

It is Apple Butter Time

Or should I say it was?

Last Sunday, two of my daughters, 1 son-in-law, and a few friends went to the Apple Butter Festival in Grand Rapids Ohio. It was a wonderful fall day, sunny, warm and the smell of gun powder filled the air.

Gunpowder? Yep, gunpowder. Part of the Apple Butter Festival are various re-enactments. Solders from the Revolution were parading in the street. Civil War solders were shooting across the river. Every so often a Tank would fire off a round. Yes, there was the smell of gunpowder. I was talking to one of the Civil War solders, who kept in character the whole time, about his life and the things he did on a day to day basis. Very interesting stuff. As I was leaving I commented how well he stayed 'in character'. He kept in character for that too, but I had to remind him that a civil war soldier would not have had a tongue stud. Oops, forgot to remove that one. Hee, Hee!!

Then there was the food. Good food. Brats, buffalo, apple dumplings. I didn't get to sample all of it. I was looking for one place that last year sold some of the best salsa I've tasted. I couldn't find them. The spot they were in last year was occupied by a person selling stuffed animals. Oh well.

My youngest and I did lose my oldest and her group. We were going to communicate by cell phone, but only one of our phones got decent reception in the town. Stick with the carrier that gives better service where you live. I don't think the "Can you hear me now" guy was ever in this town.

I imagine a good time was had by all.

More Recipes

I sent some recipes to my sister and since I had to type them into the computer anyway, I will post them on my blog. The first two are great for Thanksgiving, and the last one is a yummy version of lasagna that is great for moms to make because you can do the preparation while the kids are napping or eating lunch, and then it will cook all day in the crock pot. Also, you make it with cottage cheese instead of ricotta cheese which can be expensive. Enjoy!

Pearl Onions in Cream Sauce

1 – 10 oz pkg red or white pearl onions, peeled according to package directions

3 TBL butter or margarine

3 TBL flour

1 1/2 cups milk, heated almost to boiling point

2 TBL cream sherry (optional)

1 drop tabasco sauce

dash ground nutmeg

white pepper and salt to taste

chopped parsley for garnish

To cook pearl onions, drop peeled onions into boiling water. Cook for 10 mins. and drain. To make cream sauce, melt butter or margarine over medium-high heat. When melted, add flour, stirring constantly with wire whisk, until all butter is absorbed. Turn heat to low and add milk slowly (make sure to continue stirring with the wire whisk). Add sherry, tabasco sauce, nutmeg, pepper and salt. Fold-in cooked onions and mix well. Before serving, garnish with parsley. Variations: When folding cooked pearl onions into cream sauce, add 3/4 cup cooked green peas. Makes 4-6 side dish servings.

Sweet Potatoes With Blue Cheese and Pecans

4 lbs sweet potatoes

3 TBL olive oil

6 sprigs thyme or 1/2 tsp dried

1 cup pecans
1 cup blue cheese

Combine sweet potatoes and oil in a roasting pan, sprinkle with thyme. Roast for 30-45 min at 425 or until tender. Transfer the sweet potatoes to a serving bowl. Gently toss with pecans and cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with remaining thyme. Serves 6.

Crock Pot Lasagna

1 lb lean ground beef
1 onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, smashed
1 – 28 oz can tomato sauce
1 – 6 oz can of tomato paste
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp salt (approx.)
12 oz uncooked lasagna noodles
12 oz cottage cheese
1 cup parmesan cheese (approx.)
16 oz shredded mozzarella cheese

In a skillet, cook ground beef, onion and garlic until beef is browned. Add tomato sauce, tomato paste, oregano and salt. When sauce is thoroughly warmed, spoon a layer of the meat sauce into the bottom of the crock pot. Add a double layer of uncooked lasagna noodles, breaking to fit if necessary. Top with a layer of each of the cheeses. Repeat process until sauce, noodles, and cheeses are gone. Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hrs. NOTE: My lasagna began to overcook a little before 4 hrs in the crock pot!

How Hot Is TOO HOT?

I was working on my second post about my weekend at the farms, but my attention was diverted by the following news story. Since I know a few people who really enjoy spicy food, I'm sharing this as a warning to you!

An aspiring chef died after eating a super-hot chilli sauce as part of an endurance competition with a friend.

Andrew Lee, 33, challenged his girlfriend's brother to a contest to see who could eat the spiciest sauce that he could create.

The fork-lift truck driver, who wanted to cook for a living, prepared a tomato sauce made with red chillies grown on his father's allotment. After eating it, however, he suffered intense discomfort and itching. The following morning he was found dead, possibly after suffering a heart attack.

Toxicology tests are being conducted to try to establish if he suffered a reaction to the food.

An inquest was told that Lee, from Edlington, England, was in perfect health and had just passed a medical examination at work. He was a keen cook and would often prepare meals for his parents. It is believed that Mr Lee had never prepared a dish as hot as the one he made the night before his death.

Lee's sister, Claire Chadbourne, 29, said that he took a jar of the sauce to the home of his girlfriend, Samantha Bailey, and challenged her brother Michael, 29, to see who could eat it. "Andrew just ate the chillies with a plate of Dolmio sauce," she added. "It was not a proper meal because he had already eaten lamb chops and potato mash after work.

