

E-con-o meals

Homemade noodles nourishing, filling

by Monine-Strode-Stebbins

The first homemade noodles I can recall were made by an elderly babysitter that we had when my mother and father were out of town. My impression was that they were fat and doughy, and certainly not worth the trouble. The ones purchased at the store were worth every cent they cost. With this little value judgment intact, I had dismissed ever trying them myself.

Then, one day I went to a potluck where there was the most marvelous chicken and noodle casserole. Since I'm always on the lookout for easy and inexpensive recipes, I asked the cook what her secret was. To my great surprise, it was the same old recipe I used, with one addition—it used homemade noodles.

Still skeptical, I decided that I should try some someday when I had a lot of time and didn't mind a mess. That babysitter must have made a triple recipe! There were so many noodles strung around the kitchen that I had a concept of being buried in dough.

Well, this week I tried homemade noodles and I'm converted. They're fast, easy, economical and delicious. They don't make as much mess as biscuits! What this says to me is that I should reevaluate my biases every once in a while. I may be able to discover a brand new world.

The new interest in homemade pasta promotes a variety of equipment and cutters. Don't feel that you need any new equipment. It may be nice to have all that, but it certainly isn't necessary. You probably already have everything you need. It helps to have a wooden surface to roll them out on and a good rolling pin or large dowel is necessary. Then just a knife to cut them, and someplace to let them dry.

HOMEMADE NOODLES

1 egg
1/2 cup water
2 cups flour

Beat egg with water and add the flour. Stir until well mixed. Knead the dough about five minutes. It will be a very stiff dough. Cover dough with a damp cloth and let "rest" for at least 30 minutes. This resting is important. It allows the water to equalize in the flour.

To keep the dough from sticking, as you roll it out, use a cornstarch puff. This is made by putting about 1/2 cup dry cornstarch into a square of porous material, then tying it with a string. This is then used on the board and rolling pin just like you would a powder puff. It distributes enough cornstarch to keep the dough from sticking, but not enough to make a doughy surface.

Roll 1/4 the dough out at a time. Make a circle that's at least 12 inches across (larger, if you like very thin noodles). Fold the dough lightly over and over making about 2-inch folds. Then cut across the folds, making the noodles as wide as you wish. Unfold the strips and dry for about two hours. You can use cake cooling racks or just leave them on the counter, turning them two or three times during the two hours.

Cook them in boiling, salted water for about 8 to 10 minutes and use in your favorite recipe.

Extra noodles are best if kept in the freezer, unless you are sure they are thoroughly dried.

For about 10¢ a batch you can make the equivalent to a small package of noodles—costing about 99¢. The real payoff, though, is the good taste. The dough has a very nice feel, too. Good taste, money saving, fun to do—what more can you ask. Isn't it nice to discover something very old that's now very new! Especially since I had dismissed them as not worthwhile. It makes me wonder about some of my other biases.

Here are a couple of recipes that are very economical. They make large batches.

LASAGNE

1 batch homemade noodles (don't roll extremely thin), cut wide
Sauce:
1 quart or large can tomatoes
3 tablespoons corn starch
1 teaspoon oregano
1/2 teaspoon rosemary
1 teaspoon parsley
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1 or 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced, or 1 teaspoon garlic salt or powder
1 pound hamburger (optional)
1 medium onion, chopped

2 cups cheese (mozzarella, monterey jack or cheddar)

Have noodles dried and ready to boil. Set water on to boil for noodles.

Mash canned tomatoes in a sauce pan. Stir cornstarch into about 1/4 cup of the cold tomato juice. Bring tomatoes to a boil, mix in cornstarch mixture and stir until it thickens. Add seasonings. Seasonings can be varied according to your taste. Let sauce simmer while frying hamburger and onion together, grating cheese and boiling noodles.

Boil noodles 8 to 10 minutes. When hamburger is fried, add to sauce.

In 9" x 13" or two 8" x 8" pans, layer sauce, cheese and noodles until all ingredients are used. Have cheese on top layer.

Bake in a 350° oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until heated through. Casserole can be frozen before or after baking.

