

# VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Not everyone is a good cook, nor is every recipe a good one either. But some recipes are fun whether they're good or not, because they're imaginative, different, and unlikely ever to be attempted. How often for example, would you attempt to cook and eat a snapping turtle?

One recipe for this tasty morsel begins with the instruction, "Catch the turtle." Especially informative is the description for proceeding once the turtle is located. "Be sure to put a gaff hook in his mouth so he'll bite hard on it (he won't let go)."

The purpose of the gaff hook is to provide a safe handle, for the directions continue, "Lay turtle on chopping block, haul head out of shell with gaff hook and chop off with hatchet."

Picture yourself with three arms, because one must wield the hatchet, one haul on the gaff hook, and the third keep the turtle on the chopping block. Maybe it would be better to lay the turtle on a flat board on the ground and stabilize it with one foot. Or maybe you can find a second person to hold the turtle, and a third to haul on the gaff hook while you chop.

Next the cook is advised, "After the turtle stops moving around (about an hour), cut off toes as these are apt to hook you." If you're not yet discouraged, you can proceed to the easy part.

"Turn animal upside down and, with a sharp knife, cut around outer edges of shell; it will come off in one piece. Remove skin from legs. Meat can then be cut out in sections. Soak meat overnight in cold water."

This recipe directs you to continue preparation the next day. "Drain off water. Cook meat half-an-hour in a pressure cooker with salt and onions. Cool, and pick out bones with two spoons. Bones will be all shapes and sizes and cannot be removed before this point. Turtle meat is now ready to use in any way desired. We like it in stew."

Another way to use the meat is to parboil the soaked, drained and bones meat until fork-tender, cut it in serving pieces, roll them in flour seasoned with salt and pepper, and fry in butter or margarine until golden brown. Delicious as I'm sure it is, except in direst circumstances most of us with a hankering for turtle will purchase the canned variety at a gourmet counter.

Maybe someone will present you with a brace of black duck now the waterbird season is open. Should you be the lucky recipient of such a gift, be ready to prepare the meat properly. There's no need to pick or dress the ducks. Simply part the breast feathers and slit the skin down the center of the breastbone with a very sharp knife.

Carefully fillet the breast meat from the bone. Cut the legs off the bird and skin them. Throw the rest of the carcass away.

Place a few tablespoons of butter and a small chopped garlic clove in a heavy iron skillet over high heat and add pieces of duck meat. Sear quickly on all sides and eat at once. Meat should be rare for best flavor. Beach plum jelly is the recommended accompaniment.

Here's a one-dish meal you could consider if you're fond of succotash. It's different, easy, inexpensive, and although I haven't tried it yet myself, I'm sure it's a good hearty dish.

Pick over two cups of red kidney beans, discarding any foreign material, and soak overnight in cold water. Boil in soaking water until done. You can tell when beans are done because when you blow gently on a spoonful of them, their skins will split. Drain.

Slice two onions and fry with three strips of lean diced bacon in a large kettle. Add beans, two cans of whole kernel corn and one can of cream style corn. Season with salt, pepper and a little sugar, to taste. Mix well and simmer gently for no more than half-an-hour. Sprinkle each serving with grated cheese and serve with a tossed green salad. Yummy.

Few communities today are so isolated that no doctor is within reach, but some still are even now. When people must tend their own physical ills, they concoct simple remedies. These aren't recommended for medicinal use, but are offered only for entertainment purposes.

To relieve itch of poison ivy, crush leaves of Self Heal (*Prunella Vulgaris*) between palms of hands until "juicy"; then rub on affected area. Self Heal, a common plant, grows close to the ground and has a purple flower resembling a miniature corn cob.

Make your own hair tonic? Shake together 3 oz. castor oil, 1½ oz. bay rum, 1½ oz. gin, and a teaspoon of bitter apple powder. Rub into scalp three times a week. Don't ask me where to get the ingredients.

The cure may be worse than the affliction, but arthritis can drive a person to stringent measures. Boil two quarts of water for 5 minutes and add two heaping tablespoons of sulphur, an ounce of strained honey and the juice of five lemons. Bottle and refrigerate. Take three ounces every four hours. You may get better in self-defense.

Folklore suggests that a cure for rheumatism may be affected by the simple expedient of wearing a nutmeg strung on a leather thong around your neck. If that doesn't work, when you take off your shoes before retiring, put them in the shape of a cross. As a last resort, sleep with a dog.

For a bad cough, hollow out the inside of one large beet, fill hollow with rock candy and bake in a 375° oven until candy melts. Put in jar and feed often to persons of any age. For a very bad cough, mix 1 oz. glycerine, ½ oz. paregoric, ¼ cup of sugar and ½ pint of gin; use a teaspoonful every four

hours. Wonder if that's how pharmacists make terpin hydrate?

Great-grandmother depended on nature's gifts to protect her complexion. On the first morning of May she arose before sunrise and washed her face in dew. Water found in partly decayed tree-trunks, she found, had a musky deliciously-soft quality like rain water from an old wooden rain barrel, and contained some substance that bleached freckles from hands and face. Buttermilk mixed with the herb tansy was used in the same way.

To soften and smooth work-roughened and weather-beaten skin, cream, tallow and cocoa butter were applied just as we use hand lotions.

A small bag of flour or starch served to reduce the natural shine of nose or chin. Beet juice or pokeberry juice could add a bit of color to cheeks and lips, but too much was considered vulgar.

Before days of beauty salons, hair dressers and store counter cosmetics, sap from a grapevine, gathered in early spring, was used to retain hair color and disguise silver threads among the gold.

There were even prescriptions for preventing bad luck. To insure good fortune, some believed, all that was necessary was to throw an egg backwards over the head and over the house. Others swore that egg-throwing was ineffective, but tossing a broken horseshoe over the right shoulder would guarantee good luck.

Perhaps one of the reasons we think of Americans as coming from hardy stock is that they survived their own recipes and nostrums. Survival of the fittest was Nature's law-of-the-land; life expectancy may have been shorter, in those days, compared to actuarial figures today, but we can not deny that enough of the old folks did survive. If they hadn't, we wouldn't be here to be amused by their old-fashioned notions.

It occurs to me that a couple of hundred years hence, those who follow us (if we leave them a world fit to live in) may be equally amused by many recipes and practices we put our faith in during this era of enlightenment.