

K's Kitchen: Not following directions ruins soup

By Kathryn Reed

You know it's not going to be a great meal when on the stove it doesn't taste good. It's not going to get any better on the table.



Oh, the hazards of not reading directions.

I called my sister, Pam, into the kitchen because I knew something was wrong with the soup. We added salt, garlic and basil. Not much better. We let it simmer. Still, not what I would call something all that good.

Oh well, it was time to eat and this is what was being served.

In talking over what went into the vegetable chowder either Mom or Pam asked about the fat that was in the soup. After all, it's fat (and usually a lot of it) that makes a cream soup so tasty. *Uh-oh*, I thought. I used nonfat milk. That was the problem.

The recipe calls for a quart of milk, saying lowfat is OK. This meant lowfat would be the minimum level. There's a tremendous amount of difference between lowfat and nonfat milk. In the case of this soup, it went from being barely edible to (probably) really yummy.

We got through the meal that night. But a pint of half-and-half was added to the pot the next day and left to simmer a

bit. Oh my, what a difference that fat makes.

Follow the directions, add a bit more butter (I needed to to cook the veggies) and up the fat content in the milk and this should be great to add to your soup recipe collection.

The recipe is from "The New Moosewood Cookbook" by Mollie Katzen. All the comments in the recipe are from the author.

Vegetable Chowder, 8 servings

Instead of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ pint heavy cream, as in the original version, this new light one has only 1 Tbs. butter, no cream, and the option of lowfat milk. It still tastes luxurious.

Try not to shy away from the full amount of garlic. It gives the soup a rich flavor and is surprisingly smooth and subtle.

1 T butter

2 C chopped onion

6 cloves garlic, minced

2 tsp thyme

2 tsp basil

1 medium potato, diced

2 medium stalks celery, diced

2 medium carrots, diced

2 C chopped broccoli

2 C chopped cauliflower

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb mushrooms, chopped

2 C corn (frozen-defrosted is fine)

Lots of fresh black pepper

1½ C water

1 quart milk (lowfat OK), heated

Optional: minced fresh herbs (chives, basil, marjoram)

Melt the butter in a kettle or Dutch oven. Add onion, half the garlic, salt, thyme, and basil. Sauté over medium heat 5 minutes. Add potato, celery, carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower. Sauté another 5 to 8 minutes. Add mushrooms and corn, plus lots of black pepper. Sauté another 8 to 10 minutes.

Add water, cover and simmer about 15 minutes, or until everything is tender. (Makes sure the potatoes are done.)

Stir in hot milk and remaining garlic. Remove from heat until about 10 minutes before serving time, then heat gently. Serve topped with freshly minced herbs.

A glimpse into the rigors of operating a winery

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Rattling off a slew of women's names, Maggie Bush proved men do not dominate the wine industry.

She credits the profession being only a few decades old – at least in the United States – for it being a field equally open to both sexes.

Bush, with husband Paul, owns and operates Madroña winery in

Camino.



Maggie Bush

“I’ve never been in a spot where I was stopped or hit a bridge because I’m a woman,” Bush told the group from Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 10 at Harrah’s. “Women have always been involved in wine.”

As a family operation, she does a little bit of everything. She’s picked grapes, crushed them, drove a tractor, tasted wines at 9am (to which she says she’s learned to spit), figured out marketing is creating rack cards and knowing the wines are in the correct restaurant, dealt with cash flow (she was once a certified public accountant), and worked on frost protection (where 30 minutes can mean the loss of an entire crop).

Those are just some of the hats she wears.

Bush married into the business. Her in-laws, Dick and Leslie Bush, planted the first grapes in 1973, with the inaugural harvest coming five years later. The tasting room, where 70 percent of the business comes from, opened in 1980. Nine years ago they turned the reins over to the next generation.

Maggie and Paul Bush have two young daughters; one who tells people she is the owner and the other who wants nothing to do with the winery.

Madroña got its name from the large 300-year-old madrone tree in the vineyard that continues to be a pillar in the vineyard.

It's the symbol on their label.

While some wineries buy grapes from elsewhere, all of Madroña's are from land the family owns – thus being able to use the term “estate” on all bottles.

Many wineries that bottle 12,000 cases a year specialize in a handful of varietals. At Madroña they grow 27 kinds of grapes. They make what they like to drink.

At the Wednesday gathering Bush was asked what her favorite wine is. She smiled, saying that's a bit like asking which of her children she likes best.

But she did admit Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Riesling are some of her favorites.

