



BOB’S
THOUGHTS

BOB BAUM

Nobody was better than Mike

I covered the NBA for 42 seasons and witnessed well over 1,000 games. Michael Jordan was the best I ever saw.

ESPN’s excellent “The Last Dance,” a 10-part documentary centered on Jordan, got me thinking of the years I was privileged to watch him play.

I didn’t see Jordan play in person as often as I would have liked. I covered the Portland Trail Blazers for 22 years and the Phoenix Suns for 20, so I would only see the Bulls when they came to town once a season.

But for a half-dozen years I covered the Western Conference Finals regardless of what teams were in, then stuck around to help with coverage of the West team’s home games in the Finals.

So I saw Jordan perform when the stakes were highest, and nobody played better in the clutch than he did.

My first extensive experience with Jordan came in the 1992 NBA Finals between the Bulls and Trail Blazers.

I didn’t travel so I, like so many others, saw Jordan’s famous “shrug game” on television.

It was Game 1 in Chicago and Jordan was extra-motivated. It seems many in the media had compared the Blazers’ Clyde Drexler to Jordan. Jordan was not happy, but that gave him added motivation. And when you aggravated Jordan, look out.

The first half of that game was arguably the most dominant individual performances in NBA history. Jordan scored 35 points in the first two quarters, sinking six straight 3-pointers out of the gate in a 122-89 rout, tying the Finals record for most 3s in a half.

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BETWEEN
THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

Lilacs to smell, fungi to forage

Gorgeous lilac fragrance is in the air and I’d give anything for a long road trip. I think I can manage an undetected short road trip to the local forest or woods, though. The mushroom hunting regulars have their secret places. Others of us just have to stumble upon hordes of mushrooms by accident. Persistence often pays.

No commercial mushroom pickers will be out this year to compete with individuals. If you wish to can your own mushrooms, a pressure canner must be used. You can only do pints and smaller. Pints get 45 minutes at 10 pounds pressure. Half-pints get 30 minutes.

Happy hunting!

Garden chores

- Continue to remove dead bulb foliage. Bulbs can be moved or divided as the foliage dies.
- Take houseplants outdoors when nights will remain above 50 degrees. Locate where they receive direct sunlight only in the morning.
- Prune unwanted shoots as they appear on fruit trees.
- Mow tall fescue lawns at least 3 to 4 inches in height. Bluegrass should be mowed to 2 to 3½ inches.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

Scrumptious Potato Pancakes



Abel Uribe/ChicagoTribune-TNS

Making potato pancakes can be a family project, with extra hands helping to peel and grate potatoes and onions.

TASTY TATERS

By James P. DeWan
Chicago Tribune

Merriam-Webster defines the potato pancake as a “lobe-finned fish known chiefly from Paleozoic and Mesozoic fossils.”

Sorry. That’s a coelacanth.

Regardless, while both the potato pancake and the coelacanth go great with sour cream and applesauce, that’s where the similarities end. In fact, I’m not even sure why we’re talking about coelacanths in the first place. This is a family newspaper, for the love of Mike.

Potato pancakes, on the other hand ...

Why you need to learn this

Well, taters are totally tasty and a whole heap cheaper than those 50,000-piece jigsaw puzzles you’ve been stockpiling of late. And speaking of stockpiling, I noticed that 20-pound sack of russets in the background of your latest live-streamed video rant. Before they spontaneously turn into vodka, why not get the whole family involved and rustle up some potato pancakes. What with all the peeling, the grating, bandaging the cuts and cursing the darkness, there’s a job

for everyone.

The steps you take

Most of you already know potatoes. Perhaps, like me, you’re of good Irish stock with a nurtured if not natural predilection for the starchy tuber embedded deep in your psyche. On the other hand, perhaps you hail from a potato-free culture, like the Moonish or the Zombiesians. In which case, listen up:

Like you and me, potatoes are comprised primarily of water and covered in a thin skin. Unlike us, though, with our bone and blood and grotty bits, potatoes are pretty much just starch. And here’s why that’s important: Different potato varieties have different amounts of starch, which affects how they react to cooking.

Happily, for potato pancakes, any potato will work, and I wouldn’t worry about those differences. Save your worry for things that matter, like how you’re going to pay the robber barons who run the college your kid wants to attend.

Other ingredients include binders and flavor enhancers, but, we’ll get to those after I’ve prattled on a little more.

Now, like Satan, potato pancakes come in many forms and go by many names. The Swiss, for example, mostly omit the binding ingredients and call it rosti; the Irish combine raw and cooked potatoes and call it boxty; Satan himself calls them “scrapey flat browns” (it’s in the Bible; look it up).

Here’s the thing to remember, no matter the nomenclature: In a world where monkeys play canasta and vampires rule the night, it’s not a bad idea to flatten a potato and cook it in fat to a golden brown.

Let’s examine more closely the ingredients:

- The potatoes. Most potato pancakes are made from grated raw potatoes, but you can also use cooked, pureed potatoes. The texture’s different, more like a syrup-soaked breakfast pancake, but, what the hay. You could also combine raw with cooked potato, like the aforementioned boxty. Or — and you’ll want to remember this next holiday season — you can get all Nutsy Fagan and use your leftover mashed potatoes. Figure about a quarter- to a half-pound of potato per person.

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The wonder of homemade waffles

By Jeanmarie Brownson
Chicago Tribune

This Mother’s Day, in an era of social distancing even from our children, our family celebration was virtual. The kitchen table was set with laptops or tablets for seeing our loved ones living in different states. The menu was be the same at all our homes.

Waffles, we agreed. Crispy, hot and slathered with fruity goodness. A kitchen filled with sweet aromas.

Oh, and some mimosas — we are drinking more these days. We love a mimosa with fresh grapefruit juice and sparkling rose wine, but orange juice works, too. Plenty of strong, black coffee for me.

Our daughter and her husband have a waffle iron to make homemade.

We have one electric waffle iron. (Does anyone have more?) I hover over it as the waffle bakes into crispy, brown, cranny-filled sweet treats. We divvy up the squares as the next waffle cooks. For a larger gathering, the wait can feel excruciating. Perhaps there are advantages to cooking for two.

Waffle irons vary in size and shape. The classic waffle iron produces a crispy waffle about 1/2-inch thick with 1/3-inch deep crannies. A Belgian waffle maker has larger, deeper crannies that hold more syrup. Check your manufacturer’s directions for heating the iron, amount of batter to add and cooking times. My classic Black & Decker electric waffle iron bakes a generous cup of batter



Abel Uribe/ChicagoTribune-TNS

Serve cornmeal waffles with the pineapple orange compote, or use fresh berries and blueberry syrup. Chicken breakfast sausages, a grapefruit and sparkling rose mimosa, and plenty of coffee round out the meal.

into four squares in about 10 minutes.

Cooking during a pandemic should be a judgment-free zone. Using a boxed waffle mix is fine — just read labels to avoid artificial ingredients.

If you have the ingredients, know that homemade batter is easy to pull together, and nearly always tastes better. The recipe that follows uses a minimum of leavening for a less metallic-tasting waffle; yogurt adds tang and lightness. I combine the dry ingredients ahead of time, then add the wet ingredients to them while the waffle iron heats.

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