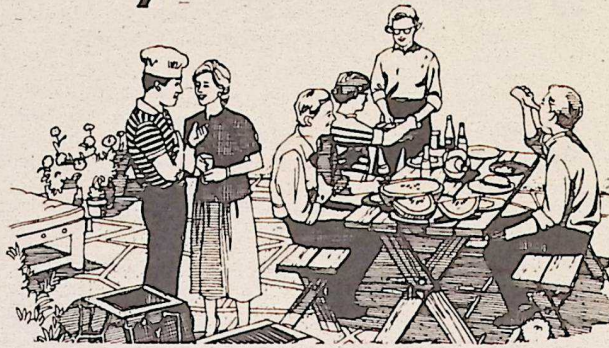


From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

# Labor Day classic - barbeque

by Lydia Lovell



Remembering **what** happened is fairly easy for me; recalling **why** something happened can be more difficult; but next-to-impossible is telling **when** something happened. If asked how long ago it was that holidays came on particular dates and then were changed to fall on Mondays so everyone could have three-day-weekends whenever a holiday rolled around, I'd have guessed five or six years. Well, I'd have been wrong. To check, I unearthed copies of The Old Farmer's Almanac; the earliest issue, 1974, clearly shows May 27 as Memorial Day. Why, that means the change came, at the latest, in 1973 . . . twelve years ago. And that means there are plenty of Americans, all those younger than 19 or 20 years of age, who don't remember that Decoration Day used to fall on May 30, regardless of what day of the week it was.

In fact the only holiday, when I was growing up and for a good many years after I was married and had a home of my own, was Labor Day which we celebrated the first Monday in September. And we still do. Somehow it's reassuring to find some things stay the same.

Looking ahead to this year's Labor Day weekend, I can't help, at the same time, looking back. Although Aunt Olivia did no cooking for Labor Day gatherings, there were occasions when we all congregated at the home of a cousin or other relative rather than at the Homestead. When held at Uncle Rob's, Uncle Henry's younger brother, cookouts were handled exclusively by the men in the family. Women might be allowed to make suggestions or recommend recipes, but the men built the fires, cooked on the grills, cut the meat, basted with their own sauces, strung chunks of meat and vegetables on skewers, and served. The women saw to it that the children stayed out from under foot, settled disputes, and visited.

One particular cookout I think all of us will always remember because Uncle Rob and Uncle Henry roasted a pig! Everyone was duly impressed with the undertaking,



and Aunt Olivia not only recorded the fact of the pig roast, but she made notes concerning the procedure followed.

The pig itself, between 60 and 70 pounds, dressed weight, took five hours to cook, even though it had been slit in half, lengthwise. The men had dug a good-sized pit in the ground the day before, and lined it with stones; early the next morning, they built a charcoal fire that covered the entire bottom of the pit.

While they waited for the charcoal fire to burn down to hot coals, Uncle Rob and Uncle Henry used a sharp knife to cut deep gashes in the meat and employed a big gravy baster to squirt **Roast Pork Sauce** into the slits. They used the same sauce for basting before, and during, the roast, swabbing it over the surface.

½ C. salt	1 C. olive oil
4 T. oregano	1 C. vegetable oil
2 T. black pepper	½ C. water
2 bulbs garlic, separated into cloves, and chopped	

Mash salt, oregano, pepper, and garlic to a paste, add oils, and add water. Mix thoroughly.

When the fire had established a bed of coals, they placed the pig's carcass, rib-side-down, on top of the coals. Then they covered the pit with a soaking-wet heavy tarpaulin and weighted it all around with rocks to keep it taut. Whenever the tarp began to dry out from the heat of the fire, one of them turned the hose on it until we could hear the sizzle of steam created when drops trickled into the fire.

After two hours, the tarp was removed, the pig turned over, and cooked another couple of hours. During the final hour, the tarp was removed and left off, and the porker was basted frequently with sauce.

Although the meat was delicious and the cooks highly praised, none of the men ever volunteered to repeat the performance. While many of us remember the cookout where we ate a whole pig, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Cookouts, these days, are still male-dominated affairs, but gas grills and simpler procedures are the rule. Perhaps, this Labor Day, you'll try **Cockachoise Chicken**. It makes 16 servings.

