



Weddings and a Funeral

This month's newsletter was intended to be all about weddings. How to find a caterer who suits you, seasonal planning guide, suggestions for a lovely small wedding, and what to say to those friends who would like to attend your lovely small wedding, but aren't going to be invited due to its smallness. Instead, I've been thinking mostly about funerals, so I'm going to go with that.

My mom died this past week, in North Carolina, of complications related to cancer. My family received many gracious gifts of food, among which were an astounding seven Moravian Chicken Pies. For those of you who aren't familiar with Moravians or their pies, [click here](#) to read a great article published in North Carolina's "Our State" magazine that describes the Protestant Moravian Church, which arrived in North Carolina in the 1700s, and the tradition of making these savory chicken pies. As is evidenced by the bounty of chicken pies now in my dad's freezer, Moravian Chicken Pies are a North Carolina Piedmont favorite.



Mary Fabrikant

To my delight, this pie has no vegetables or gloppy gravy inside, thereby eliminating any resemblance to the unappetizing Chicken Pot Pies of my childhood. This double-crust pie is filled with diced chicken meat, and lots of it, and some seasoned and lightly thickened chicken broth. It is frequently served with gravy on top. As with most foods that are so simple, the quality of each ingredient is paramount as there are so few -- in this case, crust, chicken, and broth. It is arguably one of the world's most comforting "comfort foods", and a perfect gift to a bereaved family. It freezes beautifully, and can be baked from the frozen state when one forgets to plan ahead.

I've decided that I'm going to bring this tradition west. I'm going whip up a batch of these beauties and keep them in my freezer to provide the same level of nourishment and comfort to my Denver community that my mom's Greensboro friends were able to provide to my dad (for many months to come!).

Moravian Chicken Pie

(Makes two 9" pies, each serves 6 - 8)

INGREDIENTS

Pie Crust

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 cups shortening
- 12 -16 tablespoons cold water



Filling

- 8 cups chopped cooked chicken, from two stewing hens (see NOTE)
- 2 teaspoons salt (reduce to 1 teaspoon if using kosher chicken)
- 2 teaspoons ground pepper
- 6 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups chicken broth (see note)
- 2 -4 tablespoons margarine, cut in pieces (optional)

Crumb Topping

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons cold margarine

DIRECTIONS

1. For pie crust, combine flour and salt in a bowl. Cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Stir in water just until dough forms. Divide dough into four equal pieces. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill 30 minutes, or until ready to use.
2. Roll out two pieces of dough to cover bottom and sides of two 9-inch pie plates and place in the plate. Roll out last two pieces of dough for top crusts and set aside.
3. Place 4 cups diced chicken on bottom crust of each pie plate. Sprinkle each with 1 t. salt, 2 t. pepper, and 3 T. flour. Pour 1 cup reduced chicken broth into each. Dot with margarine, if desired. Cover with top crust, moisten edges with a little water and crimp to seal.
4. For crumb topping, rub cold margarine into flour until mixture resembles bread crumbs. Sprinkle over top crust of pie. Cut a few slits in top crust to allow steam to escape. (Unbaked pies may be wrapped and frozen at this point.)
5. To bake (unfrozen) - Preheat oven to 375. Place pie plate on a cookie sheet for easier handling and better browning of the bottom crust. Bake pie 45 minutes to 1 hour, until golden brown and bubbly.
6. To bake from frozen: If pie is frozen, bake at 400 degrees for 1 to 1 1/2 hours.
7. If gravy topping is desired, make a roux from 3 T. margarine and 3 T. flour. Wisk

constantly over medium-high heat until lightly browned. Mixture should resemble wet sand. Stir in extra chicken broth or canned low-sodium chicken broth, plus salt and pepper to taste. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened to make a gravy to serve with the pie.

Note: This is a local favorite from the Piedmont of North Carolina. Though many recipes these days use all white meat, older recipes call for white and dark meat. To cook the chicken and make the broth, cooks typically simmer a whole chicken or two in water until it is almost falling off the bone, about 1 - 1 1/2 hours. The broth is strained and reduced to concentrate the flavor. The chicken skin and bones are discarded and the meat finely chopped.

