

The art of making pie...

I like pie. Pie has to be one of my favorite dessert types. There can be so many varieties. Each pie can create an explosion of taste. It has been a while since I made my very first pie. That pie was a total artistic creation. From finding the ingredients to the actual serving, it was an adventure. Other pies that came after that were less of an adventure, but the ability to make a very good pie is almost an art. Over the last 30+ years I've made almost every kind of pie imaginable, ok not that many, only the pies I imagined I would like. I guess it is time to make another pie...

My first pie was my own (and lost) recipe for caramel apple pie. I was in college and had a bunch of apples that needed to be used (sharing healthy food in college didn't go over well), but little else. I was low on funds, so I started to beg, borrow and steal (ok, I just took more than my share of sugar packets from the lunch room) my supplies. I actually had a pie pan or two (mom eventually got them back...). I was able to find somebody with flour. Salt was easily picked up with the sugar (oops), And slowly the makings of an apple pie were gathered. I'm not sure what came over me to add the caramel candy to the filling. It could have been that I didn't think there was enough sugar or cinnamon. I could have been that they were sitting there and I liked the sound of caramel apples. I unwrapped the bag and threw them in. Two pies made, from the absolute meaning of the word scratch. After baking and limited cooling, a group of us scooped up our first servings (No pie servers to be found anywhere, but we did find an old Ice Cream spade – think little shovel). It was a hit. The second pie didn't even last the night (funny how hungry college kids get for sweets, or pizza). My first foray in to pie making was a success.

As of right now, I have another hurdle to overcome when I make my next pie. No oven.. No, I still haven't replaced it since

that fateful evening when it didn't turn off. Strange how stove makers and the sellers can't tell me how their ovens will fail if the computer breaks down. I won't buy one until I know that. Anyway, I've decide my next pie adventure will be in a dutch oven. Cast Iron oven over a hot fire and coals. Should be interesting. I've never done it, but I have had the results. I can't wait. Now to decide what kind of pie...

And to think this whole train of thought started with a piece of store bought thaw and serve pie. Did I mention I like pie.
□

Jack of all trades...

master of ???.

As a homeowner, I come across many things that I need to do. Some of them I do well, some of them I put off until they absolutely need to be done. And of course some things I just ignore. □

Not having water for my morning shower or tooth brushing session isn't something I can ignore. It also isn't something I can put off. It is one of those things I just have to do.

I live in the middle of nowhere, somewhere in the NW corner of Ohio. And because of where I am, I have a well. No city water out here, so if there is no water running, it is something I will need to deal with.

In my 20+ years of living here, I've had my share of water problems. Well pump went bad, storage tank leaked, water heater leaked, pressure gage/switch failed. And finally the

circuit breaker went bad. I'm just wondering what will happen next.

The latest seemed to be bad pressure switch. I had electricity and I could manually trigger the switch. It just didn't want to come on when the tank pressure got low.

I've replaced one of these before, so I knew what needed to be done. Drain all the water and find the right tools. Take off the switch and get a new one to match it. The nearest hardware stores did not have the part I needed, so it was something that would have to be ordered. Hmm, how long would I be without water??? Since I knew I could turn it on, I decided to order the part and put the old one back on until the replacement arrived.

Before putting the old part back, I decided to clean it up and hope that it might kick in for a while. I was lucky today. So far it is working as it should. I will still have a new part if it decides to go on me soon, at least I will when it gets here.

Finally cleaned up another problem.

I've been complaining that my laptop is broken for some time now, but I never used that opportunity to fix my Power Box. I've had stuff to do on it for a couple of years now, but it just wouldn't boot up properly after I installed a new hard drive. I thought I knew what the problem was, but I never undertook the job of actually looking at it. So today I did.

Yes, the problem was exactly what I thought it was. It was

trying to boot from the old disk drive. Unfortunately, this drive no longer had any operating system on it. It was still formatted as a bootable drive, but there was nothing to boot to. Quick spin through the bios, and that drive is no longer on the boot list. YEAH.

Now I just have to find all of the stuff I needed to do and finish it up. Yes, there may be a Godspell video in there somewhere. I guess I'll have to stop blogging after my software updates from more than 1 year of inactivity.

More work for me. I'm glad I took a break from theater for a while... ☐

I actually went out to fix the mailbox

Sadly it is only temporary. Continued from a previous post...

The mailbox I have it a hollow plastic post attached to a piece of steel angle iron driven into the ground. Usually, this time of year, I just have to remove the plastic post and re-drive the angle iron. Packing the area with stone is always helpful. The freeze and thaw cycles, plus the push from the snow plows just seem to loosen up the area and the mailbox. Always a spring chore, but usually one that doesn't take too long.

Not this year. The angle iron was bent at about a 40 degree angle. The plastic post was split 1/4 of the way up. So I had to get a new post. I bought the same kind, so that I could keep my current mailbox. And then I found out the bad news. The angle iron was replaced with a wooden stake. The bolt used

to attach it was replace with 4 wood screws. The tools needed list on the outside of the box did not include the drill needed to start the holes for the wood screws or the necessity of both phillips and flat head screw drivers. Hmmm. I have other things to do today, so some of this would have to wait.

I drove the wooden stake in the ground (note self- get a bigger post) and then I attached the old post and mail box with a couple of the wood screws. I'll be back out there the next nice day to drive in a new wood post (treated lumber maybe) and the new mailbox holding plastic post.

Didn't I just have a discussion with friends on buying things that didn't contain the proper tool list? Oh well it should hold up through Monday's mail.

