

2021 Monthly Recipes

JANUARY

Baby its cold outside. We need something to warm us up, something to stick to our ribs. Something that delivers great flavor and sooths the soul - welcome to **Cowboy Chuck Roast with Onion Gravy**

- 1 2½-3 – lb. boneless beef chuck pot roast
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. cooking oil
- 2 medium onions, cut into wedges
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup brewed coffee
- 1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup bottled Mole Sauce

Trim fat from beef; season beef on all sides with salt and pepper. In 5-quart Dutch oven brown beef on all sides in hot oil. Once browned, remove beef from Dutch oven and set aside.

In the same Dutch oven, cook onions over medium heat 4 to 5 minutes or just until the edges start to brown. Stir in garlic and cook for 1 to 2 minutes or until fragrant. Place the browned beef on top of the onion mixture. Add the coffee, undrained tomatoes and mole sauce. Bring to boiling; reduce heat to simmer, cover and cook for 1 ½ to 2 hours or until beef is tender.

Divide beef into four servings. Freeze two servings and place the other two servings on top of cooked egg noodles and enjoy.

FEBRUARY

Amore! February is the month for lovers. There is nothing that says I love you like something home-made fresh from the oven, and let me tell you, this **Chocolate –Cherry Stack Cake** says it all.

¾ cup plus 1 tsp. all-purpose flour
1/3 cup plus 1 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. salt
1/3 cup unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup sugar
2 eggs – room temperature
1 tsp. vanilla
½ cup sour cream
1 recipe Cherry or Chocolate frosting
1 recipe Chocolate Dipped Cherries – optional

Heat oven to 350-degrees; grease two 6 x 2 inch round cake pans or springform pans. Mix 1 teaspoon each flour and cocoa powder; dust pans. Set pans aside.

In bowl combine ¾ cup flour, 1/3 cup cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt; set aside.

In large mixing bowl with electric mixer, beat butter on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar; beat until smooth and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla until smooth. Beat in sour cream and flour mixture. Pour batter into pans, spread evenly.

Bake 22 to 26 minutes or until tops spring back when lightly touched and edges begin to pull away from sides of pans. Cool in pans on wire rack 10 minutes. Remove cake from pans and continue to cool on rack. Use serrated knife to horizontally cut cakes in half to make 4 layers total. Place bottom layer on plate; spread with 2/3 cup frosting. Repeat with two more layers.

Place top layer on cake; heap remaining frosting, swirling in peaks.
Refrigerate. To serve, top with chocolate-Dipped cherries. Makes 8 servings

Cherry Frosting: In large mixing bowl combine one 8-ounce carton sour cream, 1 cup whipping cream, 1½ cups powdered sugar and 2 tablespoons maraschino cherry juice. Beat on medium-high until fluffy.

Chocolate Frosting: In large mixing bowl combine one 8-ounce carton sour cream, 1 cup whipping cream, 1½ cups powdered sugar and ¼ cup sifted unsweetened cocoa powder. Beat on medium-high speed until fluffy.

Chocolate Dipped Cherries: Drain 16 maraschino cherries with stems; pat dry with paper towels. In small microwave safe bowl combine 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate pieces and 1 teaspoon shortening; cook on 50% power (medium) 1½ to 2 minutes or until melted, stirring once. Dip cherries in chocolate, place on waxed paper until set. Store, covered, in the refrigerator

MARCH

Welcome to the world of Irish Dining – and no, we are not having potatoes! Tonight it is **Roasted Rack of Lamb, surrounded by sautéed Cucumbers garnished with fresh Mint**. Of course, a pint of Guinness is a must.

2 racks of lamb, weighting 1½ to 2 pounds each - chine bone removed, Frenched, if possible.

2-3 large garlic cloves

2 Tbsp. olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 large cucumbers

8-10 springs of fresh mint

2 Tbsp. butter.

Trim the racks if not already done. Heat the oven to 450-degrees. Peel the garlic cloves and then cut each lengthwise into 4-5 thin slivers. Make several incisions in the lamb between the racks and insert the garlic slivers.

Transfer the racks to a roasting pan lying them ribs side downward, meaty section upward. Wrap the scraped bones in foil to prevent them from being burned. Spoon some olive oil over the lamb and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast the lamb in the heated oven 25 – 30 minutes, basting the racks once or twice with the juice from the meat. Test the lamb with an instant read thermometer – it should register 140-degrees for medium done.

