



DORY'S DIARY

DOROTHY SWART FLESHMAN

Precious memories that are yours alone

"Those Olden Days..." Yes, I remember those days. But, I never thought I would have been part of them in that they were my memories rather than those of my elders.

The surprise comes in talking with those whom you see as your peers only to find out that they are of your children's and grandchildren's ages, already locked in times and places of their own, unable to share all that you have known.

"What was it like when..." ask curious minds in trying to place you in times unimaginable to their generation. That's when you begin to realize your place in the scheme of things and how you have lost being actively engaged in the present or can even picture what the future will be like.

And, so, you wipe away the tears of youth and take satisfaction in knowing you can remember life that the young can only wonder about.

I have now become a member of the "olden days" generation and become proud of having lived during those times.

What were those times? How did they differ from those now in their budding youth? What did they miss in not being part of those days that we wax and wane about with so much emotion and why do we cling so desperately to the days gone by with no hope of recovery?

Let the mind drift back. Let the days and years of the present fall away. Who and what ties one to the past? Would one really go back if they could? If you had known then what you know now, would you have done things in the same way?

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BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

The joys of heirlooms

Heirloom plants have many benefits. Defining heirlooms precisely is a tricky thing. Of course a seed is a living thing and not a piece belonging to a museum. Its genetics may be as old as the dinosaurs, but the actual seed is only as old as the last harvest. It has to be continuously grown and harvested to remain alive.

Defining an heirloom requires three criteria:

- The variety must be able to reproduce itself from seed
- The variety must have been introduced more than 50 years ago
- The variety must have a history of its own

The new hybrids don't always come true to seed. This is most inconvenient if you have saved the seed and hoped for good results. If they don't come true you are stuck with a harvest of inferior product.

Part of the fun of growing heirlooms is discovering their story and knowing that they are dependant and always have the same product, and will come true to their seed the next time you grow them.

When compared to heirlooms, hybrids lack fragrance and taste, but they have a longer shelf life, thicker skin and often the whole crop ripens at the same time.

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Homemade Cheese



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Queso Fresco cheese

TRULY EASY CHEESE

By Daniel Neman

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Sure, you could craft your own block of cheddar cheese, create some Havarti or whip up a batch of gorgonzola.

But why would you want to?

Most cheeses require rennet, an enzyme found in the stomach of cows (and sheep and goats). Rennet is what gives cheese its texture, but it also adds a few steps to the cheese-making process — and why bother when you can just buy cheese at a store?

But there are a few cheeses that need no rennet and require practically no labor at all. That's my kind of cheese, at least when I want to make it myself.

Ricotta, queso fresco, farmer's cheese and buttermilk cheese are all fast and easy to make, delivering a large amount of satisfaction for very little effort. Each is fairly simple in flavor — rennet also adds complexity — but they are also wonderfully rewarding.

They are all made the same way, with the same ingredients: milk or cream, acid (vinegar or lemon juice) and salt. Once you've mastered one, you've mastered them all, although they are so easy there really isn't anything to master.

They taste different, though, because of

the proportions used. Different textures come from aging.

Some cheeses, such as cheddars, will be aged for as long as four or five years. Fresh cheeses can age all the way up to one hour.

It is not aging that is taking place, anyway. With fresh cheese, you have to drain the whey out of the curds. The longer it drains, the firmer the cheese will be. Up to, as we said, an hour or so.

It is the part about separating the whey from the curds that makes fresh cheese (and is also responsible for feeding nursery-rhyme arachnophobes). First, you get milk nice and hot. Then you add some vinegar or lemon juice, which curdles the milk.

That is, it divides the milk into curds (lumpy white things) and whey (a thin, chalk-colored liquid). The curds make the cheese. In fresh cheeses, they are drained of as much whey as possible and then pressed into shape, either manually or just by letting gravity do its work inside a cheesecloth.

The one fresh cheese I made that does not have a shape is ricotta. If you've never had homemade ricotta, you may be amazed at how heavenly it can be.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that is because the version I made used 2

cups of heavy cream to go with the quart of milk — and it was the best, and certainly the most expensive, milk I could find.

All of that richness is going to make a truly stellar ricotta, especially when it is curdled with a high-quality white wine vinegar. Most people use lemon juice to make their ricotta, but Ina Garten uses vinegar, and her recipes have earned my trust.

This ricotta is so delicious, but what can you do with it? Ricotta is vital in lasagna and stuffed shells, of course, but in those it will get drowned out by the heavier flavors of pasta, tomatoes and garlic.