Fixing the mailbox

It seems like every winter I need to fix the mailbox. The force of the plowed snow seems to bend it backwards and loosen the very stone it is set in. I realize that I could have gotten one that needed a 4x4 post to set it up, but I settled for one that allowed a spike to be driven into the ground. For a couple of years it worked too. But after it got pushed back during one heavy snow fall, it was never the same.

I guess I should see if there are any new improvements to the mailbox selection. I'm not really set on getting one that needs a big post. I've seen too many of those not move and have the whole mailbox destroyed by the plowed snow. Hmm... This year, I think I will just get a fencepost and drive it into the ground next to my old box. I can then attach my mailbox to this new post. It may not last forever, but maybe it will last until next winter. I guess I really need to wait until the

ground is completely thawed out don't I. That is good news, one less thing I have to worry about today. ☐

I'm a fan of steam packets.

I'm not sure if that is the name, but it is the name I give to this type of cooking. It is ideal for cooking for 1 and could be used to cook a variety of food for those fussy eaters. I'm not sure why I never used this much when my kids were young. I only remember doing it for fish. This is food wrapped in foil that gives you all you need for 1 meal. I guess you could put two meals in one packet, but much more than that makes it hard to turn.

Steam packet one

1 or 2 Turkey sausage (brat size) – Too much fat from a regular sausage for this.

1 small onion diced

1 small-medium potato diced

1 medium carrot sliced or diced

Salt/Pepper

2 tablespoons of your favorite salsa

wrap all ingredients in foil – Crimp edges well so it doesn't leak too much.

cook in Frying pan over medium heat or on a grill at medium heat or in the oven at 325 degrees (on a cookie sheet). Cook for about 30 minutes. When using Grill or frying pan flip over at 15-20 minutes. Slice open packet, if sausage is not done just cook until it is.

More to come (or look back at the fish recipe) ☐

More crockpot cooking

The original recipe I had called for 4 boneless chicken breasts, 1 bag frozen mixed vegetables, and 3/4 cup chicken broth, salt and pepper to taste. This could be served with potatoes or noodles. Always quick, easy and tasty, but way too much for one person. So I cut this down to try to serve 1.

I have a small crock pot to use for dip and other small recipes, so I set out to use this. I had 1 boneless chicken breast, enough vegetables for 1, chicken broth to just cover the chicken breast (just like in the big crock pot) and some red pepper flakes instead of salt and pepper. Cooked this for 3 hours on high, and served with mashed potatoes... I thought it was good. Not bad for a cool fall evening.

And this was a little healthier than my breakfast food cravings of just a little while ago. How often should one eat sausage gravy? ☐

Sandwich for Wednesday

Tomorrow I will be using some leftover beef roast to be the base of my dinner sandwich. I have more salad fixings so that works out too.

Thin sliced beef, beef broth, onions, peppers. Saute onions and peppers when tender add broth and beef heat through. Drain, serve with tortillas, shredded cheese and salsa. Salad or something else to go with this and I'm all set. Or

I could use some of the rolls from today and serve it au jus, skipping the salsa. That of will depend on how I feel.

I will be making a trip to Fort Wayne Thrusday and Friday, so I may not have homemade sandwiches for those days. It all depends on when I get home. Thursday night is also play rehearsal so that limits the amount of time I can spend in the kitchen. There are quicker things to put together, and of course the easy way out – hitting some fast food place.

I'm having fun putting together some quick 'meals' and sharing them, I hope you can try one or two on your own. I'm also open to any suggestions.

Sandwich for today...

I thought I could just add a comment about my sandwiches this week, but why waste a good blog post. ☐

I'm in the mood for something different today, so today's sandwich has no meat. I picked up some Portabella Mushrooms (the big ones), a sweet onion, tomatoes, and Munster cheese. For bread I picked up some hard rolls.

To start I sautéed the onion. I then put these off to the side while cooking the mushrooms. The mushroom was brushed on both sides with olive oil. I started cooking with the gill side down for a couple of minutes. I'm just heating through on this side. I then flip the mushroom, fill with onions and top with a slice of munster cheese. At this point I brush the roll with olive oil and brown the insides. When done, slid the mushroom between the two slices of the roll. Salt and or pepper can be added to the gill side of the mushroom before adding the onions.

A slice of tomato made a nice addition to the sandwich.

This goes very nicely with a spinach salad.

That started with some baby spinach, shredded carrots, diced onion, slivered almonds, thin sliced radishes and mandarin orange segments. I'm cooking for one today, so I don't have measurements for this. I just made enough for me. A ginger dressing completed the salad.

So what's for dinner?

Looking for Meatloaf

I haven't made a meatloaf in sometime and since I'm the only one at home, I can't see myself making one in the near future. Small meatloafs just don't taste the same as one of at least 1 to 2 pounds.

Anyway when I get the urge for meatloaf, I've been trying it at different restaurants. So far, I haven't found one I really like. The taste or texture just doesn't match what I think meatloaf should be. The best I've had so far is from the Ten-Pin Tap in Ridgeville Corners, OH. A little bar, that was the major place to go for lunch before we switched buildings. Now, I'm not sure where to find it.

There are many reasons for this. #1- Most places don't serve meatloaf. It is too plain for most restaurants. #2- I don't think they drain the grease. Just shouldn't be swimming in it. #3 - I'm wondering if they use the worst kind of ground beef. Just doesn't cut it sometimes. #4- Do they ever add any spice? Bland, bland, bland or maybe swimming in Ketchup..

Anyone else on the lookout for good meatloaf? Have you found

any? Where?