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PASSOVER DISHES

Every Jewish family has its own lurid tales about Passover Seder, and my family is no exception. My memory tends to break historic Seders of my life into three basic epochs: Childhood Seders at Aunt Thelma and Uncle Charlie's, post adolescent and early married years Seders held at my Mother's Debbie Drive home, and then all of the Seders at our home which began when it became too difficult for Mom to host them. But they all had one thing in common which I suspect is a common element of many family Seders. Even though the best linens, china and crystal adorned the dinner table, the Seders were all conducted very informally, sort of like a classy picnic but without the bugs. Most years a typical Seder had a minimum of ten people but at times topped out at close to twenty. As we read through the service there were probably no less than three or four separate on-going conversations on a broad range of topics from what the President had said earlier that day to, "When is it time to eat the hard boiled eggs?", a question that was always on someone's mind.

The Seders at Aunt Thelma and Uncle Charlie's remain a bit of a blur because even though I attended Seder there until I was almost through high school, the wine I consumed during those Seders was instrumental in preventing too many memories from forming. "Here, Louis, have a little bit of wine," and I did. A little bit here, a little bit there, and before I knew it my gums and tongue would become numb, and I'd mosey on over to the living room couch for a little siesta. It was a scene that repeated itself year after year.

The Seders at my Mother's had many similarities except that the guests were *her* family (Smiths) rather than Shapiros who attended Aunt Thelma and Uncle Charlie's Seders. When we began holding Seders at our home, the same multiple side conversations were omnipresent, and five minutes into the Seder Aunt Miriam would start asking, "When do we eat the hard boiled eggs?" She continued to ask the question so many times that I often thought it should be added to the Seder as the "fifth question". In my mind, even today, the value and beauty of all those Seders was not the celebration of the Jews exodus from Egypt, but rather the family gathering together doing those little things that create tradition. And that's really what Seders are; an excuse for families to come together over a meal.

Chicken Matzo Ball Soup

(Refer to Chapter I, Soups & Stocks, for Chicken Matzo Ball Soup recipe.)

Of all foods, not just Passover foods or American foods, but *all* foods, nothing provokes greater criticism or praise more than a matzo ball. And that's because everybody's an expert, or at least they think they are. The adjectives that can be used to describe a matzo ball are almost all negative and include: light (not necessarily good for a matzos ball), flakey (even worse), heavy, dense, springy, hardy, resilient, big, small, and the universal cop out, different. But when they're made right and served with a good homemade chicken broth, they are a real treat and perhaps the ultimate Jewish comfort food. And when matzo ball soup is really good, there will be no words offered to describe it, just half closed eyes and a barely audible "mmmm" uttered like the purring of a contented kitten.

Matzo Charlotte (*Ruth Dickstein*)

Not bad for a Passover dish. No, really, I mean it. Not bad for a Passover dish. The pineapple really gives it an interesting and refreshing flavor while actually making it possible to swallow with no discomfort or need for accompanying liquids! I'd actually eat Matzo Charlotte even if it wasn't Passover!

2 cups matzo farfel
1 qt. boiling water
2 eggs (separated and well beaten)
½ cup sugar
2 tbs. sugar
½ tsp. salt
3 tbs. shortening melted (or butter or margarine)
rind of 1 lemon (it probably means just the zest)
1 medium can (1 cup) crushed pineapple (drained)

In a strainer, pour boiling water over matzo farfel. Combine egg whites and 2 tbs. sugar. Fold egg whites into matzo farfel. Combine all remaining ingredients in a deep dish and bake in a pan of water in oven at 325 – 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Lemon Torte

Basic Passover Sponge Cake:

9 eggs (separated and well beaten)
1 ½ cups sugar
2/3 cup matzo cake flour
¼ cup potato starch
1/3 cup + 1 tbs. orange juice & rind (I think they really mean zest, not rind, but I can't be sure.)

Beat yolks in a small bowl very well and add ½ cup sugar. Keep beating and alternately add flour and starch with juice and rind to the yolks. Let stand and beat egg whites. When sugar forms peaks add 1 cup sugar and then beat very well. Fold yolk mixture into whites. Bake for 1 hour and ten minutes at 325 degrees. Test after 1 hour.

Lemon Icing:

6 eggs separated
1 small package lemon Jell-O
½ cup hot water
Rind of one lemon
Juice of 2 lemons
1 tbs. orange juice
1 cup sugar

Beat yolks with ½ cup of sugar. In double boiler stir in lemon juice, lemon rind and yolks with sugar and cook until mixture coats spoon. Add Jell-O and stir until completely dissolved. Set aside to cool. Beat egg whites at high speed until peaks begin to form, and then slowly add ½ cup sugar beating constantly. When very stiff, fold into cooled egg yolk mixture. Use as pie filling or filling between layers of sponge cake.

