet juice, mayonnaise, salt and pepper. Beat with a beater and chill in freezer tray until frozen at edges. Remove from freezer and whip like whipped cream. Fold in grated beets, cabbage, onions and horseradish, then pour into mold and refrigerate.

Wine Mold (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

This was probably my favorite of the Jell-O molds. The wine gave it a very fresh and distinctive flavor, and because of its translucency you could really see what was inside and how carefully the fruit and nuts had been placed in the mold.

2 packages of cherry Jell-O

2 scant cups of boiling water
1 can pitted cherries drained
1 ¼ cups cherry juice
Red wine
Chopped walnuts or pecans

Make Jell-O as per box instructions. Use 2 cups of water plus the juice from the cherries, and then add red wine to make four cups of liquid. Refrigerate, and when slightly jelled add cherries and a small handful of chopped nuts.

Sour Cream Fruit Mold (*Edith Leventhal*)

2 packages lime Jell-O (3 oz.)
2 cups water
1 can crushed pineapple (8 oz.)
1 can pear halves (8 oz.)
1 cup sour cream

Dissolve Jell-O in 1 ½ cups boiling water. Add 1 ½ cups cold water. Drain canned fruit and combine juices. Add 2/3 cup to the Jell-O mixture, stir well and chill in refrigerator until syrupy. Dice pears and add them along with the pineapple and sour cream to the Jell-O mix. Mix thoroughly and pour into 6 cup mold or 2 (two) 3 cup molds. Refrigerate until firm. Unmold on crisp salad greens and garnish with fresh fruit.

Beet Mold (*Edith Leventhal*)

1 package of Red Jell-O (3 oz.)
1 ½ cups beet juice
3 tbs. vinegar
1 chopped celery stalk
1 cup chopped beets
3 or 4 tbs. prepared horseradish (white or red)

Dissolve Jell-O into hot beet juice. Add vinegar. When Jell-O starts to gel, fold in beets, celery and horseradish. Pour into mold and refrigerate until firm.

Bing Cherry Mold (*Edith Leventhal*)

2 packages 3 oz. Dark Cherry Jell-O
1 can pitted Bing cherries
1 cup less 2 tbs. boiling water
Cherry juice
1 cup red wine
Handful of coarsely chopped walnuts

Drain cherries in strainer over bowl and place in refrigerator. Dissolve Jell-O in boiling water. Add scant cup of wine and cherry juice. Add water if necessary. There should be no

more than 3 ½ cups liquid. Refrigerate until consistency of unbeaten egg whites. Add nuts and cherries, pour into mold and refrigerate until firm.

Before we conclude this section, one final word about Jell-O molds. For those of you who still may not be convinced of the validity of Jell-O molds as a serious and special food, you really have to see and taste it to believe it. These elegant molds became a signature of sorts for the Smith girls and appropriately reflected their own elegance and uniqueness.

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Cheese Blintzes 1

For those of you who may not be really sure exactly what a blintz is, allow me to explain. In simple terms, a blintz is a Jewish manicotti, but without the tomato sauce. It's typically accompanied by the Jewish version of tomato sauce, sour cream! Really, if it wasn't for the pork thing that Italians do, it would be hard to tell us apart. In fact, when you get right down to it, Italians are really nothing more than kneeling Jews!

Crepe:

1 cup milk
¾ cup sifted flour
3 eggs
2 tbs. veg. oil
½ tsp. salt
1 tbs. grated orange rind
1/3 cup butter or margarine

Combine eggs, oil and milk. Add flour, salt and rind. Beat until very smooth. (Batter should be thin like heavy cream.) Chill for at least 30 minutes. Melt 1tsp. of butter in a 6 inch skillet. Pour in just enough batter to cover bottom of skillet. Remove from pan when lightly browned and repeat process. Stack brown side up.

Filling:

½ lb. of dry fine curd cheese or cottage cheese
2 egg yolks
2 tbs. sugar

Combine all ingredients and beat until smooth. Chill until firm. Fill each crepe with the filling and fold. Fry in pan with butter on both sides until lightly brown. Serve with fruit sauce or sour cream.

Cheese Blintzes 2 (Mildred Popky)

Crepe:

4 eggs
2 cups flour
1 cup milk
1 cup water
veg. oil

Filling:

1 lb. pressed cheese
1 egg
pinch of salt
sugar to taste
cinnamon to taste
vanilla to taste

Combine crepe ingredients to make crepe batter. In a small skillet, add enough veg. oil to coat bottom, and then do the same with the crepe batter. Cook until lightly brown, remove from pan and set aside. Repeat until crepe batter is used up. Combine the filling ingredients and mix with hands. Fill each crepe with filling, fold, and fry with veg. oil until lightly brown on all sides. Serve with fruit sauce or sour cream.

Breakfast Casserole (*Esther Slaff*)

6 thick slices of good bread
½ lb. of cheese (Edam, Gruyere or Gouda)
2 eggs (beaten)
1 cup milk
½ tsp. salt
pinch of nutmeg

Butter bread and place flat in oblong casserole dish. Cover bread with cheese and then pour over mixture of eggs, milk salt and nutmeg. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes.

Buttermilk Pancakes

1 ¼ cup flour
1 ½ cup buttermilk
1 egg (beaten well)
½ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
1 tbs. melted shortening

Mix all ingredients together, but leave a little lumpy. Cook in very hot skillet or griddle.

Lou's French Toast

Always a weekend favorite with Sally and Jodi, it takes French toast to a higher level.

1 loaf unsliced challah bread (square loaf, not braided)
4 eggs (maybe 5 depending on size of loaf)
¼ cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
¼ tsp. almond extract
½ tsp. ground cinnamon

Carefully cut crust from bread. Cut loaf into 1 inch slices, and then cut those slices into 1 inch "logs". In a pie dish, crack three eggs and beat well. Add vanilla, almond abstract, cinnamon, and milk and beat well. Thoroughly soak bread pieces in mixture, and turn as necessary to insure the bread becomes saturated. Melt butter in a skillet, and cook bread covered on a medium low heat to allow it to cook all the way through without burning. Turn French Toast as necessary to insure even browning on all sides. Serve with maple syrup.

Apple French Toast Casserole

This became a big favorite in my household, and particularly for entertaining at Sunday brunch.

1 cup brown sugar
½ cup butter
2 tart apples
5 eggs
1 ½ cups milk
¾ tsp. vanilla
1 loaf French bread

Combine sugar and butter in pan and then add apples. Cook over medium heat for about ten minutes or until syrupy. Pour into a 9" x 13" baking pan or Pyrex dish sprayed with PAM. Spread sliced apples over butter and sugar. Slice bread and place them over apples. Whisk the remaining ingredients and pour over bread. Refrigerate overnight. Bake for 50 minutes at 350 degrees and serve.

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