

Seafood and Hedges

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From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

by Lydia Lovell

Seafood restaurants abound on the Cape. Alongside busy highways, on the shores of harbors and bays, and tucked away in woodland groves, we find numerous places that specialize in serving fish dinners, but no fish dinner in a restaurant can surpass a fish dinner prepared at home, particularly when fish is plentiful and dependably fresh, as it is in our local markets.

Seafood meals are easily put together; the hard parts (catching the fish and cleaning it) have already been done for you by the time the fish reaches your kitchen. The cook's biggest chore may be deciding how best to fix it and what vegetables and dessert will enhance the main course.

Rules of thumb that Aunt Olivia employed in choosing methods of cooking were a matter of protocol, but they make just as good sense today as they did when she presided over the stove. If portions of fish are thicker than half-an-inch, bake or broil them; if thicker than an inch, stuff and bake them; and any fish thinner than half-an-inch may be broiled or pan fried.

Among her practices for using leftover fish to advantage was a recipe for fish en casserole which she adapted to almost any delicately flavored cooked fish to prepare a gourmet meal. Since her fish casserole would feed six people, economy was served as well. As important as economy, however, is eye appeal and flavor; had Aunt Olivia found frozen crab steaks (like those available from fish market freezers) she would doubtless have served **Seafood Casserole** even oftener than she did. Cooked cod, haddock, or flounder are ideal choices; or, if you prefer, use fresh, frozen or canned shrimp.

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| 1 can (4 oz.) mushrooms,
drained | 1 can (10-1/2 oz.) cream
mushroom soup |
| 1 C. finely diced celery | 1-1/2 C. cooked fish, flaked |
| 1 small onion, chopped fine | 1/2 lb. (or 7 oz. can) crabmeat |
| 1/2 green pepper, chopped
fine | 1/2 C. each cooked white and
brown rice |
| 2 T. margarine | 1/4 C. milk |
| 1/2 can pimentos, chopped
fine | 1 C. medium white sauce |
| 1/2 C. blanched whole
almonds | paprika and parsley |
| | 1 T. butter (or margarine) |

Saute mushrooms, celery, onion and green pepper in two tablespoons margarine until tender but not brown. Add pimento and mushroom soup, undiluted. Mix well; add flakes of fish, flaked crabmeat, and both kinds of rice. (Rice may be cooled together.) Stir in 1/4 C. milk. Heap into a greased 1-1/2 quart casserole and bake, covered, 45 minutes in 250° oven.

While casserole bakes, prepare white sauce and toast almonds by stirring them over low heat in one tablespoon of butter until golden. Drain nuts on absorbent paper. Serve with hot white sauce, garnishing each portion with almonds, paprika and chopped fresh parsley.

Among seafood lovers, favorite entrees at restaurants are clams in various guises. There are two kinds of clams usually offered: soft shell or hard shell. The latter, also called quahog, is the type you need for making **Stuffed Clams**.

Buy quahogs about 2-1/2 inches in diameter; allow four for each person. If you don't know how to open quahogs, ask to have them opened while you wait and be sure you get the shells as well as the meat and the liquor. **Don't try to open quahogs unless you are positive you know how.** And that advice goes for opening oysters, too!

Drain the clams, saving the liquor. Chop the meat in a meat



grinder, a food processor, or the old-fashioned way- in a wooden bowl with a chopper. Mince one medium onion, a small green pepper, and the leaves and a large stalk of celery. In a small saucepan, saute the vegetables in two tablespoons of butter or margarine until golden but not brown. Add clam liquor and chopped clam meat. Simmer about five minutes. Season with a quarter teaspoon of prepared mustard, a pinch of black pepper, and one teaspoonful of Worcestershire sauce. Remove from heat.

Add enough crushed unsalted cracker crumbs to form a paste. The mixture should be neither runny nor stiff, but should just hold together when you squeeze it gently. Pack mixture into clam shell halves and place the shells on a cookie sheet or shallow metal baking pan. Bake 20 minutes in 350° oven.

For garnish, place a square of raw bacon on top of each clam before making, or top each, just before serving, with 1/2 teaspoon of lemon juice. If you are using canned clams, grease a casserole dish, heap in the clam mixture, and bake 30 minutes.

Aunt Olivia liked to serve cauliflower or broccoli with seafood casserole; with stuffed clams, corn-on-the-cob was our favorite vegetable when it was in season; otherwise, canned whole kernel corn was an acceptable substitute. **Cabbage and Carrot Slaw** never failed to please our palates, too.

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| 1 small onion, minced fine
(optional) | 1 or 2 stalks celery, minced fine |
| 1 head of cabbage, grated | 1/2 C. mayonnaise |
| 3 large carrots, scraped and
grated | 1 t. cider vinegar |
| | 1 t. sugar |
| | salt and pepper to taste |

Prepare vegetables and mix together in a large bowl; add sugar, vinegar and mayonnaise. Refrigerate, covered, for at least two hours. Add seasonings to taste.

Desserts the Lovell family anticipated following seafood dinners were many and varied, but one we all especially enjoyed was **Hedges** as made from a recipe that originated with Mrs. Hannah Hinckley. (Mrs. Hinckley's son, Mr. Roscoe Hinckley, recently celebrated his 92nd birthday, so you know this recipe is an old one.)

Begin by making a cake (or if you want to save time, buy a two-layer sponge cake at the store). To be absolutely authentic, you can make your own, as follows:

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| 2 beaten egg yolks | 1-1/2 C. flour |
| 1 C. sugar | 2 t. baking powder |
| 5 T. cold water | 2 beaten egg whites |
| 1 T. lemon juice | |

Separate eggs and beat yolks until thick and lemon colored. Add sugar gradually, continuing to beat; then add water and lemon juice. Sift dry ingredients together and add gradually to egg mixture. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Bake in a greased and floured round pan for 30 minutes in a 350° oven.

When cake is cool, split it horizontally, and fill center with a creamed filling made this way:

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| 1 C. milk (divided) | 2 egg yolks |
| 2-1/2 T. sugar | 1/2 T. butter |
| 1 T. corn starch | 1/2 t. vanilla extract |

Mix 2 tablespoons of cold milk with one tablespoon of cornstarch. Set aside. Mix beaten egg yolks with 2 tablespoons of cold milk. Set aside. Mix rest of the milk with sugar in top of double boiler. Cook, stirring, until sugar dissolves. Stir in cornstarch and milk mixture; stir in egg yolks mixture. Continue cooking and stirring until mixture thickens and coats a metal spoon. Remove from heat, add butter and vanilla. Before creamed filling is entirely cool, spread between cake layers.

From the two egg whites, make a meringue by beating them until stiff with 2 tablespoons of sugar and a pinch of cream of tartar. As near to serving time as possible, spread meringue over cake and bake until golden brown in a "quick" (375°) oven.

Quicker and easier is **Poor Man's Cake**, a recipe which was given Aunt Olivia by Mrs. Ellen Tallman.

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| 1 C. sour milk | a little of the following spices |
| 1 C. sugar | (try 1/2 t. each) |
| 2 T. butter | cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, |
| 2 C. flour | allspice, salt |
| 1 t. baking soda | 1 C. raisins |

Cream sugar and butter together, add sour milk. Sift flour, soda, and spices together, add to first mixture. Stir in raisins. Pour into a greased loaf pan, and bake at 350° for 35 to 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.