All Seders consist of two basic and extreme factions: the “What a wonderful religious and cultural experience, so let’s read and cherish every word,” faction, and the “Jesus Christ, I’m starved. When the hell do we eat?” faction! A typical Seder is a tug of war between these two forces of good and evil, and the Seder leader must be both strong and wise to successfully navigate his way through the service without offending one of the factions or without being himself assaulted.

But back to the business at hand...food! The eternal quest of all Jewish mothers is to find kosher for Passover dishes that don’t taste like (you guessed it) kosher for Passover dishes. In going through the hundreds of recipes accumulated and saved by my Mother, Passover dishes were one of the popular categories. The very term “kosher for Passover” brings with it a list of food restrictions that is akin to removing the beef from hamburgers or the “Merry” from Christmas, but this did not deter Jewish women from finding acceptable alternatives. Throughout all of time, or at least since Moses and his crew got lost in the desert, the taste of Passover food compared to regular non-Passover food has been a topic of constant and hot debate. If you were endowed with super powers that enabled you to listen in on any Passover Seder table, you’d probably hear near identical comments in each household about a variety of Passover foods.

Nephew David: “Aunt Rose, this lemon sponge cake (kosher for Passover) is to die for! It’s absolutely delicious, and light as a feather!”

Aunt Rose: “Quick, take a piece and eat it before it floats away or someone eats the last piece.”

Or, “This is the best matzo I’ve ever had. Well, at least since last Passover!”

And of course, no Seder would be complete without a critique of the matzos balls. “Careful, you could hurt someone with these. They’re heavier than Aunt Rose!”

I always wondered, if the cake was really that good, why did they only make it during Passover? Why didn’t they make it for somebody’s birthday and put candles on it? And even more revealing, why did they always throw more of it away than was eaten? I’ll tell you why, it’s because it was *kosher for Passover*, and if you check Webster’s Dictionary you’ll see that *kosher for Passover* is defined as, “lacking in taste as compared to regular non-Passover food”. It’s a bit like saying, “For meat taken from the sole of a coyote’s foot and then left in the sun to dry, it really isn’t all that bad.” In other words, and if that’s all you’ve got, it could be worse! But don’t be deterred by my irrational rantings. Passover cakes really do serve a function, if only to satisfy the sweet cravings of Jews during the eight days of self induced flour (and grain) deprivation we call Passover.

But what discussion of Passover delicacies would be complete without discussing matzo. That would be like describing sour milk without explaining what it smelled like! But then again, what can I say about matzo that hasn’t already be said? It’s essentially the dehydrated version of bread with all the taste removed which is then baked until it is one hundred percent moisture free and brittle. (Would you willingly eat brittle bread?) You don’t eat matzo plain because (1) it tastes like Styrofoam (well, maybe not quite as tasty), and (2) because it’s virtually impossible to swallow unless it has something spread on

it (i.e. butter or jelly) or is accompanied by large quantities of liquid. Some will tell you how they enjoy a matzo sandwich during Passover, but that's a complete lie because matzo was made for a sandwich like rocks were made for floatation devices! One bite from a matzo sandwich and the whole thing fractures and drops the sandwich contents on your lap. But even worse, a sheet or two of matzo has the same effect on your gastro-intestinal system as drinking concrete, and it can give a whole new meaning to the term "constipation". (Editor's note: I think we have a real first here. When is the last time you saw the word "constipation" used in a cook book!)

Matzo Meal Pancakes

There are several schools of thought on what to eat matzo meal pancakes with. Probably the most common accompaniment is sour cream. By the way, sour cream is to Jews what red sauce is to Italians. Whenever we're not sure what to put on a food, we always fall back on sour cream, and matzo meal pancakes are no exception. The other accompaniment that I like is a simple sprinkle of plain old sugar, and yet others prefer jelly. But whatever you do, never eat them plain! Trust me on that one.

3 eggs (separated and beaten)
½ cup milk
¾ cup matzo meal
½ tsp. sugar
¼ tsp. salt
dash of cinnamon

Add all ingredients (except egg whites) to beaten yolks. Fold in stiff beaten egg whites. Fry with butter in a skillet.

