



Journey through Thyme

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Columnist

Traditional foods for Fourth of July

Next Wednesday, Americans will celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the event that sparked the American Revolution and led to the eventual creation of the United States of America.

The Fourth of July is a beloved holiday among Americans — and the perfect opportunity to fire up the grill with family and friends.

No Independence Day celebration in America

would be complete without a picnic table filled with some traditional favorites: Hamburgers, hotdogs, buns, potato salad, corn on the cob and watermelon.

But when our forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence, it's likely that they celebrated with a feast of rabbit, pigeon, lobster — and turtle soup.

No one knows for sure, but according to legend on the very first celebration of America's birthday, John Adams and his wife, along with thousands of other Americans on the East Coast, sat down for a celebratory meal of green turtle soup. The traditional meal also included poached salmon with egg sauce, green peas, boiled potatoes, Indian pudding or apple pandowdy.

The popularity of turtle soup died out when concern about protecting the species of turtle grew.

On the other side of the plate, tomatoes and potatoes have been a perfect pairing for centuries. And as early as 1781, Thomas Jefferson served French-fried potatoes with tomatoes at Monticello.

In 1927 according to

“Good Housekeeping’s Book of Good Meals,” a good July 4th dinner consisted of canned tomato soup, broiled lobsters, stuffed potatoes, luncheon rolls, stuffed green pepper salad and cherry pie.

Here are a couple of “Porch Picnic” menus that were published in the *Washington Post* for July 4, 1934: Assorted breads, rye, white, graham and finger rolls; assorted meats and spreads including salami cut in thin slices, spiced gold tongue, ground ham with grated pineapple and chopped walnut spread, cream cheese and green pepper spread. The other Porch Picnic menu consisted of hot ham shortcake, pineapple and cucumber gelatin salad, ripe olives, cheese crackers, iced tea, raspberries and ice-box cookies.

In 1950 the *Daily Tribune* reported: “It’s the custom in New England to serve cold salmon steaks on the Fourth of July. No one knows where it started, or why, but the custom is spreading to all parts of the country. Perhaps the color was responsible, but we think it more likely that it’s because salmon fishing is at its height in July.”

And in 1966 in the Navy *Food Service* publication was a “Yankee Doodle Dandy” supper for the Fourth, which featured a chili mac and cucumber and sour cream salad.

The recipe was submitted by the USS Madera County (LST-905)

CHILI MAC (10 portions)
2 1/4 lbs. ground beef
3/4 cup onions, chopped
2 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 1/4 teaspoons pepper
1 1/4 cups macaroni
2 1/2 cups tomato puree
3/4 cup canned tomatoes
3/4 tablespoon chili powder

Cook beef, onions, salt and pepper in skillet over low heat until browned. Cook macaroni according to package directions; drain. Add tomato puree, tomatoes, macaroni, and chili powder to browned meat. Simmer 30 minutes.

Today, food has become less formal as it has changed with the technology of our times.

So why do we celebrate Independence Day with hot dogs and hamburgers? Probably because America is a nation of immigrants with diversified taste buds. The nation as a whole came together with differing culinary backgrounds, and that helped to create and popularize what is currently on your Fourth of July picnic table.

But if you’re still craving the historic dish, Americans in the South make mock turtle soup with veal or beef.

Here is a great version of **MOCK TURTLE SOUP:**

3/4 cup unsalted butter

6 celery stalks chopped
1 cup chopped onion
2 garlic cloves minced
1 1/2 pounds ground sirloin
1 (15-ounce) can tomato puree
1 (14.5-ounce) can chicken broth
1 (14.5-ounce) can beef broth
1/2 cup all-purpose flour mixed with 1 cup water
1/2 cup Worcestershire sauce
1 cup ketchup
1 teaspoon hot sauce
2 bay leaves
1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 cup lemon juice
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
6 large hard-cooked eggs peeled and chopped
1/4 cup sherry
Garnish lemon slices

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, melt butter. Add celery, onion, and garlic, and cook until just softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Add sirloin and cook until meat is browned and vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Transfer to an 8-quart slow-cooker.

To slow-cooker, add tomato puree, broths, flour mixture, Worcestershire, ketchup, hot sauce, bay leaves, thyme, salt, and pepper, and stir to combine. Cook over low heat for four hours.

Add lemon juice and cook 30 minutes. Remove bay leaves, and stir in parsley, eggs, and sherry. Garnish with lemon slices, if desired.

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