

It's time for low-cal, high-flavor cooking

By DANIEL NEMAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

And now come the regrets.

Did I really have to have that second piece of pecan pie? Couldn't the mashed potatoes have had maybe a little less butter? Did I truly have to eat all of those mint chocolates that our friend brought from Chicago?

Yes. Yes I did. Those things are great.

But now I'm feeling it: every Christmas cookie, every potato pancake, every Frango mint. My belt is annoyed at me. My scale groans when it sees me approach.

So in the spirit of resolutions made for the new year, I decided to make a bunch of dishes that will make my belt and scale happier, and me, too. I went low-cal.

Naturally, I did not want to give up on flavor and enjoyment. I determined to make dishes that both tasted good and were relatively good for me — or at least good for my waistline.

I began with a riff on an old favorite, carbonnades a la flamande, the famous Belgian dish of beef-and-onion stew cooked in beer.

The difference in the version I made is that the beer used is stout, a dark beer such as Guinness that is rich in coffee and caramel flavors. Despite its full-bodied flavor, the beer has only a few more calories than Bud Light. And its taste is so mellow, it needs less brown sugar than traditional carbonnades to smooth out the stew.

The recipe uses less beef than the regular carbonnades, which cuts back on the calories. But you don't mind the loss, because it makes up for it in chunky mushrooms, which blend in perfectly with the other flavors.

It's a hearty, warming stew with a robust taste. You don't even notice the flavor of the beer, which melts away into the sauce for an utterly satisfying meal.

My next dish was equally intriguing: Lemon Chicken With Bulgur. Bulgur is one of those grains that I rarely think to use when I'm cooking, and I'm always happy whenever I use it. It has a nutty taste similar to brown rice, but a creamier and more luscious texture.

It also happens to go brilliantly with chicken — and especially, as I discovered, with lemon chicken.

The recipe includes a couple of curveballs that are unexpected but delicious. Mixed into the other ingredients (onion, garlic, lemon) are a half-teaspoon each of cardamom, coriander and cumin.



Christian Gooden/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Lemon Chicken with Bulgur, photographed at Dan Neman's home on Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021, is a low-calorie dish worth considering following the holidays.

The Indian spices are subtle, but you know they are there. They act as a quiet sounding board to amplify the bright citrus notes of the lemon. They make what is already a great dish even better. It is sure to join your repertoire, as will the Beef Braised in Stout Beer.

And so, for that matter, will Turkey Wienerschnitzel.

The flavor of turkey is similar enough to veal that it makes a reasonable substitute; I even know a chef who used to cook turkey at his restaurant and jokingly call it "redneck veal."

Veal is hard to find these days, and it is expensive when you do see it, so Turkey Wienerschnitzel would be a great idea even if it weren't so delicious. Based on the classic Austrian dish, it is a turkey cutlet, breaded and lightly fried, served with capers and slices of lemon. A fried egg on top tastes great, too.

This version, which was created by Steven Raichlen in his pre-barbecue days, saves some calories by dipping the turkey in egg whites instead of whole eggs, and it theoretically requires only two tablespoons of oil to fry four cutlets.

To be perfectly honest, it took me three tablespoons of oil to fry the four cutlets. But that isn't too bad, and the Wienerschnitzel was exceptional.

My last low-cal, high-flavor dish takes potatoes to a new level. Bombay-Style Potatoes are a type of spiced potatoes that, despite the name, appears to have originated in England.

Curry and potatoes have long been a popular combination, and the Bombay style usually adds tomatoes to the mix. But the version I made uses Granny Smith apples instead to add just the right amount of sweet tartness to the spicy curry.

I cheated when I made mine.

Instead of putting together a homemade blend of spices for the curry, I just used curry powder out of a jar. It was awfully good the way it was, and I can only imagine how much better it would have been if I had only taken the extra few minutes to make my own.

Whether you mix together your own curry or use the store-bought variety, be sure to use Yukon Gold potatoes with this dish. Their texture is almost butter, their taste almost creamy, which absolutely brings the recipe to life.

BEEF BRAISED IN STOUT BEER

Yield: 6 servings

1½ pounds boneless lean beef, such as round, trimmed of all visible

fat and cut into 2-inch cubes

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 cups diced onion

2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

1 pound fresh mushrooms, washed, trimmed and halved if large

2 cups Guinness stout beer (do not use extra-stout)

1½ cups beef stock

2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme, or ¼ teaspoon dried

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1 bay leaf

¼ teaspoon black pepper

¼ teaspoon salt (omit if using salted canned stock)

2 teaspoons cornstarch mixed with 2 tablespoons cold water

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1. Wash the meat and pat dry with paper towels. Heat the oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown the beef cubes on all sides and remove them with a slotted spoon; this will have to be done in a few batches.

2. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onions, garlic and mushrooms. Sauté for 5 minutes, stirring often. Return the meat to the pan and add the remaining ingredients except cornstarch and vinegar. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, for 1½ to 2 hours or until the meat is tender.

3. Remove the meat and vegetables from the pan, discarding the bay leaf, and reduce the gravy by one-third, stirring frequently. Stir in the cornstarch mixture,

simmering for 2 minutes until thickened. Return the meat and vegetables to the pan and stir in the vinegar. Reheat the stew, if necessary. Serve over rice, if desired.