In fact, the family will be spending a few months next year in France immersing themselves in the world of Malbec. It's their travels that keep them rejuvenated, Bush said.

Creating wines that go well with food is one of Madroña's goals. For those who want to experience that, for one night there is no need to go off the hill. Madroña's wines will be poured Nov. 12 during the Soroptimists' annual wine tasting fundraiser from 6-9:30pm at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

Are food tastes evolving or cyclical?

By Jennie Yabroff, Newsweek

A writer declares in the *New York Times* that Americans eat far too many animal products; he advises that if we do as the

French do and limit our intake of meat, we will be healthier and spend less money on food. Michael Pollan, in this month's food issue of the *Times* magazine? No, a reader with the initials A.B.C., writing to the paper—in 1856. Instead of bacon and eggs, A.B.C. suggests Americans begin their mornings with café au lait, defined as a “decoction” of coffee with boiled milk—still a popular breakfast choice, as the lines at any Starbucks will attest.

Food writing is almost always infused with nostalgia. But when it comes to food trends, we have a recurring case of cultural amnesia. The Food Network, molecular gastronomy, vegans, locavores, heritage chickens, the obesity tax: it's easy to assume that our current obsession with food is unprecedented. Surely our palates are more sophisticated, our recipes more complex, and our ideas about health and nutrition more enlightened than ever. In fact, most of our current obsessions are as old as Spanish cream. Never tasted it? It was all the rage in 1878, and, after reinterpretations as Bavarian cream, pot de crème, and crème brûlée, was featured on the Food Network's *Everyday Italian* in its current faddish, egg-free incarnation, panna cotta, last May.

The *Essential New York Times Cookbook*, a nearly 1,000-page, bright-red doorstop (ideal for pressing terrines, says the book's editor, Amanda Hesser), proves that when it comes to what we eat, there's no such thing as invention, merely reinterpretation. In compiling the book, the first compendium of *Times* recipes since Craig Claiborne's 1961 version, Hesser solicited suggestions from readers, ransacked the *Times*'s archives, and tested recipes spanning 150 years, throwing out any she wouldn't make again. She found that not only have our tastes changed less than we think they have, but food has always been a key indicator of who we think we are—and who we aspire to be.

Read the whole story

Gaining weight vacationing in New England

By Kathryn Reed

BOSTON – It started as a cycling vacation, but turned into more of a culinary tour of New England – at least that's the trip I was plotting before leaving Tahoe.

New England can certainly be a foodie experience, but that isn't what I had in mind. Beer, cheese and ice cream were on my list of things to devour. The cycling part of the holiday helped ease the guilt of eating my way through the East.

Inside the Quincy Market in Boston are a slew of places to eat and drink. Good thing. We had worked up an appetite walking the Freedom Trail. Whole lobster, clam chowder and Sam Adams – seems like a well-balanced meal.



Kae Reed eats
her way
through New
England.
Photo/Susan
Wood

I'm not sure Sue ever found a clam chowder she didn't like.

Maybe it's just psychological, but there is something special and tasty about New England clam chowder in New England.

Near this tourist hub entrepreneurs recreated the bar from the TV show "Cheers" – though this tourist spot had nothing to do with the actual program. In fact, it was built after the show went off the air. Still, we had a beer at the end of the bar where Norm usually sat.

Farther along the trail is a farmers market. Wow – what a selection. Besides fruits and vegetables, seafood was also for sale. We grabbed a few items for a picnic of sorts to be had latter.

Sam Adams tour

It's hard to believe Sam Adams is celebrating 25 years of being in the beer business. The free tour is great – and easy to get to by using the subway. Ah, functional public transit – what a concept.

Michael, our guide, was entertaining and informative.

The importance of water, barley, hops and yeast (the only ingredients in Sam Adams and most beers) were outlined for the nearly 60 people on the tour. And this was a weekday in October.

"Hops are the spice or soul of beer. They provide the bitterness and are responsible for a lot of the aroma," Michael said.

Samples of barley were passed around – one being nutty, another more mild, another with a hint of chocolate.

Water comes from the tap. It's filtered and continually tested to make sure its purity is consistent.

The yeast is responsible for alcohol content, carbonation and flavor profile.

It's this brewery where brewmasters research flavors and quality control is maintained. Sam Adams has two other breweries.

Men in waders roam around the fermentation tanks. At one point it looks like beer is flowing onto the concrete floor, which has drains in it, before water comes out of the metal contraption.