So you can mix it into scrambled eggs or bake it into a cake. You can use it on top of pizza or use it to make tomato sauces rich and creamy. You can serve it with strawberries or any kind of fruit, spread it on bruschetta with a few drops of olive oil or smear it on crackers by itself or with just a bit of jam. Delicious.

Buttermilk fresh cheese was the most firm of the cheeses I made. Because it is made with buttermilk, it also has the most distinctive flavor — the smooth, soft tang that only buttermilk can deliver.

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Expanding your Instant Pot cooking resumé

By Lisa Futterman

ChicagoTribune

Now that I've been cooking in the Instant Pot for a while, I've been trying to think outside of the box about it. I've tripped up a few times (overcooked vegetables, undercooked beans), but I feel confident about Instant Potting everything from cheesecakes and flan to yogurt and paneer to risotto and biryani. It's time for a new challenge.

I came across a recipe for country pate, a dish I had never tackled, done in the Instant Pot. Brilliant! Instead of being mildly overwhelmed by foil-wrapped bricks, water baths and caul fat, why not pressure-cook your forcemeat in a canning jar? And, if it's already in a jar, why not take pate-in-a-jar to a picnic? And why not round out the offerings with more portable Instant Pot dishes?

I built a portable Instant Pot menu around the rich spiced meat classic, adding a fun savory spinach dukkah-spiced cheesecake-in-a-jar to spread on crackers or pita chips, and a gooey individual chocolate dulce de leche pudding cake-in-a-jar to spoon up for dessert. Grab a baguette and some mustard, then throw your jars, some spreaders and spoons in a

cooler and go. Add some crunchy cut up raw vegetables, olives, cornichons, and you are all set.

These recipes beg to be made ahead, but if the idea of slaving over a hot Instant Pot all afternoon gives you any form of discomfort, pick just one and tell your picnic pals to pack the rest of the basket. Staying home this weekend? The jars of pate and cheesecake make fantastic appetizers (with their super-cute jar presentation) for a dinner party, and I don't need to explain to you how delicious those cake jars are served warm from the Instant Pot with gelato on top! Just let them cool down a bit before serving, so your guests don't burn their fingers.

COUNTRY PATE

Prep: 20 minutes, plus chilling time
Cook: 45 minutes
Makes: Four 8-ounce jars, about 8 servings per jar

You'll need four 8-ounce glass canning jars, such as Mason jars, with tight-fitting lids. If you have more of the forcemeat than can fit into the jars, save it to saute in a skillet to use in scrambled eggs or as a pasta topping. This recipe calls for chilling the mixture

8 hours before cooking it, then chilling the cooked pate again overnight.

- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ pound bacon
- ½ pound raw chicken livers, rinsed
- 1 pound ground pork
- 5 tablespoons brandy
- ¾ teaspoon Chinese five-spice
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 shallots, chopped
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1½ to 2 teaspoons kosher salt

1. In a food processor, chop the garlic. Add the bacon and liver; pulse until coarsely chopped. Transfer to a mixing bowl and add the pork, brandy, five-spice, pepper and thyme. Chill, 8 hours or overnight.
2. In a small skillet, heat the butter over medium-high heat until melted. Add the shallots; cook until beginning to soften. Allow shallots to cool slightly, then add them to the meat mixture along with the egg, cream and salt. Stir to combine well.
3. Pack into four 8-ounce canning jars; tap firmly on the counter to

remove air pockets. Screw the lids on loosely and set on a rack in the insert of the Instant Pot. Add 1 cup water to the bottom of the insert. Seal and cook for 15 minutes at low pressure.

4. Allow pressure to release naturally, about 10 minutes. Carefully remove the Instant Pot lid directing the steam away from you. Remove jars from pot; allow to cool on counter. Screw the lids on and chill overnight before serving with fresh baguettes, cornichons and Dijon mustard.

Nutrition information per serving: 64 calories, 5 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 45 mg cholesterol, 0 g carbohydrates, 0 g sugar, 5 g protein, 145 mg sodium, 0 g fiber

SAVORY INSTANT POT CHEESECAKES

Prep: 25 minutes
Cook: 25 minutes
Makes: 3 jars, about 24 servings

You'll need three 8-ounce glass canning jars, such as Mason jars, with tight-fitting lids. Use the cheesecake as a spread or dip for crackers and crudites.

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