

# Jewels & Gems

by Lydia Lovell

Again and again, as I go through boxes of papers, files, and old books that once belonged to Aunt Olivia, I run across caches of recipes that seem to me to be small treasure chests filled to overflowing with jewels, jewels to be strung together in an ever-changing necklace of foods to grace our tables and please the palates of family and friends.

Most recently has surfaced a bundle of clippings and some of the blank 3 x 5 cards on which Aunt Olivia wrote many of her recipes; clearly, she intended to transfer recipes from the clippings to cards so she could add them to her files. Something interrupted her plan, however, for here is this unfinished business left now for me to do.

One gem among them is **Swiss Steak**, so we shall plan a hearty dinner around this meat dish for six hungry people.

**1 1/2 lb. round steak, 1" thick**  
**2 T. flour**  
**1 t. salt**  
**dash of pepper**  
**2T. shortening**

**2 large onions, sliced thin**  
**1 stalk celery, diced**  
**1 clove garlic, minced**  
**1 No. 2 can (2 1/2 C.) tomatoes**  
**1 t. steak or Worcestershire sauce**

Mix flour, salt and pepper together. Cut meat into six serving-size portions, and sprinkle one side of the meat with half the flour mixture. With either a meat-tenderizer hammer or the rim of a heavy saucer, pound the flour into the meat; turn the meat over and sprinkle remaining flour on other side of the meat and repeat pounding process until all the flour is pounded into the meat. Not only does the flour seal juices inside the meat, but the pounding process breaks down the fibrous texture of round steak and tenderizes it.

Preheat a cast-iron skillet large enough to take all the meat with room to spare. You may also use a tefloned frying pan with a tight-fitting cover. Melt the shortening over medium heat and brown both sides. Add all the other ingredients, stir, and cover closely. Cook over low heat about 1 1/2 hours until meat is tender. Toward the end of the cooking period, add a little water if necessary and if you want nice gravy.

Another gem from the same bundle is written with red ink on a page torn from a calendar and bearing the date, Sunday, May 18, 1958. Despite its age, the paper has not crumbled nor the handwriting faded. We have, therefore, an unusual recipe for **Noodle Kugel**.

**8-oz. pkg. wide egg noodles**  
**beaten eggs**  
**C. granulated sugar**

**1/4 bottle dark Karo syrup**  
**5 T. melted butter**  
**1/3 C. salt-free cracker crumbs**

Boil egg noodles in salted water for 25 minutes. Rinse under cold water, drain well, and transfer from colander to large bowl. In small bowl, beat eggs until light colored, add sugar, karo syrup, and melted butter. Pour over noodles and stir thoroughly. Grease a shallow baking dish or casserole.

Sprinkle cracker crumbs into dish to coat all surfaces. Note: Matzos meal may be used instead of cracker crumbs. Pour noodles mixture into casserole. Bake at 375° about 1-1/2 hours until golden brown.

Almost any vegetable goes well with Swiss Steak and Noodle Kugel, but since we have another gem that tells such a great deal about the green squash, zucchini, let's see what can be done with this versatile veggie. First of all, zucchini comes in all sizes from tiny ones no longer than your finger to medium sizes, five to ten inches long, to giants weighing several pounds and measuring almost two feet in length. For delicate flavor and adding raw to mixed green salads, choose the smallest ones. These are delicious, too, steamed with pearl onions and cherry tomatoes, and buttered just before serving.

For **Broiled Stuffed Zucchini**, choose zucchini about seven inches long.

**Six zucchini, 7" long**  
**1 T. salad oil**  
**1/4 C. onions, finely diced**  
**1 egg, beaten**  
**3/4 C. soft bread crumbs**

**1/2 C. ripe olives, pitted**  
**3/4 t. salt**  
**1/8 t. pepper**  
**1/2 C. grated cheddar cheese**  
**Paprika**

Cut stem end from each zucchini, split lengthwise, and par-boil in salted water to cover until just tender (about 10 minutes). Drain and set aside. In a small saucepan, cook chopped onion in oil until translucent. Meanwhile, beat egg until light-colored and add soft bread crumbs. Rye bread, either with or without caraway seeds, is a particularly flavorsome choice. Add olives, seasoning and the cooked onions. Set aside.

