Hogtown HomeGrown

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Legend and legacy

My Aunt Mae was a legend in our family. She cooked, she sewed and she crafted, not unusual for a woman of her generation, but Aunt Mae did it with incredible energy, enthusiasm and expertise. Technically, she was not my aunt at all; she was Granny's older half-sister, but, in the ways of the South, we called her Aunt Mae.

I have published her pound cake recipe, but more than cakes, this woman could turn out a full Southern spread, complete with biscuits and cornbread, while visiting with you in her parlor. She wouldn't miss a beat in the conversation as she slipped out to put something in the oven—"excuse me, won't be a minute!"

Her sewing skills surpassed anyone else's I have ever known—from underwear to dresses and suits to tuxedoes—everything her family wore came from her sewing machine. There she sat, her back ramrod straight as a result of the boned corset she wore everyday of her adult life, creating, mending, always making something new out of something old. Her thrift served her well since she lived a comfortable life until her death at age 95.

What brought her to mind recently was her tatting—handmade lace created by knotting and looping hundreds of inches of thread for just a few inches of finished product. When Granny died, I received her sewing box, but at the time only opened it to peek inside, never diving beyond the top tray. When I finally took the plunge, I found piece after piece of Aunt Mae's tatting. Some were small, just scraps left from a project. Some were attached to remnants of long-discarded garments and pillowcases. One looked like it had once been the edge of a dress, a complete circle with its ends tatted together.

I rolled all the pieces carefully, running my finger over each bump that Aunt Mae's hands had created. Perhaps I will use them someday and gift our grandchildren or their spouses with a garter for their wedding day as Aunt Mae did for me. Or maybe, many years from now, one of our grandchildren will open up this sewing box and wonder about who made these wonderful little treasures from the past.

As I age, I worry about my legacy—did I pass on what I know, what I've learned, what I've created? Will my descendants know who I was or have stories about me to share? I know I won't be known for my housecleaning or craft abilities, but maybe, just maybe, by teaching our grandchildren to cook, it will be a tradition that they will carry to the generations that come after them. And if they learn to cook, maybe, just maybe, Aunt Mae will live on too—both the legend of her abilities and the legacy of her pound cake served on a table-cloth edged in her tatting.

What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans—long, green, roma

Beets—red, chiogga, heirloom

Berries—blueberries, blackberries, strawberries

Bitter melon

Bok choy

Cabbage—green, napa/chinese, red

Carrots—orange/yellow/red

Citrus—grapefruit, orange, sour orange, juices

Corn—silver, bi-color

Cucumbers—mini seedless, pickling

Eggplant—white/purple italian, purple asian, thai

Garlic—chives

Greens-kale, collards, arugula, chard

Herbs—curly/flat parsley, mint, italian/purple/lemon/holy basil, chives, rosemary, thyme, sage, marjoram, oregano

Kohlrabi—green/purple

Leeks

Melons—cantaloupe, watermelon, crenshaw, honeydew

Mushrooms—shiitake, oyster, chanterelle

Onions—white/red, white/red scallions, sweet

Peaches

Peppers—red/green/orange/yellow sweet, habanero, jalapeno, poblano

Potatoes—white, red new

Radish—globe, daikon, french breakfast, black, icicle

Shoots, Sprouts and Microgreens

Squash—pattypan, zucchini, yellow, crookneck, acorn, butternut, delicate, kabocha, hubbard

Tomatillos

Tomatoes—grape, beefsteak, heirloom, green

Local and Fresh— Rosemary

Popular in Mediterranean cuisine, rosemary is equally tasty in both protein and vegetables dishes. A woody bush, many varieties grow beautifully in our area, providing a fragrant and beautiful addition to the garden landscape.

Roma Beans with Rosemary and Garlic

INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons olive oil

4 cups roma beans, snipped and snapped

2-3 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped

1 Tablespoon minced fresh rosemary

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 Tablespoons water

DIRECTIONS

Heat a lidded saucepan over medium heat, add oil and stir in beans. Sauté beans until they turn bright green.

Place garlic, rosemary and salt together in a pile on a cutting board and chop together until completely combined.

Stir into beans, add water, cover and cook until tender.

Serve hot or at room temperature. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Garnish with a drizzle of olive oil and freshly ground black pepper.