"He apparently got into bed at 2.30am and started scratching all over. His girlfriend scratched his back until he fell

asleep. She woke up and he had gone. It is incredible. Who would have thought he could have died from eating chilli sauce? We don't know of anything else that could have caused his death. The postmortem showed no heart problems.

"He loved cooking for his friends. He always said he wanted to be a chef but didn't want to start at the bottom."

An inquest was opened and adjourned in Doncaster last week.

You are what you eat?

Well, I am no stranger to trying new and, what for some would be, exotic foods. I generally enjoy trying new things to eat, even when I don't enjoy the taste. There have been a large number of foods that I really like, that if I had failed to try, I never would have known the taste sensations.

From A (for Ants), to Z (normal zoo animals – Hippo and crocodile), I have tried many different foods. Other than zucchini, I can't really recall any Z foods, maybe someone could enlighten me. After the [extreme recycling](#) I wrote about I didn't think I could see an article about food that would just turn me off. But I found one. The problem for me is that I have tried almost everything else, why wouldn't I try this. I have eaten bugs, so why not [rats](#)? I guess that would be one way to make sure the rat population stays in check. They would no longer be just pests, but a food source. Maybe I'll have to try some... Can't be any worse than squirrel can it? After all a Squirrel is just a rat with a fuzzy tail right?

A day with Family and Friends

I spent most of the day at the home of my eldest daughter and her husband. They were having an Open house for friend and family. Since it was close to 90 today, and they have a pool, it was a good day to be there. I spent too much time in the sun, I ate too much, and I had a wonderful time.

I met more of my daughter's in-laws (again for the first time, the wedding doesn't count). But since her husband is 1 of 17 children, I don't try to keep them all straight. I would just get them mixed up anyway.

I didn't count how many of the siblings were there, but there were a couple of faces I didn't recognize. There was also a friend or two that I didn't recognize either. So putting people into families was difficult. The funny thing I don't think it matters much at my daughter's house. It seems like the people who are invited in are family. They may be that long lost cousin you sometimes wish was still lost, but they seem to be family. It is a very inviting place to visit.

Now, over the years I've had reservations about my daughter's choice of friends. I don't recall mentioning this too often. This was of course due to fear of having her cling to them more than she was. We all know how some teenagers can get. If the parent approves, avoid. If the parent disapproves, attach. My eldest had this little quirk. If she still does, well when/if she reads this blog, she may avoid a lot of friends. You see, I approve of her friends. They are characters to be sure, and they would tend to agree with that statement. But they are good friends to my daughter. And as with everything in my family, that is important.

It doesn't really matter what I think, or don't think of the people my girls hang around with. What is really important is how they treat my daughters, and what my daughters thinks of them. It has been that way for as long as I've had daughters. This is one of the reasons I never said anything about my daughters' friends. As long as they were happy, it was good. Even if I noticed something a little off, it was good. Now that 3 out of the 4 are legal adults, and 2 out of 4 are actually of legal drinking age, I've noticed that this way of thinking about things really paid off. All 4 can make very wise decisions on who they want to hang with. They know who they like, and they try to avoid those they can't get along with. It's good to see parenting work out right every now and again.

Now I guess I should write about the food. They really did it right. Burgers, dogs, chicken, salads, deserts, chips, drinks, everything for a summer gathering was available. (except nobody brought watermelon, I should have gotten watermelon, why didn't I get watermelon... Oh yes, the last one I brought was turned into a vodka-watermelon slushy.) We ate well. There was one funny thing. I was thinking of having an iced coffee today. Normally I think iced coffee is to be left somewhere, not to be ingested. Every once in a while I get a taste for it. My daughter had some freshly made when I walked in the door. What a lovely coincidence. I couldn't have planned that better if I had called ahead. So today was a good day...

Thanks, But I Prefer a MA'AM-

wich Post Revisited

I was checking out thesmokinggun.com and I came across a news story about a man who had an unfortunate experience at his local Subway restaurant... seems they couldn't get his sandwich the way he wanted, so he called 911 for help – not once, not twice, but 3 times. It reminded me of the time I ranted on my blog about how I prefer sub sandwiches made by women, but apparently this fellow would not agree. Check out my original post [here](#).

And here is the summary of the man's Subway mishap; scroll down for the link to the actual 911 calls he made:

Florida man busted for calling 911 over improperly prepared sandwich

AUGUST 5—If you're wondering what the guy who called 911 to complain about his Subway sandwiches looks like, well, meet Reginald Peterson. The 42-year-old Florida man became so upset last Thursday when a pair of subs "did not include 'everything' as he had requested," he called Jacksonville cops "so that the police could have his sandwich made to his specifications," according to a Jacksonville Sheriff's Office report. Peterson, pictured in the below mug shot, was arrested on a misdemeanor charge of placing false 911 calls. A Subway employee told cops that an irate Peterson was "screaming at everyone in the business" because a worker could not seem to rectify the sandwich problem. As for the fate of the Subway grub, the sheriff's report notes, "The sandwiches were placed in a trash can at the suspect's request."

