

## Memorial Day

Remembering loved ones, and especially those who have died for our country, deserves a special meal and appreciation of family, friends, and country.

Memorial Day weekend here is the time for raking the yard, getting the garden in, spreading the last of the snow around to melt, and unofficially welcoming in the summer season. With hopes the black flies haven't started biting yet, we head outdoors to enjoy the warm air and share a meal or two.

I hope these dishes will bring a smile to your face as they are unconventional but delicious, and can become a tradition you can repeat year after year.

### **Homemade Onion Dip**

Once you've made your own, you'll never go back to the old onion-soup-mix glop again! This one's much less salty and tastes a lot better, too! All it asks of you is a bit of your time—and it's totally worth it. Make this a day or two ahead for convenience.

- 2 large Spanish or Vidalia onions (2 cups diced)
- 2 Tbs light olive oil
- 2 pinches salt
- 1 16-oz. container sour cream, brought to room temperature
- 1 8-oz. block cream cheese, softened
- 1 Tbs Gravy Master
- ½ tsp garlic powder or use fresh 2 garlic cloves, finely minced (even better)
- ½ tsp white pepper
- Dash or three of your favorite hot sauce (optional)

Remove cream cheese and sour cream from the 'fridge at least two hours before starting. Brown onions in oil over medium-high heat, taking care not to burn, till brown and well done. Set aside to cool.

Place all other ingredients in a medium bowl and mix well. Add cooled onions. Refrigerate, covered, overnight, or at least 4-6 hours. Serve at room temperature with chips, crackers, or pita bread wedges, then watch it disappear!

### **Chinese Chicken Salad**

I got this recipe from my friend, Dawn King and tweaked it a bit. It is so delicious your kids will gobble it up while getting some veggies in the process! You'll need a tight-fitting plastic container—low, flat, and rectangular in shape—that'll hold about 6-8 cups. You'll need to get a small bottle of toasted sesame oil in the ethnic section of the supermarket, but it is

totally worth it. It imparts a most memorable flavor.

For the salad, prepare the following:

2 large or 3 small boneless, skinless chicken breasts, gently poached, cooled, and diced

¼ cup sesame seeds

1 cup slivered almonds sautéed in oil till golden brown and cooled

1 sweet onion (Vidalia, if available, is best)

½ head of medium size cabbage, finely shredded

2 packages of Ramen noodles (discard seasoning pack)

For the dressing, mix together in a shaker:

¾ cup white vinegar

½ cup light olive or peanut oil

½ cup water

4 Tbs sugar

1 tsp garlic powder

3 Tbs toasted sesame oil

1 Tbs soy sauce

In a plastic container, break up squares of ramen noodles into 4-6 pieces. Pour mixed dressing over noodles, then add tossed remaining ingredients over. Cover and shake vigorously. Flip over and refrigerate at least overnight. If you are worried the lid will leak, be sure to enclose in a large plastic bag. Check in the morning to test that noodles are soft. Remove from refrigerator two hours before serving. Can be served in lettuce cups. Crunchy good!

### **Mamie's Blubarb Pie**

A divine concoction of blueberries and rhubarb makes this pie a true celebration. Serve with a scoop of lemon sherbet!

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup light brown sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup quick-cooking tapioca

3 cups diced rhubarb

3 cups blueberries

Pastry dough, for double-crust 9-inch pie\*

Preheat oven to 400°.

Combine sugars, salt and tapioca in a large bowl and mix well. Add fruit and

toss until well coated.

Place fruit mixture in 9-inch pie pan lined with pastry dough. Top with second crust, and trim so the top crust hangs 1/2 inch beyond rim, then tuck edge of top crust under bottom crust and crimp or pinch to finish.

Bake 20 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350° and bake an additional 25-30 minutes, until pie is golden and the juices are bubbling. Let cool 2 hours and then serve.

\*See my magical pie crust recipe below, OR use prepared rolled pie dough.

#### TIP: CRUMB TOPPING CAN REPLACE TOP CRUST

My mother didn't much like using a top crust on a pie. She loved to make a delicious crumb topping, sweet, rich, and crunchy. This recipe can be mixed up quickly and doubled or tripled, always ready in your 'fridge or freezer in a container with a tight-fitting lid. Keeps for a month or more.

1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 stick soft butter  
1/2 tsp cinnamon  
1/2 cup old-fashioned oats (optional)

Mix with fingers till crumbly.

#### **Cousin Ralph's Magical Pie Crust**

When I tell you this is the easiest crust you'll ever make, I mean it. You've probably never made crust like this, and the process flies in the face of all those pastry experts and seasoned bakers out there who've always preached that pie crust must be prepared cold—very cold—and that is a real pain to do correctly. This crust uses hot liquids, and is a snap to do. It is easily doubled, tripled, or quadrupled and freezes well, so you can make it two months ahead and pull it out to prepare a delicious homemade pie any time! Great for chicken or beef pot pies, too. You'll never go back to that pastry blender!

#### Ingredients

1 cup solid shortening  
6 Tbs water  
2 tsp milk  
2 1/2 cups flour  
1 tsp salt

Measure out flour and salt; mix and set aside. Place shortening in a medium bowl and spread it evenly over the bottom. In a small saucepan, bring water and milk to a boil, and pour over shortening. Beat with a fork till smooth and thick. Add flour and salt. Stir gently with the fork, then mix with fingers gently so as not to toughen till well blended.

Form two equal balls of dough, which will be soft and warm. I like to roll it out between two sheets of wax paper to a thickness of about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. It's easy to peel off the top paper, pick the whole mess up and flip it on to the pie pan. Carefully peel the other paper off,. If you tear the crust, it is easily patched. Position, trim and pinch taking care to eliminate any air bubbles. (I prick them with a fork then pat it to close the holes.)

Makes 2 crusts

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