16 chicken breasts and thighs	8 celery stalks
8 slices of bacon	4 large sweet onions
16 small baking potatoes	¼ lb. margarine, melted
8 large carrots	salt and pepper

Tear off 16 squares of heavy-duty foil. In each, center a portion of chicken. Cover with half slices of bacon, cut

Trim fat from lamb and cut in 2" cubes. In a large bowl, beat lemon juice, oil, salt, and oregano. Add garlic, sliced crosswise. Cut celery, peeled carrots, and scrubbed potatoes into chunks, quarter the onions, and distribute the vegetables evenly on and around the chicken. Drizzle with a few teaspoons of margarine, and season with salt and pepper. Fold and seal chicken in foil. Cook 90 minutes on grill, turning foil packs every 15 minutes to baste. To serve cut a cross in the foil and roll back the points.

No one in the Lovell family, as far as I know, married a Hungarian, yet not a one of us but considered himself a connoisseur of **Shish Kabob**. This is how we prepared 12 servings for a cookout.

4 lbs. boneless lamb	1 C. dried parsley flakes
½ C. fresh lemon juice	10 large bay leaves
1 C. salad oil	4 small zucchini, sliced 2" thick
1 t. salt	2 doz. large fresh mushrooms
1 t. oregano	1 sweet red, pepper, in 2" cubes
6 cloves garlic, halved	2 medium sweet onions, in 6 wedges
2 large yellow onions, sliced thin	

onions, parsley flakes, bay leaves, and lamb. Toss thoroughly. Marinate overnight in refrigerator, stirring twice. Drain lamb, reserving marinade. Toss zucchini, mushrooms, red pepper, and onion wedges in marinade. String meat and vegetables on skewers. Grill kabobs 3" from white coals for 12 minutes, turning several times and basting with marinade. Lamb should be pink in middle.

No cookout orchestrated by men of the Lovell family is complete without **Barbequed Ribs**. The best kind are 'country-style,' but a slab of back ribs will do. Place serving-size portions in a large Dutch oven, cover with water, and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 45 minutes. Drain and pat ribs dry with paper towels. Cook them on grill over hot coals until crisp, turning often, and basting frequently with **Barbeque Sauce**. Allow about 15 minutes.

¾ C. brown sugar	2 T. cornstarch
¾ C. soy sauce	½ t. ground ginger
¼ C. cider vinegar	2 cloves garlic, crushed

Combine ingredients and cook until thickened. Brush on ribs.

Grilled meats are expected at a cookout, but grilled fish may be almost as popular. Uncle Rob specialized in **Swordfish Isfahan**, a recipe he insisted had been handed down through generations from an ancestor who had participated in the Crusades.

4 lbs. Swordfish steak	5 twists of pepper mill
1¼" thick	1 t. salt
1¼ C. peanut oil	cherry tomatoes
1 C. lemon juice	green peppers and sweet onions
6 large bay leaves, crumbled	

Remove oily parts and skin from fish. Cut fish into 1¼" cubes. Mix oil, lemon juice, bay leaves, pepper and salt. Marinate fish overnight in refrigerator, turning twice. String fish on skewers with tomatoes, peppers, and onions. If grilling over charcoal, baste fish with oil; if broiling, oil broiler pan. Grill 8 minutes, turning once, until done.

Whoever chose Uncle Rob's grilled fish also received a dollop of homemade **Tartar Sauce** made this way.

1 large genuine Kosher dill pickle	1 large lime, juiced
1 medium onion	2 C. mayonnaise

Finely mince pickle and onion; mix with mayonnaise. Add lime juice, stir well, and store in the refrigerator.

Remembering Labor Day cookouts, the fun and the frolicking, and even what we ate . . . that's easy. Saying why we met sometimes at the Homestead and sometimes at Uncle Rob's or at a cousin's . . . that's harder. Being sure about **WHEN** we were where or **WHEN** we ate what . . . that's impossible!