

MAC AND CHEESE

One of the first recipes to become a calling card of mine is a lascivious rendition of the tame and harmless Macaroni and cheese. A friend started referring to it as “slutty Mac and cheese” because it challenges your ability to exercise self control. It shows up with bravado at my Thanksgiving and Christmas table and always for my niece’s birthday. Trust me, you’ll want this one at your table, too.

COOKING
À LA *Lala*



SLUTTY MAC AND CHEESE À LA LALA

1 lb. tube shaped pasta
2T. butter
1/4 c. all purpose flour
2 c. whole milk
1 c. heavy cream

3 c. grated sharp, white cheddar cheese
1 1/2 c. blue cheese crumbles
1/4 t. cayenne pepper *(optional)*
1/2 t. grated nutmeg
3 T. minced chives

Preheat oven to 350.

Cook pasta until firm according to package instructions.

Butter a 13x 9x 2 in. casserole dish.

Melt the butter in a 5-6 qt. pot, then add the flour to make a roux. Cook the roux while stirring for about a minute taking care not to burn. Whisk in the milk and cream and stir until it starts to thicken, 3-4 minutes. Now, add all of the cheddar cheese and 1 cup of the blue cheese stir until melted. Add the nutmeg and cayenne if using. Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning. Now add the cooked pasta and stir to combine then put in prepared baking dish and top with remaining 1/2 cup of blue cheese.

Cook for 25-30 minutes and top with chives before serving.

TURNIP GREENS

Cooked greens of any ilk were on the long list of foods I wouldn't touch in my youth. Both of my grandmothers made old school greens: turnips, collards and mustard with a smoked ham hock thrown in for good health. I don't know when my road to Damascus moment was; maybe it was the pot likker that brought me to my senses.

Now that I grow my own greens, I can't get enough. A well-seasoned pot of old school greens with a rough chop of turnip root thrown in at the end is a humble dish that can serve as a supporting player, or the star of the show!

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TURNIP GREENS À LA LALA

8 oz. (or more) smoked pork belly or bacon cut into 1/2 in. pieces
1 medium sweet onion, sliced
2-3 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 lb. turnip greens, with root if you can find them
1 qt. chicken stock
Salt and pepper

First, if you have both greens and root, separate and wash the greens well and give a rough chop.

Then, in a big pot, saute the pork on medium high heat until it has some nice color and has rendered most of its fat. If your pork is lean, you might need to add a bit of olive or veg. oil to the pot before adding the onion and garlic which you will saute until soft, but not brown. Add the greens; you might need to do this in batches if your pot isn't big enough. Add chicken stock and let the greens start cooking down. Cook on medium heat for about an hour.

While the greens are cooking, peel and chop enough root to give you a cup or two and add to the pot for the last 15 minutes or so. Season with salt and pepper to your liking.

BUTTERMILK CORNBREAD

I like cornbread, but I'll confess that I think it's reason for existence is to be annointed by pot likker, the heavenly liquid that makes cooked greens the grand dame of the Southern table. Some like their cornbread sweet; however, I prefer mine with the snap and heat of pickled jalapeño. And Lord knows, I love a reason to buy a quart of buttermilk. Now, that's an ingredient worthy of both your cornbread and your jelly jar!

COOKING
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CORNBREAD À LA LALA

1 c. yellow cornmeal

1 c. all purpose flour

1/2 t. baking soda

1 t. baking powder

1/4 t. salt

1/2 c. melted butter, cooled

2 eggs

1 c. buttermilk

2 T. honey

1/4 c. pickled jalapeño, chopped

(optional)

Preheat oven to 400.

Lightly grease a cast iron skillet or 8" square baking dish and place in the oven to heat up.

Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl and whisk together until there are no lumps. Combine all the wet ingredients and whisk until smooth. Add the pickled jalapeños if using.

Now, take the prepared dish out of the oven and pour the batter in. Bake for 25-30 minutes and the crown has cracked. Test doneness by inserting a toothpick and if it comes out clean, you're good to go!