Meanwhile, peel and trim the cucumbers and cut them lengthwise in half, scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon. Cut the halves lengthwise into 3-4 strips; then gather the strips and cut them crosswise into 1½ inch sticks. Strip the mint leaves from the stems, reserving a few springs for garnish. Set the stems aside for the gravy. Pile the leaves on the chopping board and chop them finely. Fill a saucepan with water, bring to a boil; add salt and then the cucumbers and simmer until just tender, 4 -5 minutes. Drain, rinse with cold water and drain again. Heat the butter in a sauté pan; add the cucumber sticks and sauté over low heat, stirring and shaking the pan until heated through 1-2 minutes. Stir in the chopped mint and season with salt and pepper. Caution, do not overcook the cucumber or it will be bitter.

Preparing the Gravy:

½ cup white wine

1 cup beef or brown veal stock

Remove the racks from the pan and cover with foil to keep warm. Discard the fat from the roasting pan. Add the wine to the pan and boil until reduced by half, stirring to dissolve the pan juices. Add the reserved mint stems and the stock, boil until well flavored, about 5 -7 minutes. Season the gravy to taste, then strain and keep warm. For richer tasting gravy, once off the heat add 1 tablespoon butter and stir to incorporate. To serve, slice the lamb into single chops. Arrange the chops in the center of the plate and surround with the cooked cucumber. Spoon some of the gravy over the chops, sprinkle with remaining mint and serve. Oh yes, now is the time for that ice cold pint of Guinness.

APRIL

It is time to get healthy with fresh vegetable-based main dishes and sides. There is nothing more enjoyable than an afternoon brunch, featuring fresh garden peppers and pungent herbs that scream “here comes spring!” Using different colored peppers such as red, orange, yellow and green just add to the beauty of this dish. Won’t you try this **Orzo-Stuffed Peppers with Feta and Mint?**

1 large onion, diced
¾ cup dried Orzo
4 oz. bulk Italian sausage, either mild or hot
2 stalks celery, peeled and diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups crumbled Feta cheese - about 8 oz.
¼ cup snipped fresh Mint
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
6 medium size sweet peppers – red, orange, yellow or green
1½ cups carrot or tomato juice
½ tsp. salt
Fresh mint leaves to garnish

In a 4 or 5 quart Dutch oven, cook orzo according to package directions; drain and set aside. Wipe Dutch oven dry.

In a large non-stick skillet, cook sausage, onion, celery and garlic until sausage is browned and onion is tender. Stir in the cooked orzo, cheese, snipped mint and black pepper.

Cut the tops from the peppers; remove seeds and ribs. If necessary, slightly trim bottom of peppers so they stand upright. Spoon the orzo mixture into the peppers and replace tops, set aside. In Dutch oven, stir together the carrot and/or tomato juice along with the salt. Stand the peppers upright into the Dutch oven. Over medium-medium-high heat, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes or until peppers are tender.

Served peppers on rimmed plates spooning some of the sauce around the standing peppers and then garnish with some of the fresh mint leaves.

MAY

It's the month in which we celebrate Mother's Day. It matters not if you are cooking for your mother, yourself, or your child who just also happens to be a Mom. It is the thought that counts, the love that goes into the dish, and of course, that fantastic taste of the finished product. Therefore, the only recipe I can share with you here is my **Grand Marnier Marinated French Toast**. Trust me this is the dish you want to serve.

6 eggs

1 cup orange juice

1/3 cup milk (Note: I use half-and-half for a richer taste)

¼ cup sugar

¼ tsp. Vanilla Extract - I use vanilla paste which has more flavor.

2 Tbsp. Grand Marnier – no skipping here, this is what gives it the “Zing”

Zest (peel) of one large Navel Orange

8 – 9 (3/4-inch) slices French bread cut on the bias

Butter for sautéing

3 tbsps. Powdered sugar for dusting

Orange slices for garnish

Preparing the Batter:

Beat the eggs in a large bowl. Add the orange juice, milk or half and half, if using, sugar, vanilla, salt, Grand Marnier, and orange zest. Mix well until all ingredients are combined. Dip the bread slices into the batter and then arrange them on a rimmed baking sheet or in a 9 x 13 inch baking dish in a single layer. Pour any remaining batter over the top and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight turning occasionally. Bring the bread to room temperature before cooking.

Cooking:

Melt butter in a large skillet or electric griddle set over medium heat. Add the bread slices and cook until browned on both sides, turning once or twice. Do not overcook. To serve, arrange the French toast on a platter and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Garnish with orange slices and drizzle with pure maple syrup. Trust me, there will be no leftovers! This recipe makes six to eight servings.