Bob, the bearded guy seen in so many Sam Adams commercials, comes out as most of the gang is headed in to the tasting room. He smiles and puts up with the tourists wanting their picture with him.

Inside, where three 7-ounce tastes are poured, Michael gives everyone a lesson on what to look for.

Visual appearance. It's the clarity of the Sam Adams Boston Lager we are looking for. You should be able to see your finger wiggle behind the glass.

Now, inhale. Smell those hops.

Take a swig. Notice the body, the carbonation level.

Then pay attention to the flavor. Michael said we should taste a roasted caramel sweetness on the tip our tongues, then citrus grapefruit, before a bitter, dry finish on the way back of our tongues.

I can't say either Sue or I would have described it like that, but we were ready for seconds.

The other beers being poured that day were Sam Adams Octoberfest and Sam Adams Cream Stout. The latter is only available on draft at the brewery. The bottled variety is pasteurized, while the draft isn't.

Having the stout proved not all dark beers are alike. This was thick and delicious.

Sugarhouse

I kept saying I wanted to know how maple syrup is made. People laughed. Just tap a maple tree. Really? It's that simple?

For the most part, yes. Though, that's like saying wine is made just by crushing grapes.

What I didn't know until I went to a sugarhouse – that's what they call the places where syrup is made – is there are four grades of syrup – Fancy Grade, Grade A Medium, Grade A Dark and Grade B. Grade B was our favorite – the darkest, and probably the sweetest.

"The trees respond to the warm temperature, which causes the darkness of the syrup," explained Lara, who was giving lessons and samples of syrup and cheese at the Sugarbush Farm in Woodstock, Vt.

I think of syrup for pancakes and French toast. Vermonters see it as a staple.

"We put it in coffee around here," Lara said. She also said syrup is used in marinades for seafood, used in baked beans, pumpkin pie and mixed in yogurt.

We got in on the end of a tour of the plant (which is rustic and in a barn) that owner Jeff Luce was giving. He talked about the trees needing to be 35- to 40-years-old before they are tapped.

It takes 6,000 tapped maple trees to make 40 gallons of sap, which is turned into 1 gallon of syrup. No wonder pure Vermont maple syrup is expensive and called liquid gold.

On this 550-acre working farm is a path through the colorful maple trees that shows how the trees are tapped with a device that is about a quarter inch in diameter and goes 2 inches into the tree. Only 7 percent of sap is taken from a tree.

A 16-quart sap bucket catches the liquid. It's quite an operation. Sap is perishable until its boiled.

And the season is only six weeks, in spring, usually with snow on the ground to start with.

Next step is the boiling process.

"The sap enters the pan at between 2 and 4 percent sugar and boils away enough water so it is reduced to liquid that is 7 percent sugar," according to Sugarbush Farm. Maple syrup is syrup at 219 degrees. It is filtered and bottled to be sold right away, or stored in 30-gallon drums.

Vermont cheese

At the Sugarbush Farm they also make cheese. The most interesting thing was learning about the age of cheddar.

Lara told us that cheese aged for a year is what supermarkets call aged – "no matter what is on the label. And here that is young."

For the 8-year-old cheddar she lets it dissolve on her tongue, not even needing to chew it.

On this farm they make 110 tons of cheese a year in 15 flavors.

Nearby (everything is close in Vermont) is a store with just Cabot cheese samples. Being the big guy in the state, it reminded me a bit of tasting wine at Mondavi in the Napa Valley – not impressed.

Still, it is fun to venture beyond the everyday cheeses I seem to get into a rut eating.

The best sample of cheeses was at the Woodstock Inn. Chef Jason Lawless prepared an impressive display of all Vermont cheeses to be sampled one afternoon by guests of the inn. The

inn on random days does special free events for people staying the night.

Cheeses made from cow, sheep and goat milk were there for the taking. Some were aged for a few weeks, while Cabot's private stock is aged up to 18 months. Some were hard, some soft.

A Commersdale from Bonnieview Farm was super tasty. This semi-hard cheese took at second place in 2008 from the American Cheese Society.

Ben & Jerry's

Finally, we arrive at the other reason there are so many cows in Vermont – Ben & Jerry's. Five hundred family farms supply the ice cream company with milk.

At this plant in Waterbury 250,000 pints are made each day. The plant in Henderson, Nev., supplies the West Coast.

I had no idea between 55 and 65 flavors are sold at once. No grocery store I've been to has that many for sale. Cherry Garcia is the No. 1 seller, with Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough No. 2.