Passover Spice Cake

12 eggs separated (Yep, that's right. A whole dozen! Bon cholesterol!)
1 ½ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. cloves (optional)
1/3 cup kosher for Passover red wine
1 ½ cups matzos cake meal
1 cup walnuts chopped
¾ cup sugar

Beat yolks and sugar until very light. Add spices, wine, nuts and cake meal. Then fold mixture into stiffly beaten egg whites. Pour into cake pan and bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

Passover Jelly Roll

4 eggs separated
2/3 cups sugar (Add 1/3 to yolks and 1/3 to whites)
1/3 cup potato starch sifted
1/3 cup matzo cake meal sifted (then sift both together)

3 tbs. lemon juice & 1 tbs. lemon rind

Beat yolks until thick. Add lemon juice and rind and 1/3 cup sugar and beat 5 minutes. Fold in cake meal and potato starch combination. Then fold in well beaten whites (with sugar). Line pan

with wax paper. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Take towel and sprinkle liberally with powdered sugar. Remove cake from pan and place on towel and roll with piece of wax paper. After allowing to cool, unroll cake, discard wax paper and fill with jelly or other filling and re-roll.

But before we leave Passover, there is one more story I'd like to relate. It's not so much a story *about* Passover as it is a story that happened to take place *during* Passover. More often than not, my Mother's birthday, which was April 5, almost always fell during Passover which meant that she was usually deprived of a real birthday cake. A few days before her 100th birthday I visited her at the Jewish Nursing Home and asked if there was anything special she would like as a present. I barely got a rise out of her, but after several minutes of asking the question over and over again, she finally responded that the only thing she would really enjoy having was a center cut pickled tongue sandwich. A tongue sandwich on rye had always been her favorite, and although Uncle Monroe and Elaine brought her a tongue sandwich every Sunday evening when they weren't in Florida, she always commented that the sandwich was so good because she hadn't had one in years! Her short term memory was such that she simply couldn't remember that she had a tongue sandwich only a week earlier, but because of her failed memory, no one could have possibly enjoyed that sandwich more than she did.

Since the Jewish Home kept strictly kosher, and since Mom's birthday that year fell as usual during Passover as it almost always did, I knew that there were some serious obstacles to be overcome if she was to enjoy that tongue sandwich on her birthday. So I went to the Rabbi who was the executive director of the Jewish Home and told him of my dilemma. I looked him straight in the eye and with a smile on my face asked, "Can you as a rabbi sit there and honestly tell me that God doesn't want my Mother to have a pickled tongue sandwich on rye for her one hundredth birthday?" And then I added, "...and what will probably be her last birthday." Without a moment's hesitation he smiled back at me and said that there was no question about what God would want and that Mom should and would have her sandwich. There was, however, one minor accommodation that we would need to make.

"Would you mind eating your sandwiches in the staff dining room?" he asked.

That was indeed a minor concession that I was more than happy to make, and because of Mom's dementia she would have no idea of whether we were eating in the staff dining room or at the Four Seasons. The event was attended by Margie, me, Sally, Jodi, Eric and, of course, Madison, who at times Mom still thought was Sally. That birthday lunch was recorded with photos (see the bottom of page 172) which were the last photos taken of her. And so it turned out that Mom had "...the best tongue sandwich I've ever had," as well as the "...first tongue sandwich in years." It was a birthday I'll always remember because she got exactly what she had wanted and couldn't have been happier because of it. It was also her last birthday. She died seven months later.

* * *

MISCELLANEOUS ACCOMPANYMENTS

When I was born in 1942, my family lived at 263 South River Street in Wilkes-Barre, about four doors down from Temple Israel. We shared a duplex apartment with the Karnofsky's, good friends of my parents who lived on the first floor while we lived on the second floor. We also had a live-in maid named Bertha whose appearance lived up to her name. She was "big" for her age, about five foot eight, tipped the scales at a few hundred pounds and could do the hundred in a shade under two hours.

Bertha, my Mother and my Sister, Sally, all shared one thing in common – an incredible stubbornness. Once they had made up their minds on something it would take an act of God to change it. This "condition" or circumstance, if you will, also set the stage for some of history's greatest battles of will. My earliest recollections of these epoch battles go back to when I was about five or so years old. Sally would decide not to do something she was told to do, or to do something she was told not to do. If Bertha was the one who issued the original instruction, she would spend ten to fifteen minutes going head to head with Sally, and when Sally successfully held her ground, my Mother would enter the battle on Bertha's side. But quite frankly, they were no match for Sally whom I believe initiated some of these skirmishes for the sheer sport of it. I really believe she enjoyed bringing Bertha and my Mother to their knees. Typically, they would all yell at each other for several minutes, and that was usually followed by Sally being put in her room until she calmed down and saw the error of her ways. Of course, she eventually calmed down, but I don't know that she ever gave in to Bertha and Mom. On some rare occasions, the debate would get so heated that Anna, Karnofsky's maid from downstairs, would intercede as a mediator of sorts and to protect Bertha and my Mother from Sally's wrath.