JUNE

It's the month for Dad's, Grads and Brides along with fresh produce from the garden. It is the start of summer and only the freshest of ingredients are used here. As the weather gets warmer, we eat less hearty foods, enjoying tasty salads instead. Here is one I think you will enjoy. **Basil-Tomato Salad** – the flavors of pesto mix and mingle in this salad to give it a light, refreshing taste. For a meal, just add some grilled chicken or fish drizzled with a Lemon Vinaigrette.

1 recipe Lemon Vinaigrette – see below for recipe & list of ingredients

1 small baguette or French roll

2 Tbsp. olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 small head green leaf lettuce, torn about 6 cups

3 cups fresh basil, torn

2 cups grape tomatoes, halved or chopped plum tomatoes

½ cup pine nuts, toasted

2 oz. Parmesan cheese, shaved.

Prepare Lemon Vinaigrette:

In small screw-top jar combine ½ cup olive oil, 1 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel, ½ cup lemon juice (from 1 large lemon), 4 cloves minced garlic, 1 teaspoon sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Cover and shake well. Set aside until ready to use.

Heat oven to 425-degrees; Split baguette in half horizontally. In small bowl combine olive oil and garlic. Brush on cut side of baguette. Cut each bread piece lengthwise into 3 or 4 breadsticks. Place on baking sheet. Bake 3-5 minutes or until toasted. Transfer to wire rack; cool.

In large bowl combine lettuce and basil. In a 3 to 4 quart glass canister layer greens, tomatoes, pine nuts, and cheese; serve with breadsticks and Lemon Vinaigrette.

JULY

We are in the heart of summer, hot lazy days filled with ice cold lemonade or ice tea, corn-on-the-cob and my all-time favorite, something from the grill. As long as it can sit on the grill grates, I grill it. For your dining pleasure, I present to you **Summertime Hot Dogs with Dr. Pepper Barbecue Sauce**. This sauce combines flavors from all over, sweetness from Kansas City, the use of a unique flavor ingredient – the Dr. Pepper – from the many different barbecue recipes I have read, and we balance it all with some savory ingredients that just tickle the inside of your mouth. Enjoy!

1 large yellow onion – chopped
4 cloves garlic – chopped
4 Tbsp. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1 12 oz. can Dr. Pepper
1 cup ketchup
1 cup packed brown sugar – either light or dark, whichever you have
½ cup cider vinegar
1/3 cup Worcestershire sauce
3 Tbsp. tomato paste
2 tsp. ancho chili powder
1 tsp. finely ground white pepper
1 tsp. kosher salt
8 Hot Dogs – about a 1 pound package – you choice of brands
8 Hot Dog rolls, split and toasted
Optional toppings such as pickles, sliced jalapenos, diced tomato, chopped onion
Yellow mustard, dark green relish, or whatever your heart wants.

For the Sauce: In medium saucepan cook and stir onion and garlic in hot butter over medium heat about 10 minutes until onions are tender. Add all ingredients except hot dogs and buns, and toppers. Reduce heat, simmer covered, 15 minutes. Now cook, uncovered, until sauce begins to thicken, 20 to 30 minutes - remove from heat and cool for 10 minutes. Puree sauce in pan with an immersion blender or transfer to a blender, cover and blend until smooth.

Meanwhile, on charcoal grill cook hot dogs on rack directly over medium coals for 5 to 7 minutes or until heated through. For gas grill, reduce heat to medium, cook on grill rack directly over heat, cover and grill as above.

AUGUST

Summer is winding down but we are still grilling. A spicy rub for the grilled steak gives these **Steak-and-Herb Tacos** an authentic Southwest flavor. Bet you can't each just one!

1 one and a half pound boneless beef top sirloin steak - 1-inch thick
2 Tbsp. snipped fresh marjoram or oregano or 2 tsp. dried each
1 Tbsp. chili powder
2 tsp. garlic powder
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
1 Tbsp. olive oil or vegetable oil
12 6 -8 inch corn or flour tortillas
2 tomatoes, chopped
1 small onion, chopped
4 to 6 radishes, with tops, sliced
½ cup snipped fresh cilantro
8 to 10 oz. queso-fresco cheese, crumbled or Monterey Jack, shredded
Lime wedges – optional

Trim fat from beef, place in shallow dish. In bowl combine marjoram, chili powder, garlic powder, salt, cayenne pepper, and oil. Spread on both sides of the beef; cover and refrigerate 2 to 4 hours.