[Click here](#) to listen to Peterson's three 911 calls (MP3)

Pinata Pilgrimage

I didn't blog all weekend because we made a few-hundred-miles trek to the Chicago suburbs for my nephew's 5th birthday party. We stuffed ourselves silly over there because as much as we love where we live, the restaurant choice can grow kind of boring. So, being in a different area had us stopping for food every chance we got, but by the end of the weekend, we were a wee bit regretful... I think that midnight case of White Castles are what did us in. Since there aren't any White Castles near us, we had to stock up and buy a whole case since they reheat pretty well. We stopped there on the way out of the area, and then we had to smell them all the way home – yuck. They taste good but don't smell so great, especially when it's time for bed... So, as you can see, we did fit in a bit of culture on our trip. For those who aren't familiar with White Castle, it's a fast food chain found in the midwest that specializes in mini-hamburgers, also known as "sliders". They aren't just mini-hamburgers, though, they're steam-grilled, and they have a very unique taste... not to mention an, ahem, interesting side effect when you feed them to pets and small children. I will not elaborate; let's just say that my kids really like them, but the next day our noses were paying for it.

We also found time to stop at an ethnic grocery store for something my husband has been looking for called *Halva*, which is a Middle Eastern dessert. I had never tried it before, and I really like to try ethnic foods, so we picked some up. It is pretty good! The halva we got was actually from Macedonia, and though it tastes nothing like it, I would best describe its texture as that of the 'astronaut' ice cream. You know, the freeze dried ice cream that they sell at space museums?

And to round out our cultural experience, my nephew had a pinata at his birthday party. Pardon my spelling it wrong, I can't find the special n with the tilde over it they use in the spanish alphabet. So in my blog, it will be known as a pinata. Just in case you are not familiar with what a pinata entails, check out Wikipedia's explanation:

A succession of blindfolded, stick-wielding children try to break the piñata in order to collect the sweets (traditionally fruit, such as sugarcane) and/or toys inside of it. It has been used for hundreds of years to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and Easter.

Seems that Wikipedia figured out how to do the tilde... but anyway, yes you read that right – **blindfolded, stick-wielding children!** Actually, it's customary to use a baseball bat instead of a stick, yet oddly enough, I don't think I've ever been part of a pinata party where a parent didn't have to step in and break it open themselves – this one being no exception. It went pretty well, though we did almost have a casualty – my nephew took his first whack at the pinata, and his dad had not cleared the area, so CRACK went the bat against the cell phone he was wearing... but I guess all was well, especially since someone had talked them out of their original plan: giving a bunch of 5-year-olds an *aluminum* bat with which to whack at the pinata. Thank goodness for the insight! If you get a chance, you should check out the pinata scene in the movie [Parenthood](#), it's hilarious... the kids at the party lose interest after not being able to get it open, so the scene cuts to [Steve Martin](#) beating the heck out of the thing as it lays on the floor. Nothing like that at my nephew's party, in fact, his pinata opened rather easily. And when it did break open, there wasn't the usual melee either... the kids were actually quite orderly in picking up the pinata "guts". I was a little worried because the last time I was at a birthday party with a pinata, the kids all piled in a heap on top of each other, and the kid at the bottom ended up with

a bloody lip.

So, overall, great weekend, even if it lacked sleep – lots of driving and we didn't get home until 3:30 in the morning! And I have a few weeks to decide whether or not we will be brave enough to attempt a pinata at my daughter's 4th birthday party... maybe that will be enough time for her to forget that her cousin had one...

One thing is for sure, if we have a pinata, we will *not* have an aluminum bat on the premises!

Thanks, But I Prefer a MA'AM-wich

I have yet to figure out what makes women so much better at making sandwiches than men. It might sound funny, but it's very true. I've been to a number of Subway Sandwich Shops across a number of states, and every time without fail, if a male makes the sandwich, eating it is dreadful. They don't spread the condiments evenly, so the sandwich is either soggy or falls apart or both, and it definitely doesn't taste very good when ingredients are all clumped together and not spread out correctly. I can think of 4 possible reasons why females make better "sandwich artists" than males: **1. organizational skills** – Women tend to have better ways of organizing things and in a more efficient order. Apparently, this holds true even when organizing sandwich ingredients. **2. detail-orientated thinking** – Women tend to think about and obsess over every little detail, just ask their husbands. **3. patience** – Women practice having lots of patience to put up with the men in their daily lives. It takes lots of patience

to make a perfect sub. **4. compassion** – Let's face it, women have more of this than men. And it takes an understanding woman to want to take the time to care about your sandwich.

Does this mean that having a woman in the white house is a better choice after all? Probably not, I wouldn't read that far into it. But if I were you, next time you go to a Subway and a male worker says, "Can I help you?", you should say, "Thanks, but I prefer a ma'am-wich".

HAHAHA! Just kidding! You'll look like a big idiot if you say that! If a man makes your sandwich, just wear a bib and don't expect it to taste very good!