TURKEY NOODLE CASSEROLE

Boil turkey legs and thighs in enough water to barely cover. Add 1 onion, 1 teaspoon parsley, 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Cook until tender—two hours. Add more water, if necessary. Remove turkey to a plate, allow to cool slightly so meat can be taken off the bones. If not used immediately, refrigerate.

Make white sauce using turkey broth: Add 1 cup dry milk powder to 4 cups turkey broth. Stir well. The rest of the broth may be used for soup or other recipes.

In a separate pan, melt 1/2 cup butter or margarine, stir in 1/2 cup flour. Cook briefly. Add broth-milk combination and cook and stir until thickened. Taste and season more, if needed.

Boil one batch of homemade noodles for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and add to white sauce along with meat that has been picked off the bones. One-half cup sour cream can be added, if desired.

Bake in large casserole at 350° for about 25 to 30 minutes, until heated through.

Turkey legs and thighs—which are sometimes called hindquarters—are an especially low-cost meat. This recipe can be made for about \$2 and will feed a family of four or five for a couple of meals.

A whole chicken can be used instead of the turkey legs and thighs.

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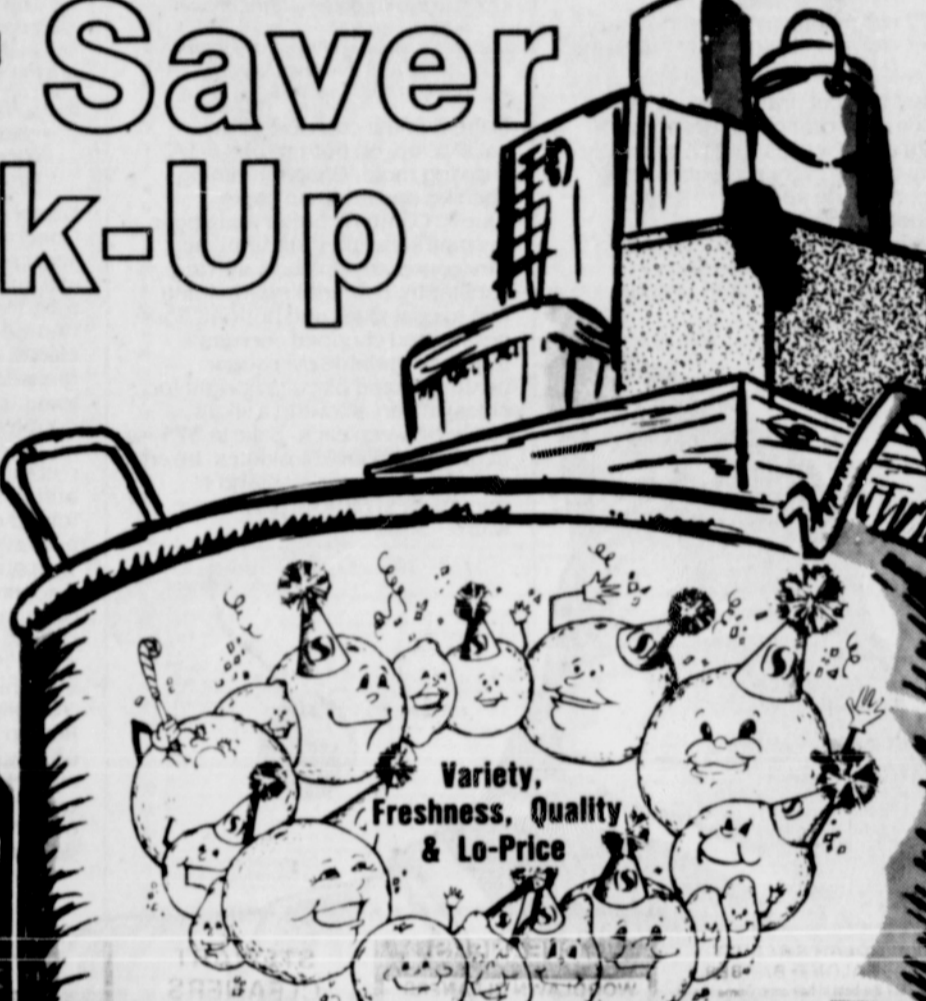
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