As luck would have it, my favorite, Mint Chocolate Chunk, was the sample of the day. The only disappointment was the tiny little cup it's served in. I think they could have spared a full cone. But I suppose that would cut down on sales.

I bought a scoop of Bonnaroo Buzz – a combo of coffee and malt ice creams, with whisky caramel swirls and English toffee pieces. Yummy, but incredibly sweet.

Sue wanted to bond with her fellow Vermonter and snowboarding Olympian from Sierra-at-Tahoe so she had a scoop of Hannah Teter's Maple Blondie. Good, but not good enough to get Sue to trade in skis for a snowboard.

More food stuff

Other places worth checking out on a trip to New England:

- Green Mountain Coffee in Waterbury, Vt.;
- Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Waterbury, Vt.;
- Charlotte Village Winery, tasting room in Quechee and Charlotte, Vt.
- Red Rooster restaurant, inside Woodstock Inn, Woodstock, Vt.

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Photos/Kathryn Reed

Ernie's secret ingredient – 30 years of good employees

By Kathryn Reed

Plates of food barely leave the cook's hands before a waitress picks them up. Steam rises from the late morning breakfast order. Hot coffee is being poured to a crowd that doesn't care it's almost noon. Money is exchanged.

The waitress – Betsy Sommerfeldt; the coffee pourer – Judy Bruso; and the cashier – Paul Bruso are a formidable trio. Sommerfeldt has worked for Paul Bruso almost since the day he bought Ernie's Coffee Shop 30 years ago. The Brusos have been married for the last 20 years.



Betsy
Sommerfeldt
has been
taking order
at Ernie's for
nearly 30
years.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Longevity in the restaurant business is a rarity. Longevity in Tahoe seems even more rare. A packed house in a recession is impressive.

Drive by the South Lake Tahoe eatery that serves breakfast and lunch seven days a week from 6am-2pm and the parking lot off Emerald Bay Road is nearly always full.

Bruso credits his staff of 20 full-time workers for the success of Ernie's. (Students fill in on a part-time basis during the busy summer season.)

"Good employees create good service, create good food, create a good environment," Bruso said. "If you have a great staff, you are going to be OK. We treat people right and they treat us right."

Sommerfeldt has had job offers through the years, but has never seriously considered turning in her apron for another line of work.

She, like the other waitresses, has locals and tourists who come in specifically requesting to be seated in her section.

“It’s kind of like a Cheers atmosphere where everyone knows your name,” Sommerfeldt said.

Being a people person makes this line of work ideal for the 51-year-old. She says the interaction with customers is the best part of the job.

Sommerfeldt also has complimentary things to say about the Brusos. She likes that they are hands-on owners. She says their personalities balance each other out – with Paul being a type-A personality and Judy bringing a more calming influence.

The pay is good; hours are flexible – making for employees to be able to enjoy the Tahoe lifestyle. Tips are pooled, so co-workers make sure everyone is pulling their weight. Paid vacation and profit sharing are part of the deal.

Even though the Brusos seem to live at Ernie’s, they have plenty of faith in the staff to be able to get away on a regular basis – which could be spending four weeks walking 500 miles across Spain or a month’s vacation on the East Coast.

Ingredients of success

Besides the staff, Bruso credits being involved in the community as part of his success story.

“You need to be involved and concerned about what goes on in the community,” Bruso said. “We believe in supporting locals, the kids, the schools. That’s what makes a community.”

Burger nights are one of the most popular fundraisers. Of the approximately 120 Ernie’s has hosted for various groups, more than \$300,000 has been raised.

When it comes to the food, changes are continually made.

“We rarely take anything off. We add things based on customer requests or ideas from employees,” Bruso explained.

Cassie Chandler, a trainer at Push Fitness, suggested meals infused with more protein. Some of her recipes have been incorporated into the daily mix. (See recipe below.)

“We don’t like to tell people what to eat, but we like to have things available no matter what they want to eat,” Bruso explained.

The Brusos have been eating a vegan diet for about nine months. But that doesn’t mean meat, eggs and cheese are about to disappear. It just means more vegan options for diners.

Eve Hall doesn’t change her order – it’s always eggs over easy, hash browns and sausage.

“It’s always consistently good,” the longtime South Tahoe resident said of the food at Ernie’s.

For Dave Anderson, he used to get the Mountain Man breakfast (6 link sausages or 6 slices of bacon or 4 country sausage patties or a slab o’ham, with 3 eggs, hash browns or home fries, side of biscuit and country gravy). Now he’s on a gluten free diet. But Ernie’s can accommodate him so he’s still a regular.

