

Going all in on GARLIC

By DANIEL NEMAN
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Not too long ago, few Americans ate garlic.

It had too strong a taste; it was too sharp. It made your breath smell bad. There is a reason that it was associated with keeping away vampires — the flavor and aroma were too intense, even for them.

If consumed at all, garlic would only be eaten in Italian food, and only in small amounts.

That was how we thought at least through the 1960s. But now, we love the stuff. On average, Americans now eat more than two pounds of garlic each year, according to the Garlic Seed Foundation.

So I thought I would make several dishes that make the most out of garlic. I wanted the garlic flavor to be at the front and center of each dish, but I did not want it to be too strong, too pungent. I wanted the garlickiness to be redolent, but relatively mild.

Nothing offensive here. Just garlic that is smooth and mellow.

There are a couple of ways to achieve this result, both of which I used in all seven of my recipes.

The first is to leave the cloves whole. Most people mince or chop their garlic, exposing more surface area. That makes the flavor more acute and concentrated. In Italy, where they know something about garlic, the cloves are left whole so that the flavor is noticeable but not overpowering.

The other trick is to cook it at a relatively low temperature for a relatively long time. That way, the flavors get a chance to ripen and mature until the garlic is almost sweet.

Perhaps the purest example of these concepts is oven-roasted garlic. I first had this at a wonderful French restaurant in Chi-

cago, Bistro 110, in the late 1980s or early 1990s. It made such an impression on me that they happily provided the recipe, printed nicely on an index card.

An hourlong braise in the oven renders an entire head's worth of cloves impossibly soft and spreadable. Cooked to the point where its natural sugars have caramelized, the garlic is at its best simply smeared on a piece of baguette. If the baguette has been buttered, well, so much the better.

Oven-roasted garlic plays an essential role in the next food I made, too: garlic vodka.

All you do is roast a head of garlic in the oven and then drop it in a jar with vodka. All it takes is 12 to 24 hours, for a subtle to a progressively stronger flavor.

I like garlic and I like vodka, but I have to admit that I am not a huge fan of garlic vodka — and this is coming from someone who thinks horseradish vodka is the king of alcoholic drinks. But if you, too, like garlic and vodka, you might want to give it a try.

It would make a wonderful bloody mary. And think of how great it would be in pasta with vodka sauce.

If you are still wary of using a lot of garlic in a dish, then you have probably forgotten about chicken with 40 cloves of garlic. It was all the rage in the 1970s and '80s.

It is indeed chicken cooked with 40 actual cloves of garlic, and it is sublime. Far from being acrid, as you would expect, the chicken is suffused with a warm, garlicky glow. But not too garlicky. The garlic does not even compete with the chicken; it only serves to enhance it.

If you have never had chicken with 40 cloves of garlic, I cannot recommend it enough. It may become your favorite way of preparing chicken.

And if the thought of 40 cloves scares you, then feel free to use 38 cloves. Just tell everyone it was 40. No such deception is needed with the garlic bread I made. I used my Italian wife's recipe.

Her garlic bread begins with an equal combination of butter and olive oil, the way her mother made it. Into the mixture goes a couple of whole cloves of garlic — never minced or crushed in a garlic press, she warns. For this garlic bread, the subtlety of the garlic is key.

She does not touch her garlic beyond peeling it to make hers, but I made mine just a little stronger by crushing my cloves before adding them to the butter and olive oil. Either way is fine, but frankly I think I might like her slightly milder version better.

Subtlety was never on my mind before when I made stir-fried spinach with garlic, which I first had 25 years ago at the City Lights of China restaurant in Washington, D.C. I recall it being the sort of dish that left you smelling like garlic four days after you ate it, and I gleefully made it that same way in my own kitchen ever since.

But that's not the effect I was going for this time. Instead of essentially making the spinach a backdrop for the garlic, this time I left the cloves whole and allowed the garlic to flavor the spinach.

I like the old, garlicky way just fine, but I like this more understated dish better.



