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The Queen of Comfort Food

By Susie Iventosch

After alluding to this dish in my last column, it seemed fitting to publish a recipe for the queen of comfort foods—chicken pot pie. (My king is macaroni and cheese!) So, even though this dish is not low-cal, nor particularly fancy, it is just one of those delicious comfy foods that satisfies any appetite on cold, crisp days. It can always be made ahead, or frozen, too, for busy families.

This recipe calls for browning the roux, to make the sauce nice and rich, then adding a large splash of wine to enhance the flavor. For the veggies, if possible, steam them in a French steamer just to al dente, which keeps them from getting too well done. (Or you could roast them in a 400° oven until just tender.)

After that, your taste buds are your palette (or your palate!) and you can add or subtract veggies—peas, beans, broccoli or even cauliflower—to add your own touch from the winter garden assortment. or substitute chicken for turkey or even beef. If you do use beef, then perhaps you'd like to use beef broth in lieu of the chicken broth. Though I've not made a vegetarian pot pie, I should think it would be a good alternative for non-meat eaters. In this case, save the broth from steaming the vegetables to use in your gravy.

Since this pot pie recipe calls for pearl onions, it reminded me of my sister's pickled pearl onions, which are a terrific condiment for Thanksgiving dinner, make a fun hostess gift to take to holiday parties, and are really yummy in martinis ... so I'm told.

Getting back to the 3Bs ren-

devous from our last issue, another reader emailed requesting ideas for finger foods that would be good for bridge, Bunco or book clubs, because her groups do not have a full meal at their gatherings, just snacks. There are many such recipes in my cookbook (Tax Bites & Tasty Morsels) including: Nutty Stuffed Mushrooms, Shrimp'cango, Sultry Spiced Nuts, Blue Cheese-Olive Toasts and Baked Feta with Roasted Peppers and Greek Olives. Also, it is easy to make appetizer sizes of nearly any dish you enjoy. You just need to think "small" and use fancy toothpicks, especially if you're turning pages, rolling dice or dealing cards!

For example you can make bite-sized enchiladas, mini lamb burgers (or meatballs) with a sliver of mango or dash of chutney, grilled marinated artichoke hearts, or toothpick skewers of mini horse-radish-roasted potatoes with small bites of grilled tri-tip and a sliver of red onion. You could prepare teazed sandwiches with a variety of fillings—smoked salmon with dill and capers, or artichoke hearts, sundried tomatoes and goat cheese, etc. on an assortment of breads. Or you might serve mini servings of homemade soup in demi-tasse cups, sans spoon! Recently, at a B&B where we stayed, they served seedless grapes rolled in a blue cheese-cream cheese mixture and then in finely chopped pecans. Delicious!

Next time, we will feature "small dish" recipes for the 3Bs, but for now, back to the Queen of Comfort ...

Susie Iventosch is the author of *Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels*, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com.



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Chilly Weather Chicken Pot Pie

Makes one 9-10 inch pie or about 6-8 smaller individual ramekins

Ingredients

- 1 recipe basic pastry for 9-inch shell (recipe below)
- Filling**
- 6 tablespoons of butter
- 6 tablespoons of flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup of heavy cream
- ½ cup white wine
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ½-1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 4 cups of cubed cooked chicken breast
- 24 small pearl onions, cooked and skins removed (approximately ½ of a 10-oz. bag, can be red, yellow or white)
- ¾ cup carrots, cut into large dice and cooked
- ¾ cup celery, cut into large dice and cooked
- ¾ cup potatoes, cut into large dice and cooked (I use Peruvian purple potatoes for fun)



Directions

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Melt the butter in a saucepan, stir in the flour, poultry seasoning, salt and pepper and cook over medium heat (keep stirring), for 2 to 3 minutes or until browned. Slowly whisk in the broth, cream, and wine. Continue to cook for 5 minutes, until thickened and smooth. Mix chicken and veggies in a large bowl then pour gravy mixture over and stir well. Spoon mixture into a well-greased deep-pie dish or casserole. Place the prepared pie crust over the top, allowing enough to hang over the edges to be crimped. Cut vents in the crust to allow the steam to escape. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until the crust is nicely browned.

Pie Crust

Ingredients

- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cubes unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small cubes
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 1/4-1/2 cup ice water

Directions

Mix flour and salt in a large bowl. With a pastry cutter, or fingers, crumble butter into flour until well integrated. Sprinkle cider vinegar over mixture and stir in well with a fork. Add ice-cold water, a little at a time and blend with fork until dough is moist enough to roll into a ball, but not too wet. Roll into one large ball for the pie crust and a smaller ball to use for patching your crust, or cinnamon roll ups for snacking!

These recipes are available on our web site. Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Kate's Pickled Pearl Onions

Makes approximately 2 pints

Ingredients

- Two 10-ounce bags of pearl onions (white, brown or red—a combination is colorful)
- 2 cups water
- 1 to 2 teaspoons sea salt (your choice, depending on desired saltiness)
- 2 tablespoon sugar
- 1 1/2 cups white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon pickling spice (available at your local grocers in the spice section)

Directions

Place onions in pot of boiling water and cook for approximately two to three minutes. Remove from heat, drain and rinse with cold water immediately. When cool, remove skins with a small paring knife. Start by slicing off root end and carefully peeling back skin. Save as much of the onion as possible. Place onions in sterilized jars. (For this recipe you should need about four half-pint jars, or 2 pint jars.) In a small pot, combine vinegar, sugar, salt and spices and bring to a boil. Stir until sugar and salt are dissolved. Remove from heat and pour liquid over onions in jars, leaving 1/2-inch of space at the top. To seal jars, cover closed jars with water and place in boiling water bath for several minutes. Follow manufacturer's directions for sealing jars properly.



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