



THE BEST OF BESSIE

THE LEGENDARY RECIPES
OF BESSIE F. HARNEY
TRANSCRIBED AND
DECIPHERED FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

FOREWORD

The *Best of Bessie* is about home cooking. It's about the aroma of roast pork and potatoes calling my brothers and I home from the Cove playground on a bitter cold Sunday afternoon. It's about seeing the world and re-creating it in your kitchen, but still returning to Beverly, Massachusetts, each summer for my mother's clam chowder and oysters topped with crushed Ritz crackers.

If you drool over angel hair pasta and goat cheese popovers, drool elsewhere. These recipes are older than you are. This book is about food with feeling, with history.

This collection is also a celebration of the prized — if cryptic — documents that sent these recipes down a generation. They didn't get there via PTA cookbooks or lacquered recipe boxes. They traveled scrawled on odd-shaped pieces of notepaper or in the margin of a torn newspaper and were left for us under a designated cushion of the living room couch, together with editorials on, say presidential politics and the latest news on lowering cholesterol. The recipes may call for "oleo," but never margarine. They usually carry a tip like "good in frig for

five days." They are historic documents.

But a few words of warning about this cookbook. No formula guarantees you'll be able to replicate my mother's perfectly firm matzo balls (not too firm, not too loose). And if you follow my mother's clam chowder recipe precisely, you've made your first mistake. My mother never follows it precisely.

Ultimately, what you need are Jewish immigrant parents (offering oral history over a sizzling pan of potato latkes), a spell living with Irish in-laws (demonstrating the fine points of preparing roast turkey dinner), a sensibility bred of the Great Depression and World War II (food, like money, is best when it can be "stretched") and even unfortunately arthritis in the hands (for matzo balls that don't break up and can't break a window).

If you don't have all of the above, settle for my mother's main ingredients: improvisation and good sense. If you fail, remember what Bessie says, "What of it?" If you succeed, no surprise: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

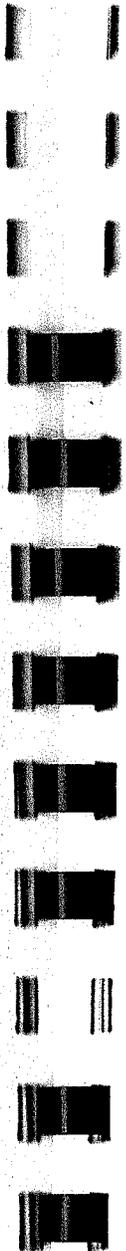
— John O. Harney

THANKSGIVING BREAD STUFFING

6 cups ground dry bread crumbs	3 eggs
1 cup quick cream of wheat	2 sticks oleo
1 large onion diced	4 celery sticks
1 teaspoon Bell's seasoning	1 tablespoon salt

Mix the dry ingredients. Add eggs. Melt oleo and lightly saute onions (do not brown). Stir into the bowl of dry ingredients. Add 1/2 cup of hot water (more if stuffing is too crumbly).

Bessie's Tip : Don't bother sewing cavity after stuffing. Instead close the opening with a large onion.



BUTTER PECAN CRESCENTS

cup (2 sticks) oleo

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 cup sugar

2 cups flour

1 cup finely chopped pecans

In a large bowl, beat the oleo with 1/2 cup of sugar until light and fluffy. Blend in vanilla. Gradually add the flour and pecans to the mixture. Blend until mixture forms a dough. Seal in plastic and refrigerate at least 1 hour. Heat oven to 350°. Divide dough into 8 pieces and with lightly floured hands roll each into 1/2 inch rope. Cut each rope into 2 inch pieces. On an ungreased cookie sheet shape each piece into a crescent tapering the ends by gently bending them. Bake 15 to 18 minutes or until faintly brown. When cool, dust cookies with remaining sugar.