Colter Peterson/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Oven-Roasted Garlic.

For an unexpected dish, I made fresh thyme and garlic soup. It was particularly easy to make, the sort of soup that you could easily whip up on a weeknight and serve either as a first course or as an entrée, if paired with something else such as cheese and bread. It is too thin to stand alone as an entrée.

It is unexpectedly good, because it is so easy to make. All you do is simmer garlic cloves in chicken (or vegetable) stock and sprigs of fresh thyme. When the garlic is soft, you remove the thyme and puree the garlic and stock. A healthy splash of lemon juice gives it just the right acidic counterpoint. A slice of stale — or toasted — bread on the bottom of the dish provides a foundation on which the other flavors are built.

Finally, I made a shrimp and garlic sauce — not the familiar Chinese dish but a version that would be more at home in Italy or Provence.

The dish comes together quickly, as it usually does when shrimp is involved, and it is unusually satisfying. It isn't just the shrimp and it isn't even the garlic. The way the shrimp and garlic come together with lemon juice, dry sherry and olive oil is quite a marvel.

It is the stuff that culinary dreams are made of.

CHICKEN WITH 40 CLOVES OF GARLIC

Yield: 4 servings

40 cloves garlic, peeled
2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided
½ teaspoon granulated sugar
8 (5 to 7-ounce) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs or 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts halved crosswise
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ cup dry sherry
¾ cup chicken broth
½ cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons cornstarch dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
Note: To peel many cloves of garlic at once, break garlic heads into cloves and place in a zipper-lock bag. Squeeze out air, seal bag and gently pound garlic with a rolling pin. Remove peeled cloves from bag.

1. Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and preheat to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. Toss garlic in a microwavable bowl with 1 teaspoon oil and sugar. Microwave garlic until slightly softened with light brown spotting, about 4 minutes, stirring halfway through.

2. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Heat remaining 1 teaspoon oil in 12-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Cook chicken

skin-side down until browned, 7 to 10 minutes. Transfer to plate, skin-side up. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of fat from skillet. Reduce heat to medium low, add garlic, and cook until evenly browned, about 1 minute.

3. Off heat, add sherry to skillet. Return skillet to medium heat and bring sherry to simmer, scraping up any browned bits. Cook until sherry coats garlic and pan is nearly dry, about 4 minutes. Stir in broth, cream, the cornstarch mixture, thyme sprigs and bay leaf, and simmer until slightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Return chicken skin-side up to skillet along with any accumulated juices. Transfer skillet to oven and roast until chicken registers 175 degrees, 18 to 22 minutes (15 to 20 minutes if cooking breasts).

4. Using pot holder (skillet handle will be hot), remove skillet from oven. Transfer chicken and half of garlic to serving platter. Discard thyme and bay leaf. Using potato masher, mash remaining garlic into sauce and season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour half of sauce around chicken. Serve, passing remaining sauce separately.

Per serving: 580 calories; 40 g fat; 14 g saturated fat; 207 mg cholesterol; 35 g protein; 17 g carbohydrate; 4 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 820 mg sodium; 83 mg calcium — Recipe from "The Chicken Bible" by America's Test Kitchen

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When one building is better than two



GINNY MAMMEN
OUT AND ABOUT

As in most of downtown La Grande, Adams Avenue was once lined with frame buildings that were destroyed by fire or razed in order to build larger, more permanent structures. It was the same for the northside 1300 block.

The space at 1307, however, was an empty lot on the 1888 Sanborn Map, but a small frame building housing a millinery shop was located at 1309 at that time. In the late 1880s or 1890s another one-story nondescript frame building was constructed at 1307.

These two small shops were popular and had several businesses that remained for a number of years.

