



MARY'S MEMO

Recipes • Menu Ideas • Shopping • Cooking Tips

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Chief and Rays Supermarkets

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

The economy isn't stopping wedding bells from ringing, but it might influence gift selection. I'm big on gift cards so newlyweds can buy what they need, not what I might want them to have, although I have definite opinions, especially when it comes to kitchen gifts. Things are much more expensive than when I married in 1951 and it may take several gift cards to make a single purchase.

If you're shopping for kitchen shower gifts look no further than Chief and Rays house wares for reasonably priced items. Herbs and spices are not cheap and an assortment of commonly used ones piled into a functional container is another idea.

If you're willing to spend more money, I think OXO brand gadgets are the current leader. I'm fascinated by what is available from asparagus peelers to a just purchased strawberry huller. With it, the hull is pierced and a button pressed to release leaves and hull. Imagine that! When it comes to kitchen gadgets "we've come a long way baby!"

Certainly new brides (and grooms, too) need a basic cookbook. My recommendation is either the red and white plaid Better Homes & Gardens or Betty Crocker. I like both of these books because they're loose leaf bound and lay flat for reference. Recipes for 2 people and 4 ingredient ones also appeal to the novice cook.

Appliances that I consider essential include a microwave, an automatic coffeemaker and an electric portable mixer. If the bride and groom like to cook and bake, give them a Kitchen Aid standard mixer. It's the Cadillac of mixers! Other small appliances that I wouldn't do without include a blender and food processor.

As for pots and pans, buy the best you can afford. I'm still using equipment that's as old as my marriage but I followed care instructions on the label and treated what I had with respect, much like a carpenter looks after his tools.

SHOULD YOU BE A LOCAVORE?

One of the hot issues in food shopping these days is locally grown food. According to the strict definition, a "locavore" is one who only eats food grown within a radius of 100 miles. Locally grown fruits and vegetables picked just before you eat them will most certainly taste better than those picked before they are ripe and shipped two thousand miles (tomatoes and corn come to mind). Still, not every body lives close enough to a farm or even a farmer's market. And if you buy only local foods, variety will be limited most of the year. If produce in the store is fresh and in good condition, it will be rich in nutrients and will taste good, wherever it is grown. Frozen and even canned fruits and vegetables are nutritious, too. They are convenient and a boon to cooks who have to get a meal on the table after a day's work. It is not true, as some locavores claim, that frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are worthless.

Source: University of California at Berkeley Wellness Letter, July 2009.

Look for Mary's Memo on our website: www.ChiefSupermarkets.com

MINI GARDEN REPORT

I'll admit I couldn't have a mini garden without help from others. Someone had to cultivate it and good friends from St. Pat's Church in Bryan volunteered to help put the plants in the ground for me. Since then, I've been keeping the weeds out and enjoying the benefits of fresh tomatoes, seedless cucumbers, eggplant, zucchini and green bell peppers. Gardening is also good exercise and some days it wears me out. But it's a small price to pay for a plateful of just picked home-grown tomatoes!

Baked Tomato and Corn Casserole in another way to use summer's harvest.

BAKED TOMATO AND CORN CASSEROLE

- 6 large ripe tomatoes
- Flour, salt and pepper
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 10 ears of sweet corn cut from the cob
- 1 large sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup butter, melted (1/2 stick)

Cut tomatoes into 1/2 inch slices. Dredge in flour seasoned with salt and pepper to taste. Sauté in oil until slightly golden. In a 3-quart glass casserole, alternate layers of tomatoes, corn and onion slices. Repeat layers. Mix bread crumbs with melted butter. Sprinkle on top of vegetables. Bake in 350°F oven for 35 to 40 minutes. Recipe makes 8 servings.

WHAT'S FOR DESSERT?

I like a cake recipe that comes from the oven ready to eat such as Chocolate Crunch Cake.

CHOCOLATE CRUNCH CAKE

- 1 1/2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup quick cooking oatmeal
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 2 squares unsweetened baking chocolate, melted
- 1 1/4 cups + 1 tablespoon unsifted flour
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Pour boiling water over oats; stir to combine. Cover and let stand for 20 minutes. Beat butter until creamy; gradually add sugars, beating until fluffy. Blend in vanilla, eggs and chocolate. Add oats mixture; blend well. Add flour, soda and salt to creamed mixture; blend again. Spoon batter into greased and floured on the bottom 9x9x2-inch baking pan. Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 50 to 55 minutes. Remove from oven and spread crunch mixture on top. Return to oven and broil until coconut is golden. To make crunch topping, mix together 1 1/2 cups flaked coconut, 2/3 cup packed light brown sugar, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and 1/3 cup melted butter.