In the days before we spent summers at Harvey's Lake, it was common for us to pack picnic lunches or dinners and go somewhere for a picnic, and one of our favorite spots was a place called Giant's Despair. It was located atop one of the mountains just outside of Wilkes-Barre and was a favorite picnic area for local residents. There wasn't really all that much special about the place other than the view, but there were several places to spread out a blanket and commune with nature. There was also a fresh water spring, and many visitors, including the Shapiro's, brought glass jugs that could be filled and taken home. I don't really remember if the water was anything special, but visitors to Giants Despair like to think it was.

On the occasion of one such picnic we piled everyone, and that includes Bertha, into my Dad's brand new Studebaker. One of his friends had just opened a Studebaker dealership, and I guess Dad felt obliged to purchase the car from him. Mistake! For those of you who may not know what a Studebaker from the late 1940s looked like, I'll try to explain. Its designers were evidently infatuated with airplane design because it literally looked like a very small plane but without the wings. The body was sort of short and stubby and came to a point in the front which was crowned by a grille designed to look like an airplane propeller. The propeller didn't actually turn, but it looked as if it might. The trunk had a weird taper as well, although it didn't come to a real point. "Roomy" or "spacious" are not words you would use to describe the Studebaker. "Confined" and "cramped" would be more on the mark.

So there we were, all five of us jammed into our new Studebaker on our way to Giant's Despair to enjoy a beautiful summer day. Sally and I sat in the back with Bertha who had managed to work up a good sweat before we even pulled out of the driveway. (Remember, back then there was no AC in the house or cars!) Giant's Despair wasn't all that far from our house, probably no more than twenty minutes, so in no time we were at the base of the mountain and just beginning the climb to the top. Even I, a six year old kid, could tell that all was not right in automotive land.

“Give it more gas, Melvin”, my Mother helpfully suggested.

“The sole of my shoe is touching the floorboard,” replied Dad who was not particularly happy with the performance of his new car.

He had already downshifted into first gear, but the car was barely moving up the steep hill. It was very hot in the noon sun, and by now Bertha looked as if she'd been doused with a fire hose. After several minutes of, “going no place fast”, as my father would say, he backed down the hill a bit and into a small pull-off area while he and my Mother discussed what to do. It appeared that upmost in my Father's mind was to take the car back to the dealer on Monday morning, but rather than call it a day and go home, Dad came up with another plan. The main hill of Giant's Despair is probably about a mile and a half long, and Dad decided to do it backwards, in reverse, because that gear had a particularly low ratio and might provide enough oomph to get the job done. So he turned the car and his neck around and started out again up the hill, but this time trunk end first!

It probably took ten minutes, and by the time we reached the top Dad was sweating almost as much as Bertha, but we made it! I don't remember anything about the rest of that day, but I do remember something from the next day. When Dad came home from work the Studebaker was gone, and instead he was driving a new Chrysler New Yorker.

Fruit Compote (*Ruth Shapiro Dickstein*)

- 1 package pitted prunes
- 1 package apricots
- 1 large can pineapple chunks (with juice)
- 1 large can mandarin oranges
- 1 can cherry pie filling
- 1 cup sweet, red grape wine
- 1 orange (cut in half)
- 1 lemon (cut in half)

Combine all ingredients in a casserole dish and cook at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. If too thick, add orange juice or apricot wine.

Apple Fritters

- 1 cup flour
 - 3 tbs. sugar
 - 1 ½ tsp. baking powder
 - 1/3 cups apple juice
 - 1 egg (separated)
 - 3 tbs. melted butter
 - 3 tart apples (peeled & chopped)
- Separate egg and add yolk to apple juice. Fold in the chopped apples and then remaining ingredients. Drop with a spoon into shortening and fry. Serve with maple syrup.

Nuts & Bolts (Miriam Newman)

You can buy these off the shelf at any super market, but believe me when I say they're not the same, not even close.

2 cups Cheerios
2 cups Rice Checks
2 cups pretzel sticks
1 ½ cups red peanuts
1/3 cup butter (melted)
1 tbs. Worcestershire Sauce
½ tsp. garlic salt (or 3/8 tsp. garlic powder)
½ tsp. celery salt (or Lowry salt)

Mix dry ingredients with melted butter and Worcestershire Sauce, spread on a cookie sheet and bake at 250 degrees for 30 minutes. Stir after 15 minutes.

