

Headline: 1960's Cooking 101

SubHead: *Adventures in the kitchen*

by Anna Borris

As a youngster in the 60's, many of the fruits, vegetables and herbs I now take for granted were unheard of in my Irish Catholic family. Peppers, bean sprouts, romaine, cilantro, kiwi and so many more foods which are commonplace today, never appeared on our table. We were totally unaware of most of them. Ginger (powdered) was used only in baking; garlic was used to flavour spaghetti sauce. The only other pasta dish was the macaroni and cheese occasionally served on our meatless Fridays.

Take-out food was limited to fried chicken or pizza. We didn't know about shwarma, sushi, falafel, or burritos, and couldn't find them if we did. Charlie's Diner on Wellington Street served the standard hamburgers and pub fare, and who wouldn't love the novelty of eating dinner in a bus?

If an occasion demanded a fancier location, the Miss Westgate Restaurant was the choice. Mothers' Day always meant a trip all the way to the Green Valley, dressed in our best – excited about Mickey Mouse ice cream.

Our plain, unadventurous diet didn't discourage my culinary efforts one bit. During a visit with an aunt in New Jersey, I discovered lasagna and asked for her recipe. I couldn't wait to try it out when we got home. Her recipe included one and a half pounds of ground beef. Problem was, I didn't know ground beef and hamburger meat were the same thing. So I waited until the night when my mom served roast beef for dinner. The next day I spent half an hour chopping up the leftover roast beef for my recipe, but I must say, my variation on lasagna was most delicious!

During the federal election in April of 1963, which John Diefenbaker lost to Lester B Pearson's Liberals, my mom was a volunteer and asked me to make dinner for my dad. The plan was to have mashed potatoes and fried bologna. I laboriously peeled a few potatoes, cut them up and boiled them for twenty minutes.

No one told me I had to drain off the water, so I assumed that the cooked potatoes would absorb all the liquid. To my horror, I ended up with a mushy version of potato soup. Even though the accidental invention of potato soup didn't impress my dad too much, we did end up having a very satisfying dinner of bologna sandwiches.

Another culinary adventure occurred on a boring summer's day when a friend dropped over and it seemed like a good idea to make fudge. We thought we followed the directions exactly, but no matter how long we boiled it, the consistency just wasn't right. The next best thing was to make a sculpture out of it and, miraculously, it turned into a small, brown, sticky turkey. After a few bites, we stashed it in the fridge where it stayed until my Mom threw it out.

After successfully trying the no-bake cookies and a few other recipes in the Kate Aitken cookbook, I graduated to the ever-popular, and very Canadian, Five Roses Cookbook. The detailed instructions for cooking bear were a little disconcerting, but otherwise it was easy to read. Most things turned out reasonably well, although there was one perfect lemon pie which I took out of the oven and promptly dropped on the floor in a pile of broken glass and hot lemon filling.

That was my worst catastrophe and there were many more recipes to try. My own kids always liked the butterscotch brownies. You should try those.

My culinary skills have improved considerably since those days, and the recipes I use now include many once-exotic ingredients like bean sprouts, Romaine, and cilantro. With the advent of the Internet, you can still find Five Roses recipes and it's probably true that if you can read, you can cook anything - from anywhere.