CORN BREAD

1 1/4 cups flour

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup corn meal

4 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 cup oil

1 cup milk (canned OK)

1 egg, beaten

Heat the oven to 400°. Grease an 8 or 9 inch baking pan. Combine dry ingredients. Stir in milk, oil and egg, mixing just until dry ingredients are moistened. Pour batter into a prepared pan. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown and wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean. Serve warm.

FRITTER BATTER

1 cup flour

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon oleo

(omit if batter is on chicken)

1 egg, slightly beaten

1 cup milk

Mix flour, sugar, and salt. Combine egg, milk, and melted oleo. Add to the flour mixture and stir until smooth.

Dip bananas, apples, chicken, whatever. Drop into deep hot fat until brown on all sides, turning as fritters rise to surface.

Drain on a brown paper bag and pat dry with paper towel.

Serve fruit fritters with powdered sugar.

CHILI CON HARNEY

2 cans dark red kidney beans (Friend's)	1 teaspoon salt
2 cans tomato soup (Campbell's)	1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 large onion	1/2 teaspoon garlic
1 lb. hamburger	1 tablespoon flour

Brown hamburger and onion. Add beans and soup.
Add seasonings, stir and simmer about 30 to 40 minutes
on very low heat.

*Bessie's Tip: Leftover chili can be frozen.
Some people use chili powder in this recipe.*

GOLDA'S LATKES

4 medium to large potatoes

1 slightly beaten egg

1/4 cup instant flour

1/2 teaspoon of salt

cooking oil to cover

1/2 inch in of pan

Grate potatoes, then add other ingredients. Cover bowl, then drain. Using a large spoon, drop batter into pan and fry in oil over medium heat until brown on each side. Keep oil handy to add as needed during cooking. Also keep the instant flour ready if the mix gets too watery.

Bessie's tip: Serve with sugar, sour cream or applesauce.

CHOCOLATE GOOBIES

1 stick of melted oleo

1 cup sugar

1 egg

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 square of chocolate

2 cups corn flakes or K cereal

1 cup flour

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Mix in a saucepan with a wooden spoon. Spread 1/2 inch thick in a cookie sheet. Bake at 350° for about 10 minutes or until they look dry. Cut into squares.

STUFFED SHELLS

1 package large shells

Filling

1 lb. ricotta (skim milk style)

1/2 lb. cottage cheese

1/2 lb. mozzarella (grated)

1/2 cup parmesan (grated)

1/2 package chopped
spinach (squeezed dry)

1/4 cup Italian bread crumbs

2 eggs

1 teaspoon salt

1 /2 teaspoon pepper

Mix all the filling ingredients and set aside. Boil shells in water to cover-add salt. Remove after 15 minutes (shells should still be firm). Use two 9 x 12 pyrex dishes And grease lightly. Spread the bottoms of the dishes with 1/2 quart bought sauce and equal amount of stewed tomatoes put through blender. Add garlic, basil and parsley. Fill shells with cheese mixture and lay them on their sides in the pyrex dish. Cover with a layer of tomato sauce and cook at 350° for 35 minutes.

Bessie's Tip: Don't cook the second dish. Feeze for an easy future meal.

CHICKEN STOCK

1 whole chicken 2 ribs of celery
1 large onion 3 whole peeled carrots
1 tablespoon salt and pepper 6 quarts of water
(or to taste)

Cook chicken, carrots, celery and onion in water 2 1/2 to 3 hours and remove chicken from the bone (reserve meat for salad or pie). Return bones to the stock, cover with water and cook for another hour. Strain broth through a colander. Discard celery and onion but save carrots. Carrots cut easily with knife and should be put back into soup. Refrigerate over night. Skim off fat after soup has been cooled.

