

Econ-o-Eating

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"What would you like for dinner?" It's a plea for some help in deciding that everyday chore. The main response in most families is — "Oh, anything. I don't care." Well, that's a great incentive to give up cooking altogether! My own mother's response was to say, "Well, if you don't care, I won't fix anything." And, of course, that brought cries of anguish. I come from a big family — six girls — and meals were a favorite activity. We didn't want to think about food, we just wanted it to appear. We could always muster a complaint if we didn't like it, though.

If you're the main cook at your house, you usually end up choosing what you like to eat. This principle even has a name. You're called the Gate Keeper. It becomes your responsibility to choose the food and to keep an eye on the budget as well. That's a big challenge.

Why do you choose what you do? Sometimes it's because you like the way something tastes, or because it was a favorite in your family as you were growing up. Sometimes you choose not to have something because you don't like the texture or flavor. Liver, custard or okra, for instance, can be disliked by some and loved by others.

Recent surveys show people are changing their food-buying habits because of the economy. They are choosing lower-cost foods and using fewer convenience items. They are also making changes because of a new dedication to good nutrition.

Food brings back memories that can be either good or bad. Our "Granny" can't stand the taste of grape juice or jelly. One day I asked her why she disliked it so. She said they had a grape vine during the Depression and so for years that was about the only fruit they had, and they had a lot of it. Whenever she eats it, she feels poor!

When I'm feeling the pinch for food money, I tend to choose things I have on hand. I look through the cupboard and the freezer and try to think of something I can fix without spending any more money. I figure the longer I stay away from a shopping trip, the more impulse buying I avoid.

If I've made menus and shopping lists, I have little problem making the food last as long as it need to, but sometimes I'm not that organized.

When I just choose things day to day, I get into a rut. I fix things that are easy and quick because I don't plan very far ahead. It seems easier, somehow, if I have made menus. We also try more new things — since I add the needed ingredients to the shopping list.

Families also have expectations. Potato salad should taste a certain way. Granola or cereal should be the "way they're used to!" I was having a discussion with some friends about ways to be more economical and one suggested you could make pizza at home. There was a strong reaction! Several people said it costs more to make it at home — and the person who had made the suggestion really had to defend herself. "It doesn't have to!" Well, in some families, the expectation is so set that pizza isn't pizza unless it has certain (usually expensive) things on it, so they'd rather go without than settle for less than their ideal.

You, as the gate keeper, have something to do with what the family favorites become. Peg Bracken, author of "Peg Bracken's Appendix to The I Hate To Cook Book" has this to say: "If you catch them soon enough, you can teach puppies and kittens to like dry dogfood and cat-food, both cheaper than the wet by quite a distance." This is a principle that can apply to people. If you train them up right they'll appreciate the less expensive and more nutritious foods. You, however, have to choose those things yourself.

One of the drawbacks or advantages is that partners come to you with a whole set of likes and dislikes that either blend or contrast with your own.

Here are a couple of my favorite recipes. The Mom's Pot Roast is just like my Mom's, but I saw it demonstrated at a cooking school more than 20 years ago. I think that may have been where I picked up the idea I'd like to be a home economist. The other recipe is a delicious rhubarb recipe — when rhubarb is in season I love to fix it a lot. Being

Lemon juice and grated rind added to berry pies gives them a "berry" good taste.

the gate keeper, I can have it as often as I like or until they gripe!

MOM'S POT ROAST

3 to 4 pounds beef pot roast
3 tablespoons bacon fat or margarine
3 tablespoons flour
3 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon leaf thyme
¼ teaspoon savory
½ cup water
¼ cup vinegar
3 medium onions, cut in half
6 carrots, cut in chunks
6 potatoes, cut in half
6 stalks celery, cut 3 to 4 inches long

Mix together flour, salt, and pepper. Dredge pot roast in seasoned flour. Brown meat on all sides in fat. Pour off drippings. Add thyme, savory, water and vinegar. Cover tightly and simmer 2½ hours. Add onions, carrots, potatoes and celery and continue to simmer covered for 45 to 60 minutes, or until meat is tender and vegetables are done. Thicken cooking liquid for gravy, if desired. 6 to 8 servings. Refrigerate leftovers.

RHUBARB CRUNCH

1 cup rolled oats
½ cup flour

1 cup brown sugar
½ cup butter or margarine
3 cups diced rhubarb
1 tablespoon flour
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon water

Heat oven to 350°. Grease 8x8x2 inch pan. Mix oats, flour, sugar. Cut in the butter or margarine until the mixture is crumbly. Place half of the mixture in the pan. Put the rhubarb mixture into the pan. Top with the rest of the oat mixture. Bake 45 to 50 minutes, until slightly browned on top. Serve hot or cold.



For a quick window cleanup, wash with a cloth soaked in white vinegar.

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How to Prepare Pork Chops

Since pork chops are taken from the lightly used muscle of the rib, they are a tender meat and don't require special tenderizing.

Pork chops are best cooked with "Dry Heat" methods such as broiling, panbroiling, and pan-frying. Now that warmer weather is ahead, you might want to try barbecuing pork chops. Barbecuing over briquettes adds a delicate smoky characteristic to the meat that enhances pork's natural flavor. The results are moist and delicious.

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PRODUCE TIPS
By Dario Casciato
Our Produce Buyer

Navel Oranges: a taste of Sunshine!

Sweet, juicy, and loaded with Vitamin C, delicious Navel oranges are like a taste of sunshine! Fresh-squeezed orange juice can really make a breakfast special, too. The juiciest oranges are those that are firm and heavy, but have a little "spring" left in the skin. Navel oranges are available in our Produce section from November to May, so you can still enjoy the last delicious weeks of the season. (And don't despair. Orange-lovers, after May, sweet Valencia's will be coming into season!)

Food Sections except Morrison, Stark, The Dalles, Medford or Consumer Warehouse

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