Times change

One of the biggest changes occurred seven years ago when the Brusos went from renting the building across the street to having a larger building constructed for Ernie’s that they (and the bank) own.

Sommerfeldt said it was an adjustment to get used to the bigger layout and it being noisier, but says overall it is much better.

She said one of the other things to get used to was going to computers.

“I can’t believe we added checks by hand all those years,”

Sommerfeldt said.

The Brusos don't intend to go anywhere anytime soon. Paul Bruso said they might be around for the 40th- and 50th-year celebrations as well.

Ernie's first opened in 1968. It had a few owners until the 30-year-old Bruso bought it in 1980.

"I like the name Ernie's better than calling Paul's," he said.

To celebrate their 30th anniversary, the entire menu will be half price Nov. 8-12. It's their way of saying thank you to the locals who keep them afloat in the off-season.

Ernie's Cassie Chandler-inspired Protein Pancakes

3 egg whites

1 T yogurt

1 T crushed pineapple

1 scoop vanilla protein powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ C oatmeal

1 tsp coconut extract

1 T applesauce

Mix ingredients in blender until smooth.

Cook in pan with unrefined coconut oil.

Topping choices – agave, peanut butter, applesauce.

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Fresh produce fills school lunches in Washoe County

By Jackie Green, Reno Gazette-Journal

Each week, select Washoe County elementary schools receive a bounty of fresh produce, including apricots, grapes, squash and grapefruit, cut into snack-sized servings.

What started in 2002 as a way for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to boost produce consumption and help farmers has become a tool for the nation's schools to fight obesity and raise healthier students. The goal of the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program in Washoe County is to introduce children to a wider variety of fresh foods than they might ordinarily get the chance to try.

The program, first introduced in the district three years ago, this year has expanded to 21 elementary schools. The district's Nutrition Services department works with the University of Nevada Reno Cooperative Extension to provide nutritional and supplementary information about each week's snacks for classroom discussions.

Read the whole story

States, feds pour money into

wineries

By Bloomberg Businessweek

Dick Seibert has lost money every year since he opened Knob Hall Winery in rural Maryland in 2006. Now he's looking for the financing needed to double his vines to 60 acres by year end.



"We're not making money yet, although we're not that far away," says Seibert, 58.

Seibert's optimism is buoyed by the silent partner he shares with many young wineries: his state government.

He has received about \$8,000 in aid from the state, including \$1.50 of the \$3.50 cost of each of the 4,000 vines he planted in his first two years. Five other vineyard owners in Maryland – where the number of wineries has doubled to almost 50 since 2005 – are getting a total of \$75,000 in state grants this year to expand.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: A hot drink on a cold day

By Kathryn Reed

Sometimes the standard hot chocolate just isn't enough to warm me up. I need a little more, um, medicinal touch to truly warm the insides.



I am not one to mix drinks. I don't understand proportions – or least how to balance them to make something drinkable. That's why Sue is the mixologist in the household.

One day, we think it was two winters ago, I said I was tired of the same old "winter" drinks and wanted something new. That's how the Suz-a-Hottie (a take off on a hot toddy) came about.

"I just thought of the flavors and was convinced they would blend well," Sue said of how created the drink.

With the weather changing and last month being so blustery, I asked her to make one of those famous drinks. I had never been in the kitchen while this had happened before.

Apparently the bartender starts the production by eating a marshmallow or two as a "reward," as she calls it.

A few things are great about this drink – it's hot, I've never had it at a bar, and it also satisfies a sweet craving – especially if marshmallows are involved.

We're pretty sure there is zero nutritional value to it. And we certainly don't recommend driving or operating any heavy equipment after drinking any alcoholic beverage. This is something to drink while sitting in the hot tub, writing stories or watching the Dolphins lose.

Suz-a-Hottie



Water

Hot cocoa

Peppermint Schnapps

Kahlua or Baileys

Cream de menthe

Fill mug $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water. Microwave until hot. Stir in hot cocoa. Pour in shot of $\frac{1}{2}$ Schnapps, $\frac{1}{2}$ either Kahlua or Baileys. Add dash of cream de menthe. Stir. Drink.

Late harvest brings good flavor, El Dorado winemakers say

Harvest is wrapping up in most of El Dorado County's vineyards, while crush pads and cellars continue to buzz with activity as winery owners recall one of the latest – and shortest – harvests in 25 years.