Most chapters in this book have at least one recipe (if not more!) that will make you cringe or at least offend your taste buds, but this chapter has more than its fair share. With that in mind, I think we could all agree that it makes good sense, at least good social sense, to censor what comes out of our mouths. Many years ago it occurred to me that if that's really true, and I believe it is, then it's probably also a good idea to screen or censor what comes *into* our mouths as well. There are certain things I wouldn't eat on a bet, yet I know people who would put things in their mouths that I wouldn't put in my toilet! And because of that, many years ago I developed four basic rules about what I wouldn't eat even if I was stranded on a desert island where those foods were the only sustenance available. At the risk of sounding immodest, you should know that many nutritionists compare my food laws with Einstein's theory of relativity because they're really that important. By the way, you don't have to be a nutritionist to come up with your own list of "won't eat" foods. It's just common sense. The food groups which I won't let pass through my lips as long as I am conscious are as follows:

- Blue or purple foods. Think about it for a minute and you'll see out what I'm talking about. The one single exception (as in "I" before "E" except after "C") is blueberries which I particularly enjoy in their pie form. However, oysters and other *things* from the sea with that bluish or purplish tint to them are definitely "verboten"!
- Anything with suction cups. That may seem a little narrow minded, but I just don't do squid or octopus. I also don't care for dried rubber bands with tomato sauce, and that's basically what we've got here.
- Anything that comes to the table with feet or lips on it. Use your imagination on this one. It's a very important group because its members can be among the most offensive and repugnant of all foods.
- And finally, my last rule which was born from the loins of common sense and which also serves as a final filter for anything that may have fallen between the cracks in the first three rules. Don't ever eat anything that you think may have the potential for making you puke. Just plain old common sense.

Chopped Herring (Hilda Blume)

I consider myself to be one of the greatest living authorities on chopped herring. Laugh if you will, but I'm one of the few who has been willing to step up to the plate (and I do mean "plate"!) and assume this cloak of responsibility. To begin with, chopped herring gets a bum rap. I've heard the whispers...we all have. "Herring is crappy whole before it's chopped, so why would you want to waste time cutting it into tiny pieces before you throw it away? Does cutting it up improve the taste?" Well, not really, but what you add to it does make a difference. I happen to like regular pickled herring as well as herring in sour cream, so chopped herring would seem to be the next natural step in herring culinary evolution. Chopped herring doesn't have quite the bite of pickled herring or herring in sour cream, and its texture is very different and difficult to describe. However, and more importantly, we're talking big time taste and full flavor. Give me a scoop of chopped herring on a bed of lettuce and a few wedges of tomato, and I promise not to bother you until it's all gone. And before you join the millions who openly knock chopped herring, why not give it a shot first? You might be surprised. ("Or, maybe not!")

- 1 whole pickle herring
- 1 sour apple
- 1 hard boiled egg
- 1 slice white or rye bread
- 1 small onion
- vinegar
- lemon juice
- sugar
- pepper
- 1 slice white bread

Soak bread in vinegar. Put the herring (cleaned and skinned), apple, bread slice and onion through a grinder. Season to taste with lemon juice, sugar and pepper.

Pickled Beets & Hard Boiled Eggs (Ruth Shapiro Dickstein)

As a kid, I used to wonder why anyone ever thought it might be a good idea to throw a bunch of spices, some onions, a few red beets and a couple of hard boiled eggs into a jar and let them ferment there for a few days. What sick mind thought up that combination? Maybe it was a fraternity prank. What do you think they really expected might happen when the chemical process picked up a bit of steam? And by the way...I know what you're thinking, and you're probably right. It must be the same group of culinary geniuses that gave us pickled tongue, pickled herring and candied fruit rinds. But this time they may have actually gotten it right, and before you say, "Oh, no! I'm not eating pickled anything"! , I suggest you cast aside your long held prejudices against beets or anything pickled, and give it a try. Pickled beets are actually good (I prefer them served cold), and pickled eggs taste just like regular hard boiled eggs but with a hint of sweetness.

- 2 red beets
- 1 medium white onion sliced
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ¼ cup white vinegar
- 1 tsp whole allspice
- 2 whole cloves

1 stick cinnamon

Boil or steam beets until tender. Reserve 1 cup of the cooking liquid, then drain beets and let them cool enough to handle. Peel, slice and pack beets and onions in 3 pint jars. Combine reserved liquid, sugar, vinegar, allspice, cloves and cinnamon in a pot. Bring to a simmer and cook five minutes. Strain and pour over beets. Allow to cool then cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Seasoning for Poultry

½ cup salt
1 whole garlic peeled
1 tbs. poultry seasoning
1 tbs. paprika
¼ tsp. ginger
1 tsp. seasoned pepper
¼ tsp. mustard powder
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. roasted onion powder
½ tsp. MSG

Place salt and garlic in blender and blend at high speed until garlic is thoroughly mashed. Place in a quart jar and add remaining ingredients. Shake well and refrigerate between uses.