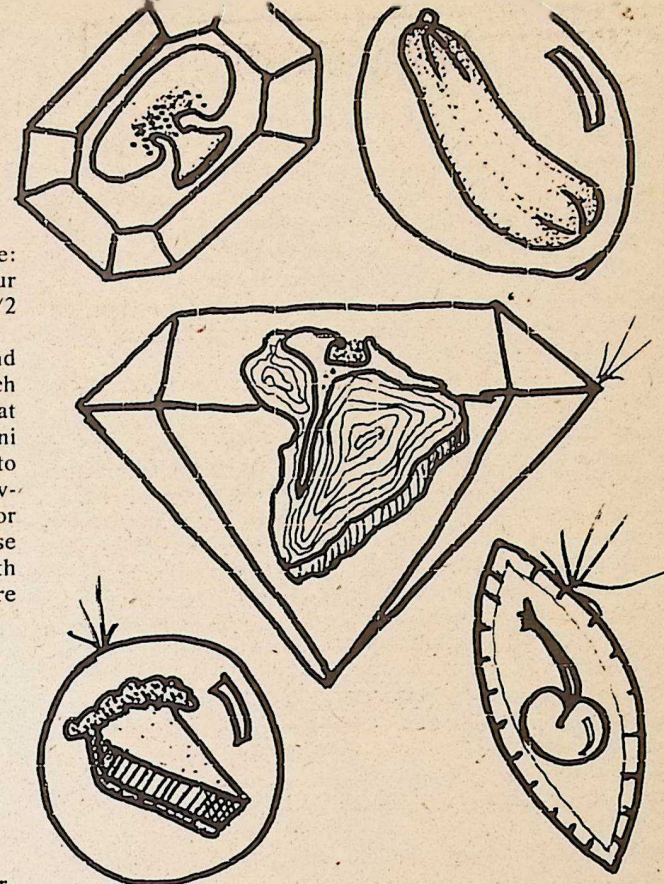
With a teaspoon, scoop out the center pulp from the zucchini, leaving a shell about a quarter-inch thick. Chop the pulp and stir into egg mixture. Heap mixture into zucchini shells and sprinkle with grated cheese and finally with paprika. Place the filled squash shells in a shallow baking pan and bake ten minutes in a 325° oven. If cheese is not quite melted, run under the broiler just before serving.

A meal such as this calls for a good dessert, and we offer a choice of pie or fruit. The pie was one Aunt Olivia often made especially for me for she knew I was particularly fond of **Butterscotch Custard Pie**.

**1/2 C. brown sugar**  
**2 C. milk**  
**1/2 t. salt**

**2 T. flour**  
**1 T. butter**  
**2 eggs, beaten separately**

Mix together in top of double boiler sugar, salt, flour, and stir milk in gradually to avoid lumps. Cook in double boiler about 15 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Pour custard slowly over beaten egg yolks and return to double boiler to cook two minutes more.



Longer cooking is likely curdle custard. Remove from heat, add butter and allow to cool. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites and pile into a pre-baked pie shell or a graham cracker crust; refrigerate. Butterscotch Custard Pie may be served plain or topped with whipped cream.

If you prefer a fruit dessert but are looking for something a bit more festive than passing a bowl of bananas, pears, apples and grapes around the table, Aunt Olivia would suggest a dish that never failed to satisfy the Lovell clan. We called it **Five Fruit Sherbet** and also called it delicious.

**4 bananas**  
**Juice of 1 lemon**  
**12 maraschino cherries**  
**1 orange, grated rind plus juice**

**1/2 C. white corn syrup**  
**1/4 C. maraschino cherry juice**  
**3/4 C. crushed pineapple,**  
**1 egg white beaten with a dash of salt**

Mash bananas in a good-sized bowl. Stir in the grated rind and juice of orange. Grate the orange rind before squeezing the fruit for best results. Add juice of lemon, sugar, syrup and cherry juice. Cut each cherry into quarters and add with pineapple. Beat egg whites with salt until stiff and fold into fruit.

Pour mixture into refrigerator trays, or any shallow container, and freeze until almost firm. Transfer to a chilled bowl and beat until well mixed. Return to tray and freeze until firm. Five Fruit Sherbet may be made days ahead, yields eight servings, and keeps safely in the freezer.

Bon appetit!