Per serving: 293 calories; 11 g fat; 6 g saturated fat; 84 mg cholesterol; 28 g protein; 17 g carbohydrate; 9 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 324 mg sodium; 51 mg calcium

— Recipe from "The Gourmet Gazelle Cookbook" by Ellen Brown

LEMON CHICKEN WITH BULGUR

Yield: 6 servings

2 teaspoons butter

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

1 chicken, about 3½ pounds, skinned and cut into serving pieces

Salt and pepper

3 medium onions, chopped (1½ to 2 cups)

2 garlic cloves, minced (2 teaspoons)

1½ cups bulgur, see note

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

½ teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon ground cumin

Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon

4 cups boiling chicken broth

Note: Bulgur is harder to find than it used to be. I bought mine at Whole Foods.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. In a large skillet, heat the butter and the oil, add the chicken and brown the pieces on all sides. Season the chicken with salt and pepper, and remove it to a large casserole or pot.

3. Add the onions and garlic to the skillet, and cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are translucent, about 3 to 5 minutes.

4. Add the bulgur, stirring to coat it and brown it lightly.

5. Add the cardamom, coriander, cumin, lemon zest and lemon juice to the bulgur mixture, mixing the ingredients well. Spoon the bulgur on top of the reserved chicken.

6. Pour the boiling broth over the chicken and bulgur. Cover the casserole or pot and cook in the oven for 1 hour or until the chicken is tender. If preparing in advance and you plan to reheat in the oven, instead of a microwave, reduce the baking time to 45 minutes so it does not get overheated and dry when reheated.

Per serving: 500 calories; 11 g fat; 4 g saturated fat; 200 mg cholesterol; 66 g protein; 34 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 1,037 mg sodium; 50 mg calcium

— Adapted from "Jane Brody's Good Food Book" by Jane Brody

TURKEY WIENERSCHNITZEL

Yield: 4 servings

1½ pounds turkey cutlets or chicken breasts

Salt and pepper

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Examining the mysterious history of 1316 Adams

GINNY MAMMEN
OUT AND ABOUT

The attractive one-story building once located at 1316 Adams Ave. in downtown La Grande has provided us with several mysteries. Time of construction is one. It was built sometime between 1893 and the early 1900s. However, we don't know who constructed it. Perhaps as time goes on there may be a clue that has been missed.

According to an advertisement in The Observer dated September 1902, Jack Childs, also known as the Harness Man, opened a store selling his hand-stitched saddles and other leather goods and supplies for the horse owner at this location. Was it this building or was it a small wood one?

It is known that as far back as 1893, John (Jack) Henry Childs had his harness-making business on the corner of that block and that he was a hard worker and entrepreneur, so it is possible that he was the one who constructed the building to use for his business.

Then there is the name of W.K. Davis on the front of the building with the words Organs and Pianos on the windows. Nowhere could be found a connection for the two. So perhaps W.K. Davis, an entre-



Contributed Photo

There are many mysteries in the history of the building at 1316 Adams Ave. It was demolished in 1973.

preneur, connected with the Crescent Knitting Mills Co. and Idaho Life Insurance, invested in the building.

The building at 1316 had a rocky start and early occupants have been difficult to track. At times the commercial space appeared to have one occupant and at other times the building was divided and two occupants were sharing the space. And businesses changed frequently.

It is known that by 1911 there was a new grocery store in La Grande at this location operated by Clarence Cummings and J. P. Price. This partnership ended in less than a year when Price sold out to T. E. French and the store

became Cummings and French. This partnership also didn't last because by December of 1912 C. J. Black bought out French. But it doesn't end here.

In December of 1914 Black bought out Cummings and within the next year moved his store to another location. It appears that some of the previous owners were more investors that actual grocery men at heart. The Christiansen Barber Shop was there as early as 1912.

By September of 1915 the New Broadway Cleaners and Pressers were sharing the commercial space with Christiansen Barber Shop. But it wasn't long before New Broadway moved to the

Foley Building.

In April of 1916, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Hull opened a pastry shop called Hall's Dutch Bakery. They offered, along with their pies and cookies, comfort foods such as specially baked pork and beans, and spaghetti with tomato sauce. This was not meant to be, for by September of 1916 there was nothing to be found about either the Hulls or the Dutch Bakery.

Then around 1917 things began to change, or at least stabilize a bit. Oxner's Paint Store moved in and operated until 1926 when it became Noah's Paint Store. Noah's operated until February 1944 when La Grande Paint Store took over for about seven years, until 1951, when the Coast to Coast store moved in. By 1960 Coast to Coast was ready to relocate to a new location and once again 1316 was vacant and Blue Mountain Heating Service moved in followed by Eastern Oregon Television, Stan's TV Repair and Cablevision Radio and TV.

Cablevision was probably the last occupant because by 1973 the building, as well as the other buildings east of it on that block, were demolished in preparation for the new First Interstate Bank building. This is currently the location of Wells Fargo Bank parking lot.

The individuals connected with the building at 1316 Adams didn't

seem to stay around La Grande for long periods of time and neither they nor their spouses especially engaged in city activities. Also it was difficult to find where they did go once they left town.

Clarence George Cummings, who was involved in the grocery business, was the only one who seemed to leave any tracks. Clarence, age 34, was living in La Grande with his wife Clara and their young son and daughter in 1910 and had his own real estate office. During the period of 1911-1914 he was involved with the grocery store and it is not certain if that was his full time job or whether he was also working in his real estate business.

However, by 1917 Clarence and Cora had moved to Portland and he was working for J. Simon, a plumbing and roofing contractor. By 1930 he was the proprietor of a Portland grocery. Sometime in the next 10 years he became the owner/operator of a filling station. Clarence was a man who seemed to be always searching for that fulfilling occupation.

C.G. Cummings died in 1943 at the age of 67.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

Ginny Mammen has lived in La Grande for more than 50 years and enjoys sharing her interest in the history of people, places and buildings.