Dill Pickles

A really good, half sour, kosher dill pickle is like fine wine and has a lot in common with it. “We will serve no pickle before its time” is, or should be, the mantra for picklers. Like fine wine, a good pickle has to be aged to just the right moment, but opinions differ as to exactly when that *right* moment is.

1 cup coarse (kosher) salt
1 gal. water
1 tsp. pickle spice
Small cucumbers (I guess they mean enough to fill the jars.)
1 qt. pickle jars (4)
4 large cloves garlic peeled
1 bunch fresh dill
1 red bell pepper

Combine water and salt in a large container and mix thoroughly. Place a clove of garlic, 1 dill sprig and ¼ red pepper in the bottom of each jar. Scrub cucumbers clean and pack in the jars. Add another sprig of dill to the top of each jar and pour in salted water to fill each jar to the top. Seal tight with lids, then *you* decide just how long to let the pickling process continue before they are “just right”.

Chopped Liver

Whether you like it or not, you have to admit that chopped liver is unquestionably one of the all time great Jewish foods. But there is also a lot of confusion surrounding it. There's liver, and then there's *liver*, but they're not both the same thing. If you say the word "liver" in a conversation about food, most people will think you mean *calf's* liver, but that's not the case here. When you talk about chopped liver, the word "chicken" is always inferred to be between "chopped" and "liver". So I guess what I'm saying is that you don't make chopped liver from calf's liver. It's always chicken liver.

I always associate chopped liver with Friday night Shabbos dinner or some other Jewish holiday. Mom always served it before dinner, and it was typically served in a small bowl with a small spreader type knife and accompanied by either crackers or small "party" type rye bread slices. I was never a big (calf's) liver and onion man, but chopped liver always got my attention, and particularly when it was good chopped liver. And, by the way, my Mother's was absolutely the best. In many ways chopped liver is very much like cheesecake or apple pie. Everyone has their own special recipe and their own little secrets that make their recipe so special. However, truth be told, most recipes are exceptionally mediocre and not worth the cracker they're spread on. But a few, a very precious few like my Mother's recipe, are capable of inducing culinary rapture. (Editor's note: That's *rapture*, not be confused with *rupture*. What a difference one single letter can make. One causes you to say "Ahhh!" and the other "Ohh!", but what we're talking about here is pure "Ahhh".)

1 lb. chicken liver
3 large onions
¼ cup vegetable oil (for frying)
4 hard-boiled eggs, peeled
salt and pepper

Sauté or broil chicken livers. Chop and sauté onions until barely brown (do not burn!). Using a hand crank meat grinder, feed in alternately the eggs, onions, livers and oil. Add salt and pepper to taste and mix with a fork. Caution: Do not stir overmix or it will change the texture. Serve with crackers or "party" rye bread (you know, the mini loafs of bread made by Pepperidge Farm).

Hollandaise Sauce

Not a big fan, but I know I'm in the minority which is why I put aside my prejudices and included this recipe. If I can include pickled tongue, pickled fish and candied watermelon rind, well then there has to be room for Hollandaise sauce. Right?

2 egg yolks (beaten well)
1 tbs. cold water
1 tsp. lemon juice
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. paprika
dash of pepper
1 ½ tbs. butter
1 tbs. flour

Combine egg yolks, cold water, lemon juice, paprika and pepper and beat very well. Very slowly add 1 cup of boiling water to the butter and flour while stirring continuously. Slowly combine both mixtures in a double sauce pan while continuing to stir.

Chicken Breast Stuffing (Hilda Blume)

1 tbs. veg. oil or shortening
¼ onion chopped
small stalk celery (chopped)
¼ cup matzo meal
1 cup corn flakes
1 egg
¼ cup water
¼ tsp. sugar
¼ cup finely chopped almonds

Melt shortening and add chopped onion and celery. Sauté until soft. Add all remaining ingredients except corn flakes and mix well. At end, add corn flakes and mix in.

Stuffing for Stuffed Veal Breast

My Mother used to make a dish called stuffed veal breast. I'm not really sure what a veal breast is, but I know it reminded me a bit of a rack of ribs. It was also a very big deal to my Mother's generation, and she made it only on very special occasions, like when I came home from college. She wanted my trips home from college to be special, and what better way to make them special than with stuffed veal breast. It was also a very time consuming meal to prepare, and that extra time and effort only served to make the dish that much more special for my Mother. But there was a problem. I never liked stuffed veal breast and, in fact, I actually hated it, but I just didn't have the heart to tell my Mother. Because of my admitted cowardice, my Mother would slave in the kitchen making that special dish she knew I loved, and I would eat it, even taking seconds, all the time hoping and praying that I could keep the meal down. For me, it was a very painful ritual which went on for years and at times even made me consider not going home! I have not been able to find the recipe for the veal breast itself, but I thought it was still worthwhile to include the stuffing recipe even if there is no place to "stuff it"! Think of it as a nuclear bomb without the triggering mechanism.

