

Old buildings preserve special memories



DOROTHY FLESHMAN
DORY'S DIARY

Everyone loves a new building — new with updated space needs, windows and automatic doors, floors that shine, and comfortable chairs.

But, there is something about an old building in which your memory weeps to see it lost to the future.

That's the way I feel about the old gymnasium behind the Middle School at 1108 Fourth St. in La Grande as the vote count causes its demise just as the Middle School replaced my old Central Elementary School and the La Grande High School, two schools in this location of which so many people no longer even know they were there.

Now future takes over this third building of which my memory hurts to see it go.

But, the people voted, and decided, and that's the way it should be to plan the changing future.

Still, from my comfortable chair, I let my mind wander back to the days when I was an eighth grade student at Central and the building behind the school was just called the "gym."

As I recall, younger students couldn't go over to the gym building until they were eighth graders in the beginners band or involved with sports that took you there. I had picked out a clarinet to be my companion for the next four years and so I was one of the privileged permitted to go out the school doors at the back of our building, down the flight of outside steps and across the concreted court formed by the wraparound location of the three buildings to the welcoming doors of the gym.

The court itself was a protective place where we sack-lunch students could spend our noon hour. Once in a while Cecilia Smith, I do believe that was her name, and I were lucky enough to get one of the ground-level basement window ledges on which to sit and visit while we ate homemade bread sandwiches as other students dined behind us over hot meals that cost money. But, we were contented to have the outdoor freedom to eat, visit, and then play "jacks" or go swing at the far end of the gym building and swing-climb the bars if the swings were taken. If you could swing high enough, you could almost look into the band room windows on that end of the building.

At that special moment when beginners band was scheduled, we would hurry from the school with our instrument through the gym doors to find a short hallway. To the left were the "shop" rooms where mostly boys were learning to build things of wood.

Around the corner were the shower rooms for the gymnastics classes and a room across the hall where Latin was taught in the classroom. These things I learned during the next four years, but for now my mind stops at the door and takes me to my right and up a double flight of steps, but first pausing at the door to the gym with its shiny hardwood court floors edged with board seats for cheering students at basketball games, and towns-folk at concerts, plays, and the like. It was even there that the Girls League tried to teach me to be a lady while serving my mother at a Mothers Tea. And that's where I was sitting and heard President Roosevelt announce the "day of infamy" and the beginning of America's involvement in World War II. Later I was to graduate from La Grande High School in that gymnasium room.

But, I go beyond the door, turning right and up the second flight of steps that led to the balcony of the gym, but now I stop off at the doors to the band/orchestra/choral rooms and enter to find graduated risers for group rehearsals, directors, students, and music that took me forward into life.

There is much more to say about the gym building, maybe later when the pain of loss recedes with time, but I must pause alone in the band room now for a moment with memory.

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Berry Bounty

Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS
Healthy strawberry oatmeal bars.

Take advantage of strawberries at their sweetest

By **DANIEL NEMAN**
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Now, right now, strawberries are their strawberryest.

Ripe, luscious and dripping with juice, strawberries are nature's way of welcoming us back to another bountiful season of planting and harvesting. They are like a little gift — an amuse bouche, if you will — to thank us for our patience during a long and barren winter.

And as is so often the case at many fine restaurants, the amuse bouche turns out to be the best part of the meal.

Inspired by the little red nuggets of culinary gold, I set out to make six recipes in which strawberries were the star. They include an hors d'oeuvre and a salad dressing, a baked good and two drinks (one boozy, one not) and a dessert.

Ordinarily, I would save the dessert for last, but I want to tell you about it first because I am so excited about it. It is a restaurant-quality dish (not surprisingly, it was created by a restaurant chef) and it will leave you the toast of your family, friends and guests. It's that good.

It's also a bit of work, to be honest. But each part of the dish is easy to make, and you can do most of it the day before. And then, when you are ready to serve it, all you have left is to whip up a simple sauce. And then flambée it.

Strawberry Flambée Over Lemon Ricotta-Filled Crêpes is the kind of dessert that will give you a lifelong reputation as an exceptional cook. And all you have to do is master three simple parts.

First, you make the crepes, which are just a thin batter (flour, milk, eggs, melted butter) cooked briefly on a hot pan. Next, you stir together a filling for the crepes (ricotta cheese, sugar, vanilla and the zest of a lemon and an orange).

Finally, you make a sauce by heating together strawberries, sugar, orange juice, butter and Grand Marnier. When the alcohol is hot, light a match to it and watch the flames dance in delight. It should be impressive, but in the version I made the flames were a little hard to see.

It doesn't matter. The taste was amazing.

If you prefer your strawberry dishes to be fast and easy, I recommend using the fruit to make drinks. Hardly anything on earth is more refreshing.

Strawberry agua fresca is just a sweetened strawberry-flavored water, and it is delightful. It doesn't take long to make, but you do have to let it sit for a few hours. If you know it is going to be hot later in



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Strawberry vinaigrette.

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the day, or the next day, I can't think of anything more cooling.

It's the sort of drink that will make you want to mow the grass in the hot sun just so you can come inside and drink a tall glass of it.

If an adult beverage is more your style, nothing is more summery than a frozen strawberry daiquiri.

You just need rum, of course, and strawberries, plus an extra-sweet simple syrup (it takes perhaps two minutes to make) and a significant splash of lime juice to bring just the right slap of tart citrus to the sweet drink.

Add a handful of ice cubes, throw it all in the blender and you will have a lightly boozy slushie to remember.

I have a homemade salad dressing that I adore, but it would be a waste of the season in the spring and early summer not to make a dressing with strawberries.

The one I made was bright and full of the flavor of strawberries. Along with the berries and olive oil — and salt and pepper, of course — it only requires the sweet-tart combination of honey and apple cider vinegar.

The dressing tastes fresh and pure, and it is a superb way to use strawberries that are just a little overripe. Best of all, it comes together in a matter of minutes.

You probably already know how well strawberries pair with balsamic vinegar; sometimes I just mix the two and serve it over vanilla ice cream for an unexpectedly elegant dessert. But they also can be combined for a notable hors d'oeuvre, especially when paired with creamy goat cheese and deliciously crisp charred bread.

The secret to Strawberry Goat Cheese Bruschetta is that the balsamic vinegar is cooked until it is reduced by about half, which makes it extra good because it is syrupy and intense in flavor.

The reduced vinegar is mixed with diced strawberries and spooned on top of tangy goat cheese, which has been spread on thin slices of grilled or broiled French or Italian bread. I used a grill pan for mine; it's a skillet with raised lines that mimic the effect of a grill when cooking on a stove.

A light sprinkling of fresh thyme leaves is all the bruschetta needs to tie the flavors together.

My final dish is a baked good that is actually low in calories. Healthy Strawberry Oatmeal Bars are made with butter, brown sugar and whole wheat flour — along with old-fashioned rolled oats and strawberries — and yet they only have about 100 calories apiece.

Until you add a vanilla glaze. The glaze is optional, but you're going to want to add it. Yum.

STRAWBERRY DAIQUIRI

Yield: 1 serving

1 1/2 ounces rum
1 ounce rich simple syrup, see note
3/4 ounce (1 1/2 tablespoons) lime juice, freshly squeezed
4 to 5 large strawberries

Note: To make rich simple syrup, combine 1/2 cup sugar and 1/4 cup water in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until mixture turns clear.

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