

Aunt Olivia's Kitchen From Fish Tongues to Yum-Yums

by Lydia Lovell

This time of year everyone and everything on Cape Cod knows it is spring ... except the weather. Even when the weather begins to take hints from the calendar, the crocuses, and catalogs from garden supply houses and delivers a balmy sunny day now and then, it's only teasing because the next day it brings a blizzard or dumps us back into the deep-freeze. Still, we can't help thinking spring is coming soon because it has been such a long time since Christmas and, before we know it, Easter will be here, late though it is this year.

Looking through Aunt Olivia's recipes for "something different" I ran across the strangest one I've found yet. I can't help wondering if any of my readers has ever heard of fish tongues or if any has ever eaten **Fish Tongue Stew**. I will confess I never gave it much thought, but would have said fish probably didn't even have tongues, but here's the recipe, so they must exist.

1 lb. fish tongues **Dash of pepper**
6 C. milk **3 T. butter**
1/2 t. salt **1/2 C. light cream**
a few grains of sugar

Boil tongues until tender in small amount of water- about 15 minutes. While tongues cook, melt butter in a saucepan, add milk and cream, and heat. Put tongues and cooking liquid into hot milk. Heat, but do not boil. Serve with chowder crackers. Garnish with paprika if desired.

Having offered you this unusual suggestion, I'll return to more traditional foods so you will appreciate Aunt Olivia's talents at the kitchen stove. If she ever served us fish tongues, we didn't realize what we were eating; but when she served **Mussels in White Wine**, we appreciated that we were enjoying one of the finest delicacies ever to come from the sea.

2 qts. mussels in their shells **1 t. butter**
Chopped onion, parsley, and **Salt, pepper, 1 clove garlic,**
fresh tarragon leaves **minced**
 1 C. dry white wine (chablis
 or sherry)

Whenever Uncle Henry went over to Barnstable to look up something at the Registry of Deeds in the County Court House, Aunt Olivia asked him to be sure to stop at the fish market down on Mill Way, just over Maraspin's Creek, and pick up a couple of quarts of mussels for supper. Mussels that grow in the cold waters of Cape Cod Bay are superior in flavor to any found on the south side.

The first step in preparation is scrubbing them with a stiff-bristled vegetable brush until completely clean of sand, muck, and the mossy beard that clings to them. The cleaned mussels are then placed in a large skillet with all the other ingredients, covered with a tight-fitting lid, and cooked over a hot fire for about 15 minutes until the shells open. Serve in soup plates, pass large paper napkins, and offer mugs of broth to those who want to sample it.

Perhaps the very best bread of all to serve with fish is **Johnny Cakes**. Aunt Olivia had several Johnny Cake recipes, but her favorite (and ours) she cooked on a griddle rather than baking in the oven.

1 1/2 C. yellow cornmeal **1 large egg, beaten lightly**
1 scant t. salt **Enough boiling water to scald**
4 T. sugar **the meal**
 Enough milk to thin

Combine meal, salt and sugar. While stirring, pour in enough boiling water to scald every bit of the meal thoroughly, but not enough to puddle the meal. Allow to "rest" ten minutes, then thin with enough milk so the mixture can be readily dropped from a spoon. This sounds complicated, but isn't difficult, taken a step at a time. Last, stir in the beaten egg. Drop batter from a large spoon onto a hot well-greased griddle. Turn when golden to cook other side. Serve with plenty of butter. Makes 12 to 15 johnny cakes.

Sometimes when Aunt Olivia served Mussels in White Wine and johnny cakes, instead of baking potatoes, she steamed a cup of brown rice in three cups of water to which she had added a teaspoon of salt and a tablespoon of butter. When the water boiled, she stirred in the rice, lowered the heat to warm, clapped on a tight-fitting lid, and allowed to steam for an hour.

At other times Aunt Olivia made **Baked Macaroni with Tomato and Cheese**. While my own personal preference is baked macaroni and cheese without tomato, Aunt Olivia's way is good, too.



1 28-oz. can plum tomatoes **1 16-oz. can tomato paste**
1/2 t. sugar **1/4 t. pepper**
1/2 t. salt **1/4 t. celery seed**
a pinch each of oregano, basil,
thyme, chervil and 1 minced garlic clove

Combine above ingredients and cook over low flame for at least one hour. Saute the following in frying pan before adding to sauce: 1 large onion, diced, and 1 green pepper, diced, in 3 T. olive oil. Have ready 1/4 lb. strong yellow cheese, sliced thin. Boil 2 cups elbow macaroni according to directions on the box. Drain well.

Starting with a layer of macaroni, one of sauce, then one of cheese slices, fill a well-greased 2-quart casserole, ending with cheese. Top with soft bread crumbs dotted with butter. Bake in 350° oven for 30 minutes until cheese is bubbly and crumbs crisp.

While waiting to put the mussels on to steam, Aunt Olivia prepared **Lima Bean Casserole**. (The recipe has been modernized for your convenience.)

1 pkg. frozen baby lima beans **1 8-oz. can boiled onions**
1 can condensed **1/2 C. grated processed**
cream of celery soup **cheese**

Cook beans in boiling water until tender; drain. Add celery soup and pour into buttered casserole. Arrange onions around top and press into soup. Top with grated cheese and bake at 350° until cheese is golden, about 15 minutes.

Desserts that turn a good dinner into an **Occasion** are always well-received around the Lovell table. If folks in your family all enjoy a hearty dessert, and if you're always on the lookout for one a bit different, try these **Yum Yums**, a recipe given Aunt Olivia by Mrs. Elizabeth Bell Powers. Some older Ostervillians will remember Lizzie Bell who was growing up here some eighty years ago.

1 C. flour **2 T. dark brown sugar**
1/2 C. butter

Using an electric beater, cream room-temperature butter with brown sugar. Then, with beater at lowest speed, work the flour into the butter-sugar mixture. Pat the resulting butter into the bottom of a 10" x 7" x 1 1/2" baking pan, spreading it as evenly as possible. Cream together: 2 whole eggs, 1 1/2 C. brown sugar, 1/4 t. baking powder, and 1 t. vanilla extract. In another small bowl mix together: 1/2 C. shredded coconut, 1/2 C. coarsely chopped walnut meats, and an equal quantity of chopped pecans.

Combine the two mixtures and spread over the first batter already in the pan. Bake in 350° oven for about 30 minutes. Serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. Makes eight ample servings.

Even growing boys who partake of a dinner of Mussels in Wine, Baked Macaroni with Tomato Sauce, Lima Bean Casserole, and top it off with Yum Yums and a glass of cold milk or a cup of hot black coffee are guaranteed not to complain of hunger pangs for at least two hours!