By the way, a few years after we were married, and after one of those special occasion stuffed veal breast meals at my Mother's, Margie finally summoned the courage to do something I had not had the guts to do myself. She actually told my Mother that I really didn't care for veal breast and Mother's reaction was one of gratitude! There was a lot of work involved in making the dish, and she was grateful she wouldn't have to do it again. Her only comment to me was, "But Louis, you love stuffed veal breast," a comment which is still kept alive by Margie even today.

Beef heart, gizzard and liver chopped (How's that for an aggressive start right out of the gate!)

1 stalk of celery chopped
¼ medium onion chopped and browned
¼ cup fresh chopped parsley
1 cup bread crumbs
¼ tsp. dried sage
Salt and pepper to taste
½ cup cold water
1 tbs. chicken fat

Combine all ingredients and refrigerate over night.

The so called “accompaniments” which follow are essentially candies and jams. Some of the candies are a bit, shall we say, on the exotic side, and I dare you to try them! How will you know which ones I mean? Don’t worry, you’ll know!

Heavenly Hash (Marian Isaacs)

Neither my mother nor her sisters were really into candy making, but they did make a few different types of fudge that are still great by any standard. The first one, Heavenly Hash, was a big favorite of mine and my kids as well.

1 small bag of mini chocolate chips
1 large bag chocolate chips
12 oz. chunky peanut butter
¼ Tsp. vanilla
4 ¼ cups mini marshmallows
½ cup chopped nuts (your choice!)

Combine the chocolate chips, peanut butter and vanilla in a sauce pan and melt slowly. Let cool a bit, and then stir in the marshmallows. Put in a shallow, greased baking pan and sprinkle the nuts on top. Refrigerate at least 24 hours.

Chocolate Fudge

2 squares of chocolate
1 small can of cream
1 lb. of confectioner’s sugar
1 pinch salt
1 tbs. butter
1 tsp. vanilla

In a sauce pan, bring above ingredients to a boil and keep on a low boil for 6 minutes. Remove from heat and add 2 tbs. of marshmallow whip, 1 tbs. of butter and 1 tsp. of vanilla. Beat until left arm is paralyzed, then finish beating with the right! (Yes, that is actually how the original recipe was written!) Pour into a buttered pan and top with chopped nuts or coconut.

Candied Orange & Grapefruit Peel (Ruth Shapiro Dickstein)
(Lemons & Limes may also be used)

Here again we come upon the term *acquired taste*. My guess is that the next two recipes, candied orange and grapefruit peel and pickled watermelon rind, are an outgrowth of the old world need to waste nothing. Admittedly, this would seem to stretch even that definition, but my Mother and many of her family and friends evidently thought enough of these fruity snacks that they kept them in small candy dishes in their living rooms where they would be readily available to visitors. Although I doubt that any scientific tests have ever been conducted to confirm it, believe me when I say that these fruit skins, as prepared from these recipes, had a half life measured in decades rather than weeks or even months. Bacteria, mold, and other micro-organisms which would jump all over other foods seemed to know not to take on these two candies. The candied peels were thin slices of fruit peel with a sugar coating which had the texture and taste of sweet rubber. I'd tell you what the pickled watermelon rind tasted like, but to be honest, I was never able to work up the courage to actually taste one, so that would be pure speculation!

1 grapefruit
2 oranges
1 ½ cups water
8 cups water
2 oz bitter chocolate
4 oz. bittersweet chocolate

Clean and remove skins from fruit and cut into bite size strips. Immerse in water and bring to a boil. Pour off water, add new water, and boil again, a total of three times. Add 1 ½ cups of sugar to 8 cups of water and boil slowly for 2 hours or until water becomes syrupy. Remove from pot, cut into strips, roll in sugar and place on rack to dry. Melt bitter chocolate and semisweet chocolate in a double boiler. Add a few drops of veg. oil and stir well. Dip 2/3 of way into melted chocolate and place on cookie sheet to cool. Store in glass jars in refrigerator, and in the morning throw the whole thing away! (Oops, that last part was just an editorial comment that happened to slip out!)

Pickled Watermelon Rind (Hilda Blume)

What can I say about pickled watermelon rind that hasn't already been said for candied orange and grapefruit peel! I know it's a Hilda Blume recipe, and I know her generation liked to pickle anything that would stay still long enough to be pickled, but come on...pickled watermelon rind?