Shortcuts: If time is of the essence, you can use a store-bought rotisserie chicken, and purchased refrigerated pie crusts and chicken broth.

What Comes After Saying *Yes to the Dress?*

One out of four men choose to propose in the month of December, making it the most popular month of the year to get engaged. After my own fairytale engagement this December (see photo), I can see why it has become such a popular time of year. There is something about the snow, the lights and the excitement that creates instant atmosphere.



The engagement is a whirlwind of excitement with dreams about the perfect dress, the flowers, the setting, and the food. I said yes to my dream dress two weeks into our engagement and hoped the rest would be just as easy. It turns out that the rest is not easy in the least! After many site visits and phone calls I have come to appreciate the way we simplify the planning process at *La Vie*, Canteen's wedding-focused catering division. We work with couples to coordinate all the details of their special day from food to floral and more. *La Vie* keeps each unique couple in mind and helps them to turn their dreams into reality -- without the stress! Using a boutique caterer like *La Vie* is one thing this savvy bride-to-be puts at the top of her wedding "to do" list.



January Tip of the Month

Rather than be pelted by rice or birdseed as you leave your wedding reception, wouldn't you prefer a shower of fragrant rose petals? We like to hang color-coordinated paper cones of rose petals on the back of each guest chair, so guests are gently armed for your big send-off. It's the perfect finish to your perfect day!



Tool Box

Last month I introduced you to the idea that a young man should leave home armed with a culinary tool box, and the skills to use the tools. To recap, the first five tools were: a good quality 10" chef's knife, a heat-resistant silicone spatula, a flexible fish spatula, 12" tongs, and a good all-purpose mixing bowl. The rest



of his indispensable kitchen equipment is as follows:

Non-Stick Frying Pan - From breakfast to dinner, this pan is the secret to intact omelets, golden grilled cheese and perfect pan-seared fish fillets. He'll find himself using it for every task. A note of caution: Don't use metal tools in it, or place it over very high heat. I also hand-wash mine...non-stick makes it simple.

Good Pot - One size really can fit all. From heating a can of soup to boiling water for a pound of pasta, a four-quart saucepan does the job. As with the chef's knife, buy a good-quality combination of steel and aluminum to ensure even heat distribution and years of use.

Dutch Oven - I bought my first 6 quart Le Creuset Dutch oven 25 years ago. It was pricey for me at the time, but I've used it for everything from simmering soups and braising brisket to searing roasts and roasting chickens. Its enameled cast iron finish cleans up easily and is indestructible.

Sheet Pan - During a day in our catering kitchen we use these heavy-duty 13" x 16" pans to toss cubed challah with olive oil for croutons, roast vegetables, bake cookies, gather all the ingredients for a recipe from the refrigerator, and turn bottoms-up to rest hot pans. No flimsy cookie sheet this.

Look Ma, no potholders! - Take a tip from the pros - a tightly woven, all-cotton dish towel does double duty in helping to handle hot pots and sheet pans, or to grip the slippery skin of that fish he's filleting. Don't treat them gently -- they're a tool, not a decoration. Use them for everything, then just toss 'em into the wash.

Canteen's Culinary Coaching focuses on the mechanics and the "Why?"s of cooking, so that all your culinary endeavors are fun and edible.

What People are Saying...

"Mary's food is creative and delicious. Her presentation is wonderful. She does what she says she will do and when she says it will be done. Her work, and that of her staff, is transparent during an event. Her follow-up is impeccable. I couldn't recommend her more highly." -- Ron Rubin



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15%**

...off every quart of soup you purchase during the month of February. Varieties include: Mushroom Barley, Best Tomato, 3-Bean Vegetarian Chile, Tuscan Tomato and Bread Soup, Ribbolita, Roasted Eggplant with Chevre (dairy), Curried Butternut Squash, Moroccan Lentil, Tuscan Butternut and White Bean Stew with Rosemary, 7-Vegetable, and Jerusalem Lentil.

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