Winemakers report that while crop yields are smaller than usual, the quality is excellent.

"We're excited to see great intensity of color, flavor and aroma in wine being pressed throughout the county," Beth Jones, owner of Lava Cap Winery and president of the 30-member El Dorado Winery Association, said in a statement. "This year's vintage is showing well-developed flavors at lower sugar and higher acid levels than we've seen in recent years."



A cellar assistant sorts grapes at Sierra Vista.

Photo/Sierra Vista Winery

While some El Dorado wineries have completed harvest, several are still picking grapes due to varied elevations and exposures in their Sierra Foothill vineyards.

Lava Cap Winery was harvesting some varietals four weeks later than normal.

Strange weather started in spring and has continued until now. A cool growing season meant harvest began two to three weeks later than normal.

Heat spikes in late September and October caused many varieties to come in at once, shortening the harvest season for many.

"We used a lot of different farming techniques with this vintage, anticipating a late harvest. This growing season has

yielded grapes with near-perfect flavor profiles, so we are very excited. Given the late harvest and lower nighttime temperatures, we're controlling quality by equipping most of our tanks with heaters to better manage the fermentation and soak processes," Stefan Tscheppe, head winemaker at Perry Creek Winery, said.

Incredible food makes cycling tour worth the ride

By Kathryn Reed

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS, Vt. – *A cycling vacation?* Yes.

Really? Yes.

What else is involved? Food, incredible accommodations, being able to go at your own pace, meeting new people, returning to New England for the first time since college, and seeing Sue's hometown.



Dinner is served family style at the October Country Inn.
Photos/Kathryn

Reed

OK, I'm in.

As wonderful as the Bike Vermont tour was, I'm just not a big cyclist. Still, I highly recommend this outfit. And although I may one day go on another bike tour, I definitely know I'd like to return to the October Country Inn.

This Vermont bed and breakfast run by Edie and Chuck Janisse is that rare blend of personal service in a relaxed atmosphere, with food I want the recipes for.

Several of us asked for the Maple Scone recipe. We were all denied. None of us could pinpoint the ingredient, beyond the pure Vermont maple syrup, that made them so outrageously good. We were told seldom is the same thing served on back-to-back days, but I think there could have been a riot if they didn't emerge from the kitchen the second morning.

So much food appeared for the morning and evening meals that it was a good thing cycling was involved. As a vegetarian they prepared a tofu dish each night as my protein. Although I knew I needed it for the next day's ride, there was enough food on the table to eat that I did not need the tofu.

The eggplant Parmesan that was served on night No. 2 was fabulous. I'm not usually a big fan of eggplant, but I had seconds of this dish. And it is a recipe the Janisses would share and didn't mind having published. The recipe is going to fill several 9 x 13 pans.

October Country Inn's Eggplant Parmesan

Tomato sauce ingredients:

9 T olive oil

3 C onions, finely chopped

3 T garlic, finely chopped

1 # 10 can of Italian plumb tomatoes, seeded, and coarsely chopped, but not drained

18 oz. tomato paste

3 T dried oregano, crumbled

3 tsp dried basil, crumbled

3 bay leaves

2 T sugar

4 tsp salt

Black pepper, freshly ground

In a 3-4 quart saucepan, heat the olive oil and cook onions over moderate heat, stirring frequently for 7-8 minutes.

When onions are soft and transparent, but not brown, add the garlic and cook for another 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly.

Stir in the tomatoes, and the strained liquid, tomato paste, oregano, basil, bay leaves, sugar, salt, and few grindings of black pepper.

Bring to a boil, turn the heat low and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for about 1 hour

When finished, the sauce should be thick and fairly smooth.

Remove the bay leaves, taste and season with salt and black pepper.

Eggplant Parmesan ingredients:

3 or 4 medium eggplants (quarter each eggplant with lengthwise cuts just through the skin, cut crosswise into 3/8-inch thick slices)

Mozzarella and cheddar cheese, grated

Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Lay eggplant slices on parchment lined baking sheets. Lightly brush olive oil, salt and pepper on both sides of slices. Bake without turning until dark brown, 45 minutes to an hour.

In a 9 x 13 Pyrex casserole dish, put a think layer of tomato sauce on the bottom. Layer the roasted eggplant in overlapping row. Spread a generous layer of mozzarella cheese and about half that amount of cheddar cheese on top of the eggplant, and over with a liberal coating of tomato sauce.

Repeat for another layer.

Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese on top. Bake at 375 degrees for 35-60 minutes.

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