Grill steak on rack of charcoal grill directly over medium coals until desired doneness, turning once halfway through grilling time. Allow 14 to 18 minutes for medium-rare (145-degrees) or 18 to 22 minutes (160-degrees) for medium. For gas grill, preheat grill, place steak on grill rack, cover and cook as above. While beef is cooking, wrap tortillas in foil; place on grill during the last 10 minutes of cooking time, turning occasionally.

Cut beef crosswise in slices. On each tortilla layer sliced beef, chopped tomatoes, chopped onion, sliced radishes, and snipped cilantro. Sprinkle crumbled cheese fold and serve immediately with lime wedges. Enjoy!

SEPTEMBER

What a lot of folks don't know is that September is code for PASTA. That's right, America's favorite food, pasta, shines in this fast and easy recipe. Once you serve your family **Shrimp, Chickpea, and Feta Cheese Pasta Nests**, it will quickly become a family favorite. The secret here is to use a long tine fork so you can twirl the pasta around the fork to form a nest into which you spoon the shrimp, chickpeas and feta.

- 1 14 to 16 oz. package dried multigrain, whole wheat or regular spaghetti
- 2 15 to 16-oz. cans chickpeas (garbanzo beans) rinsed and drained
- 1 16 oz. bag frozen peeled, cooked shrimp with tails, thawed
- 3 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled, about 1 cup
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint
- 1 tsp. finely shredded lemon peel
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. dried oregano, crushed
- Lemon wedges and green olives to garnish
- Olive oil

Cook spaghetti with 1 Tbsp. salt added to water, according to package directions; add drained chickpeas and shrimp during the last 1 minute of pasta cooking time. Drain.

Return the cooked pasta/shrimp/chickpeas to pan. Stir in tomatoes, cheese, mint, lemon peel and lemon juice, oregano and ¼ tsp. each salt and black pepper. Using a fork with long tines, swirl the pasta onto the fork and then plate, forming nests in the center of each plate. Now, using a spoon, spoon extra shrimp and chickpeas around the little nests. Add lemon wedges and some green olives to garnish and then drizzle with olive oil. Enjoy!

OCTOBER

There's a nip in the air and hint of colder weather to come. For me, there is nothing I like better than pork and apples. There is something about any recipe containing pork and apples that just satisfies the hunger one feels as we approach winter. This **Apple-Glazed Pork Loaf** is just such an example of a great tasting fall dinner. It is easy to prepare and I am sure you and your family will enjoy this meal.

½ cup apple jelly
1 Tbsp. Dijon-style mustard
2 small apples
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 pound ground pork
1 medium sweet potato, chopped
1 Tbsp. olive oil
Pinch of cayenne pepper – optional
2 Ciabatta sandwich rolls – split and toasted

Preheat oven to 425-degrees. For the glaze – heat jelly in microwave on 100% power 30 seconds. Stir in mustard, set aside. Core and chop one apple.

Combine eggs, pork, half of the chopped apple and ½ tsp. each salt and pepper. Form into 4 loaves (6x2 inches); placed on greased 15x10x1 inch rimmed baking sheet. Spoon some of the jelly glaze over loaves. Bake 10 minutes. Meanwhile, slice remaining apple into discs. Place sliced apple on top of loaves and drizzle with the jelly glaze. Bake an additional 5 minutes or more until internal temperature of pork is 160-degrees.

Place chopped sweet potato in a microwave-safe bowl and heat in the microwave on 100% power for 4 minutes or until potatoes are nearly tender. In a separate skillet cook the microwaved potatoes and remaining chopped apples in oil over medium-high heat. Sprinkle salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper. Cook for about 3 minutes or until tender. Serve pork loaves on ciabatta halves with the sweet potato/apple combination alongside.

NOVEMBER

We are into the Holiday Season and all sorts of fantastic dishes are coming our way. For this month I wanted to give you two things, one a great side dish and the other an easy but really great tasting salad. **Chardonnay Glazed Carrots** will impress not only your family, but all your guests too. Carrots, when roasted have a sweet flavor and combined with the chardonnay, well wait till you see how everyone enjoys this dish. As for the Salad, I like salads that are refreshing, which this one is. **Pear and Arugula Salad** combines the sweetness of the pears which complements the peppery taste of the arugula.