One of the earliest occupants of 1307 Adams was the Model Restaurant owned by Mrs. Hiltz. In January 1902 she put her restaurant up for sale. A young man by the name of James Arbuckle, who had been operating a tobacco and confectionary shop, saw a new opportunity. He sold his cigar store

to John Fredrick Steinbeck, found a partner in a man by the name of Joseph Squires, a Civil War veteran who had previously been in the livery business, and together they purchased The Model all within the month of January. The partnership between the two men dissolved in July 1903 because Squires was retiring due to illness. Arbuckle was now the sole owner of The Model. Squires moved to Spokane, Washington, where, according to his obituary died that same year at the age of 56.

Twenty years later, in 1923, James Arbuckle and his wife, Katie, sold both the restaurant and their home and moved to Portland. The restaurant, once a solid business, was on shaky ground for the next few years. The new owner renamed the restaurant Norris Grill. By May of 1924 it had been sold again and became the Oregon Trail Cafe until August of that year when Grace Shannon became the new owner. She did a complete remodeling and redecorating and changed the name to Old Oregon Trail Cafe, but by July of 1925 the cafe closed its doors.

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Fond memories of the 'Stump Patch'



DOROTHY FLESHMAN
DORY'S DIARY

In the Observer/Herald Section B on Saturday, Mar. 26, 2022, Jayson Jacoby of the Baker City Herald wrote an appreciated article on "The Story of the Stumps" in Baker County which brought back memories to a local resident of such a place in Union County.

It was called "Stump Patch" and I'm the local resident.

The Stump Patch was located somewhere out west of La Grande along the highway, possibly near Perry because at one time there was a sawmill there. I would imagine that the nearby grove of huge evergreen trees would have been harvested because of their proximity to the mill along the Grande Ronde River and the railroad tracks.

There were huge high stumps left from the felling of selected trees which, with the shading of the high tree limbs providing an umbrella covering, the area was a wonderful place in which to hold picnics, for it was cool on a hot summer's day with parking close by along the highway.

I was a small child when I remember the Stump Patch. By the time I was grown, I'm sure the patch had been cleared away for the many changes brought about with the new highway that was

constantly being rerouted through the canyon.

There was the place where people stopped to see the dancing bear, captured and on the end of a chain. The swimming pool of cold river water, the picnic grounds, the cabins for rent near the yellow and blue Richfield statue with the lion lying at the foot of the advertising sign. There were other things, too, like the weigh station and such, but this is about the Stump Patch.

My relative families were many and close-knit. They loved being together and sharing time camping, fishing, picnicking together.

One time we had gone to the Stump Patch and enjoyed the coolness as the trees swayed gently above us and the elders visited while the children played among the stumps that were about as tall as ourselves. I was probably about eight or 10 years of age and enjoyed running around between the high stumps or climbing on them along with my cousins.

This one time that stays so vividly in my mind is the one hot summer's day that the elder folks decided to picnic at the Stump Patch. We all piled into cars with picnic lunch offerings and headed out to the Patch. Once there, the salads and breads were spread out for all to fill their plates and for the children to find a place, on or near a stump, to put their plate when the fried chicken fresh and hot from the family frying pans was passed around. I can't recall

whether or not there were wooden picnic tables with attached board slabs for seats for the elders but there may have been.

Anyway, the fragrance of the chicken wafted through the forest to everyone's breathing deeply and anticipating its dispersal.

It came, but not the way we had expected.

Along with the chicken came swarms of yellowjackets just as intent on having chicken dinner as were we.

You can see the picture in your mind with the streams of folks running out of the Stump Patch with their plate of chicken, salads, and breads held high to escape to their cars for protection from the stinging insects.

I don't recall where we gathered in the home of one or another to finish the meal but neither do I remember another picnic in the grove where the stumps were still young enough to weep pitch.

The remembrance of the Stump Patch is still clear and vivid with a special heartfelt link to the past for the beauty and almost ethereal feeling while within the arms of its shade and coolness away from the heat of the day, beyond that of the failed chicken dinner.

I have thought of the forest and its stumps so many times along with wishing I could remember exactly where everything had been located along the changing highway so close to my hometown, the loss of more history such a few years ago.