2 qts. cold water
1 tbs. lime (slack lime – calcium oxide)
2 tbs. all spice
2 tbs. of whole cloves

1 qt. cider vinegar
4 lbs (9 cups) sugar

Peel off and discard green skin from watermelon. Cut rind (about 3 qts.) into 1 inch cubes. Soak 1 hour in lime water. Drain and cover with fresh water and boil until fork tender, about 30 to 40 minutes. Add 1 qt. of fresh water, vinegar and spices. Bring to boil again and add rinds. Boil gently and uncovered until liquid is clear (about 2 hours) and until rinds become transparent. If syrup becomes too thick, add water. When done, remove rinds and pack with syrup in sealed sterilized jars. Should make somewhere around 12 ½ pint jars. (Editor's note: Do you think 12 jars is enough? But then again, you can never have too much pickled watermelon rind on hand!)

Florida Marmalade

1 Florida grapefruit
2 Florida oranges
juice of 1 lemon
3 lbs. Sugar
3 pints cold water

Remove seeds from fruit and chop the whole fruits in a processor. Add the lemon juice while processing. Let stand overnight, and then boil until thickened (about 2 hours). Pour into 8 sterilized jelly jars and seal with paraffin.

My Mother had a very fixed belief system which extended to ethics, religion and just about anything that required personal interpretations. Once she decided where she stood on any given issue, it required divine intervention to change her position or belief. That same belief system also extended to less esoteric topics such as residential construction. She couldn't tell you why, but as far as she was concerned it was a globally accepted fact that residential construction required a basement. That's it...period...end of discussion. So in her mind, anyone foolish enough to build (or buy) a house without a basement was bound to have problems with that house down the road. Even after I had been a licensed architect for many years, she would still not believe me when I would explained that the basement thing simply wasn't true. If you were to try to pin her down by asking what specific problem should be expected if there was no basement, the reply would be something on the order of, "Well, you know," and she really thought you did know, even though she didn't.

So in 1977 Margie and I bought a great contemporary home on a great piece of property. When we gave her and my step father their first tour of our new home, both were less than impressed. My step father opened with, "Did you see the siding?" He was referring to the rough sawn, vertical wood siding which was one of the things that attracted us to the home. However, and fortunately, he had a solution. "Maybe you'll have a good year at the office and you can get aluminum siding," he counseled.

That was immediately followed by the big question from my Mother who was waiting for us to compete the tour. "So where's the basement?" she wondered aloud. I knew I was in trouble and had to think fast. "There isn't one, Mom," I replied, "but we'll probably put one in a few years." She nodded her head as if to acknowledge my wisdom. And no, I didn't make that up. Margie was there too and witnessed the whole thing!

Strawberry Preserves 1

1 qt. strawberries hulled and drained
1 tbs. fresh lemon juice
4 cups sugar

In a heavy pot, place berries, lemon juice and sugar and bring to brisk boil. Continue on a high boil for 4 minutes. Remove from stove and add remaining 2 cups of sugar. Do not mix, but boil another 4 minutes. Remove from stove and pour into a large bowl. Allow to cool to room temperature and stir several times. Let stand uncovered overnight. Next day, wash glass containers in dishwasher, fill with jelly and add paraffin to top and close with lid.

Strawberry Preserves 2

2 full qts. Strawberries
6 cups sugar

Scald berries for 2 minutes. Drain and quickly pour into cooking pot. Add 4 cups sugar and bring to a rolling boil for 2 minutes. Add 2 more cups of sugar and bring to a rolling boil for 5 minutes. Pour into a flat pan (no more than 2 inches deep) while stirring. Next day, stir well, put in sterilized jars and seal with wax.

Marshmallow Fudge

1 lb. confectionary sugar (Did you get that? One pound! For all you diabetics out there...enjoy!)
1 small can cream
2 squares melted dark chocolate
1 pinch salt
1 tsp. butter
1 tsp. vanilla
2 tbs. marshmallow whip

Place first 4 ingredients into a pot and bring to a rolling boil for 6 minutes. Remove from burner and add butter, vanilla and marshmallow whip. Beat until smooth. Pour into a buttered pan and allow to cool. (Optional: top with shredded coconut or chopped nuts).

Candied Pecans

1 lb. pecans
¼ tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup sugar
1 egg white

1 tsp. water

Combine egg white and water and beat until foamy. Stir in sugar, salt and cinnamon. When mixed thoroughly, add pecans and stir until pecans are well coated. Spread on cookie sheet and bake at 250 degrees for 45 minutes stirring every 15 minutes. When cool, store in a sealed container or plastic bag.

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