

August 4, 1983 VILLAGE ADVERTISER

Too hot to cook!

by Lydia Lovell



Midsummer's hot and humid weather sends the most enthusiastic king or queen of the kitchen scurrying to prepare meals without lighting the oven or shattering the budget. Barbeques and cookouts draw amateur chefs outside where the heat of fires is wafted quickly away, and the inside of the house remains a cool haven.

Al fresco dining was a notion that had yet to reach Cape Cod shores when Aunt Olivia presided over her massive cast-iron cookstove when I was a child. Its warmth, so welcome on winter days, was a curse in summer, but a necessity nonetheless. In those days, cooking required a fire in the stove, and a fire in the stove meant a hotter-than-pepper kitchen.

Once the food was prepared, however, escape followed. We ate all our meals in the high-ceilinged, tall-windowed dining room where the shade from the porch roof, and green leaves of a tall oak tree growing in the yard, kept the room cool.

Although modern well-insulated ovens and all sorts of electric appliances enable us to cook in relative comfort, patio barbeques and cookouts are often our choice today. Chicken, hamburgers, steaks, and hot dogs are among favorites that lend themselves to barbeques. While these are enjoyed in unadulterated condition, variety is achieved with sauces, marinades and bastes.

Aunt Olivia employed marinades not only for their flavors but also for their ability to tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat. By adapting her recipes and using a few of the most mobile appliances (broiler-ovens, electric fry pans, and slow-cookers), we're blessed with capabilities of cooking without adding heat to our houses.

These gadgets do their work plugged into any outlet; there's no rule they must be used only in the kitchen. Barbeque grills and hibachis are other devices that encourage outdoor cooking.

Nor are we limited to hot dogs and hamburgers, steaks and chicken, cooked over charcoal. Chicken bakes perfectly in a broiler-oven, corn boils to tenderness in an electric fry-pan, and pot roast tastes as delectable in a slow-cooker as when it's spent hours over a stove burner.

Marinades, with their tenderizing properties, also bring roasted meat unique flavors, flavors that come to us from all over the globe. From the banks of the Danube in southern Europe comes a marinade that makes a lip-smacking sauerbraten.

In a small bowl, slice 4 medium raw onions, add ½ cup red wine or cider vinegar, 6 whole cloves, 2 medium bay leaves, and 4 black peppercorns. Place a 2-to-3 pound bottom-of-the-round roast beef in a deep ceramic casserole. Pour the marinade over and around the meat, and refrigerate for one to two

days, tightly covered. Turn a few times so all parts of the meat soak in the marinade.

On the day you plan to serve it, remove the meat, reserving the marinade. Outside, on porch, patio, or in garage or carport, set up your slow-cooker and electric frying pan on a good-sized sturdy table or bench. Plug in the appliances. With the fry pan set at 350°, place a small piece of butter in the pan and, as butter melts, use a slotted spoon to remove most of the onions. Fry them in the butter.

Quickly sear the meat on all sides in the butter and onions. Remove roast to slow cooker set at its highest temperature, pour the marinade into the fry pan and scrape up all the bits from the pan, clap on the cover, and add to meat, letting it cook two hours. Half-an-hour before it is finished, add a scant quarter-cup of dark corn syrup and a half-teaspoon of salt.

When done, the roast may be kept warm in the slow-cooker at its lowest setting, or be removed, cooled, and served cold. It slices more readily after being refrigerated. Thicken the gravy with two tablespoons of flour and enough water to make a smooth paste. You may wish to strain the gravy and discard the onions.

In winter I like to serve this pot roast with carrots and tiny peeled potatoes boiled together in the same pot, and cabbage steamed separately just until tender, but in hot weather I usually opt for potato salad, cabbage and carrot slaw, and save the gravy to use over rice or mashed potatoes on a cooler

day. Fresh corn, now in season, is an optional vegetable.

Since this is a hearty dinner, fresh fruit compote makes an ideal choice for dessert. A nice combination is sliced peaches, cantaloupe cubes, and halved seedless grapes, prepared in the cool of the morning and refrigerated to allow juices to meld their flavors. A little lemon juice or a quarter-cup of dry white wine helps keep the peaches from browning, and a handful of blueberries, tossed over all when dishing up, adds a nice touch of color.

Barbeque sauces, as opposed to marinades, are mixtures brushed or spooned over meats while they cook, a process called basting. A good sauce for chicken is a mixture of 2 tablespoons soy sauce, the juice of half-a-lemon, 1 teaspoon sugar, ½ teaspoon oregano, 1/8 teaspoon dry mustard, ¼ teaspoon salt, and a dash of pepper. As they cook, brush all surfaces of cut-up chicken pieces with this sauce.

To enhance char-broiled hamburgers, prepare the following sauce ahead of time and use to baste both sides of quarter-pound patties as they sizzle on the grill. In a small heavy frying pan, place 3 tablespoons of Dijon mustard. As the mustard heats over a very low fire, stir in one cup of milk, add one peeled garlic clove pierced with a toothpick for easy retrieval, half-teaspoon of salt, dash of black pepper, 1½ tablespoons lemon juice, and one envelope powdered beef broth concentrate (or one tablespoon if from a jar). Do not dilute the broth mix.

Simmer ten minutes but do not allow to boil. Remove garlic clove before pouring into bowl. This is an excellent sauce to use with any bland meat or fish, particularly if two tablespoons of commercial sour cream are stirred into the mixture just before serving.

Glazing frankfurters may be gilding the lily, but this makes an especially delicious (and easy) hors d'oeuvre as well as a good basting sauce for grilled dogs to be served in buns. In an electric fry pan, melt a six-ounce jar of currant jelly. Stir in a tablespoon of prepared mustard mixed with a tablespoon of cornstarch and enough water to form a smooth paste. Use only enough water to bring to pouring consistency. Stir at 350° while sauce thickens, then lower heat to 250°. Boil franks in water ten minutes to reduce fat; drain, and cut into bite-sized pieces. Drop into sauce and allow to simmer for 20 minutes. Keep warm and provide cocktail picks for spearing.

Sliced cucumber chips topping rounds of white bread spread with mayonnaise, then sprinkled with seasoned salt or charcoal seasoning, are good companions to glazed frankfurter hors d'oeuvres.

Summertime entertaining doesn't necessarily mean slaving over a hot stove as it did in Aunt Olivia's day.