Serve hot with roasted potatoes and a sprinkle of crumbled feta.

Mix with sundried tomatoes, top with chopped walnuts and serve at room temperature.



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Creamy Polenta with Herbs

INGREDIENTS

3 cups water

1 cup whole milk or cream

1 cup coarse-ground polenta or cornmeal

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 Tablespoon unsalted butter

1/2 cup finely chopped herbs (try rosemary, thyme and sage—save the parsley for garnish)

2 ounces grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS

In a large saucepan, whisk together water, milk, polenta and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until very thick.

Remove from heat and stir in remaining ingredients.

Serve hot directly from the pot as a side dish OR bake in a buttered casserole for 30 minutes in a 350 degree oven.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

NOTE: Set aside 2 cups of polenta so you have enough leftovers to make Vegetable Cobbler.

Vegetable Cobbler

INGREDIENTS

1 Tablespoon each olive oil and unsalted butter

1 cup sliced leek, both white and light green

6 cups chopped summer squash

1 Tablespoon cornstarch

1/2 cup sour cream

1/4 cup finely chopped basil or other herbs

2 cups polenta

1/2 cup milk for fresh polenta OR 1 cup milk for leftover firm polenta

2 eggs

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter and 8X8 baking dish.

In a heavy lidded skillet, heat oil and butter over medium heat. Add leek and squash, stir to coat with fat, and cover pan. Sweat veggies until softened and sweet. Remove from heat.

Mix cornstarch into sour cream. Pour into squash, add herbs and stir to combine well. Pout into prepared pan and set aside.

Combine polenta, milk and eggs in a food processor or blender and puree until smooth. Pour over squash in baking dish.

Bake 45-55 minutes until puffed and golden. Allow to cool 5 minutes before serving. Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Melted Summer Veggie Sauce

<u>INGREDIENTS</u>

1/2 cup olive oil
10-12 cups veggies
1 onion
6 garlic cloves
10-12 herb stems
pinch each of salt and
red pepper flakes

DIRECTIONS

Place all ingredients in a heavy-bottomed stock pot. Stir well.

Place pot over low heat and cook everything for 2 to 3 hours until completely soft.

Allow mixture to cool. Remove and discard herb stems.

Place cooked veggies in food processor and pulse to desired sauce consistency.

Simmer over low heat before serving over polenta.

SUMMER VEGGIE COMBINATIONS

Thai eggplant Juliet tomatoes mini pattypan squash

> Zucchini Roma tomatoes Corn kernels





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Tricks and Tips

Want a quick and easy way to peel a mango? Wash and dry the fruit and hold it stem-side up. Imagine the seed inside and cut straight down on either side, creating two "halves" and a flesh-encased pit. Hold one "half" with the skin side toward your palm and a thinedged glass in the other hand. Scrape the flesh off the mango with the edge so that the fruit falls into the glass. After removing the skin, cut mango into slices. Use a paring knife to remove remaining peel around the seed and slice off pieces of mango.

Bonus:

This works with kiwis too—just cut in half the long way and scrape against glass.

Honeyed Mango Galette

INGREDIENTS

1 l. l.

1 cup each honey and water

1 lemon, thinly sliced and seeded

3 large mangoes, peeled and thinly sliced

1 cup whole wheat flour

1/2 cup corn meal

1/2 teaspoon salt

6 Tablespoons solid coconut oil

2 Tablespoons each cold water and honey

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, bring honey and water to a boil. Add sliced lemon and mangoes. Return to boil then lower heat to maintain active simmer. Cook until mango is softened to desired consistency. Remove from heat and cool completely.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Combine flour, corn meal and salt in food processor. Add coconut oil and pulse until combined. With machine running, add water and honey. Process until clumps form. Press together lightly into a flattened oval on parchment paper. Cover with a second piece of parchment and roll from the center out into a 12 inch rough circle, about 1/8 inch thickness.

Place rolled dough with parchment on baking sheet. Remove top piece of parchment. Spread 2 cups of cooked mango in a circle on the center of the dough. Fold dough edges over mango towards the center, leaving a small opening.

Bake 25-35 minutes, until edges are browned. Remove from oven and place parchment with galette onto a cooling rack. Allow to cool at least 30 minutes before cutting into wedges.

Store in airtight container at room temperature.