For The Carrots:

2 pounds assorted carrots, colors and shapes
1 cup Chardonnay Verjus*
½ cup honey
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
1 tsp. kosher salt
1 cinnamon stick
2 bay leaves
2 Tbsp. sliced chives

Peel the large carrots, slice carrots lengthwise and/or crosswise. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chardonnay-verjus, honey, butter, salt, cinnamon, and bay leaves. Bring to boiling; stirring to combine. Add carrots; return to boiling, reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for about 25 minutes, stirring often, until carrots are tender and glaze thickens.

Remove from heat. Remove and discard cinnamon stick and bay leaves; sprinkle with chives and serve.

**Verjus* (vair-ZHOO), the pressed juice from unripe grapes, has sweet-tart flavor and is similar to but less sharp than vinegar. You can use Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay verjus because it's not as acidic, but any white verjus will work.

For the Salad

1 recipe Lemon Vinaigrette

2 red Bartlett pears

12 cups of arugula - about 8 oz.

½ cup dry-roasted, salted sunflower kernels

2 oz. Parmesan cheese, shaved about ¼ cup

Shredded lemon peel – optional

Prepare the Lemon Vinaigrette. In a bowl, combine 1 Tbsp. lemon peel, 1/3 cup lemon juice, 1 tsp. sugar, and ½ tsp. kosher salt. Gradually whisk in ¾ cup olive oil. Transfer ¼ cup of the Lemon Vinaigrette dressing to a large bowl. Store the remainder in a screw top jar until ready to use.

For the Salad - Quarter, core, and seed pears. Cut each quarter into thin slices; add to dressing in bowl. Let stand for 15 minutes.

Add arugula to pears, toss lightly to coat. Transfer to serving platter; top with sunflower kernels, Parmesan shavings and lemon peel. Add additional dressing as needed.

DECEMBER

If it were not for December, I would probably weigh a lot less than I do now. What can I say, there are so many delicious and tasty treats that are made during the holidays, and of course I have to sample them all. One of my most favorite is this one, **Eggnog Cheesecake with Candied Kumquats**. Yes, there are a few steps here, but trust me once you sample a slice of this scrumptious cake you will understand why I love it. This cheesecake can be made up to 3 days in advance. Cover and store in the refrigerator. Here's how you make it:

5 Tbsp. butter, melted
1¼ cups whole-grain nugget cereal, such as Grape Nuts
1/3 cup granulated sugar – for crust
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
3 8 oz. packages cream cheese, softened
1 cup granulated sugar – for filling
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 Tbsp. pure vanilla
1 cup eggnog
1 Tbsp. bourbon
1 Tbsp. dark rum
1 Tbsp. brandy
1 recipe Candied Kumquats (optional, but well worth it)

For the Cake:

Preheat oven to 375-degrees. Butter a 9-or 10-inch springform pan with 1 tablespoon of the butter; set aside.

In a food processor bowl process the cereal about 2 minutes, until a fine crumb forms. Add the 1/3 cup sugar, the cinnamon, and the salt: process to combine. With processor running, add remaining butter through feed tube until combined. Press crumb mixture on bottom and 1-inch up side of pan. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until crisp and lightly browned. Cool on wire rack. Reduce oven temperature to 350-degrees.

In clean food processor bowl, process cream cheese until smooth. Add 1 cup sugar until combined. Add eggs, process until creamy, scraping down sides once or twice. Add vanilla, eggnog, bourbon, rum and brandy; process until combined.

Gently pour filling into baked crust. Bake 40 minutes or until sides are slightly puffed (center will be soft). Turn off oven and leave door ajar. Let cheesecake stand in oven for 40 minutes.

Transfer to wire rack; cool 15 minutes. Using a small thin knife, loosen crust from sides of springform pan. Cool 30 minutes. Remove sides from pan; cool 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate 6 hours or overnight. To serve, top with Candied Kumquats. Note: Cheesecake filling may be prepared with an electric mixer, beating on medium speed.

Candied Kumquats: Using a paring knife and piercing only the skin, cut four evenly spaced slits in each of the 12 kumquats. Place kumquats in medium saucepan; add cold water to cover. Bring to a simmer over medium heat; cook 5 minutes. Drain. In medium saucepan stir to dissolve 1½ cups sugar in ¾ cups water; add kumquats. Bring to a low simmer. Cook, uncovered, 30 minutes until the kumquats are glazed. Using a slotted spoon remove the fruit from syrup; place kumquats on wire rack over a rimmed sheet pan. Cool 10 minutes. Now place 1 cup sugar in small bowl and then roll kumquats in sugar and place 1 inch apart on rack. Let stand overnight. Store candied kumquats in airtight container in cool, dry place up to 3 months. Kumquats may be sliced before topping the cheesecake.