*Bessie's Tips: Save a spoon of the chicken fat to add to your matzo balls.
If there is more stock than needed, it can be frozen.*

MATZO BALLS

3 large eggs

1/2 cup water

1/3 cup chicken fat or oleo

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1 cup matzo meal

Blend eggs, chicken fat, water, salt, and pepper. Stir in matzo meal, cover and refrigerate for one hour. With water-moistened palms, roll mixture into 1 inch balls using about a tablespoon for each. Carefully drop into water that's heated to a gentle boil. Cover and cook for 25 minutes or until balls swell and rise to the top.

CUSTARD

1 quart milk

3/4 cup sugar

diced bread and/or
grapenuts

4 or 5 eggs

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine and beat ingredients. Pour the custard mix into pyrex bowls containing pieces of bread or grapenuts (just enough grapenuts to cover the bottom of the bowl). Put bowls on a cookie sheet covered with 1/2 inch of water and cook the custards at 325° for 1 hour.

BESSIE'S BOILED DINNER

3 lbs. corned beef

6 carrots

1 whole large cabbage
cut into wedges

6 potatoes peeled

1/4 teaspoon pepper

turnips (optional)

In a large saucepan, cover corned beef with water. Add pepper. Simmer covered for 3 - 3 1/2 hours or until tender. After 1 hour add potatoes, carrots and turnips. Add cabbage about 1/2 hour before serving. Cut meat into slices. Serve with cooking liquid and vegetables.

Bessie's Tip : Try serving this with beets!

CLAM CHOWDER

3 cans Snow's minced clams 1 quart steamers and liquid
1 large onion 5 large potatoes
1/2 stick oleo 2 (13oz)cans evaporated milk
Salt and Pepper (to taste)

Steam clams in 2 inches of water. Strain through a colander using several layers of paper toweling. Remove black portion of necks. Snip clams with kitchen shears (to make smaller pieces). Saute a large onion in 1/2 stick of oleo. Add 2 cups of water and put in blender. Return to pan and add 5 large peeled potatoes, diced in 1/2 inch cubes. Cook slowly until tender, adding canned clams, clam juice and evaporated milk. Do not cook after milk is added. Just let stand. Before serving, heat slowly and add fresh milk as needed. Salt and pepper to taste

PORK ROAST

WITH PAN- BROWNED POTATOES

4 lbs. center cut pork roast onion salt
instant flour garlic powder
paprika onion
1 teaspoon soy sauce or
Kitchen Bouquet (optional)(for flavor and color)

Sprinkle the pork with flour onion salt, garlic powder, and paprika. Set on a sliced onion in a metal roasting pan. Arrange medium potatoes around the roast and cook at 350°. After a 1/2 hour of cooking, add 1 tablespoon of flour to the pan. Add more at intervals during the next 3 1/2 hours until the gravy that's forming at the bottom of the roasting pan seems to be drying out. You may wish to add soy sauce or Kitchen Bouquet to the flour mix. Potatoes should be brown and crusty as the meat is done.

AN ANALYSIS OF ONE OF BESSIE'S RECIPES

BILL ALWAYS BROUGHT FRESH HADDOCK FROM GLOUCESTER

OLEO IS THE SAME AS MARGARINE

START WITH A RECIPE FROM A MAGAZINE, THEN CHANGE EVERYTHING

ALWAYS PRONOUNCE THIS "PADADDOES"

DON'T BOTHER WITH FANCY FRENCH COOKING

LEAVE OUT EXTRA GARNISHES (AND EXOTIC SPICES)

CANNED MILK SEEMS TO BE THE MILK OF CHOICE IN MANY RECIPES

FISH CHOWDER

1/2 lb lbs. fish fillets (whitefish, pollock, white hake, cod, haddock)
1/2 lb 1/2 lb bacon chopped in small cubes
5 5 potatoes diced
1/2 teaspoon salt, pepper to taste

2 2 medium onions chopped
1 qt 1 qt. half and half (or whole milk) *cream milk*
1 qt. fish stock
2 tablespoons margarine
2 tablespoons flour

Fry the ~~bacon~~ *bacon* in a skillet with a little water until the cubes are opaque and remove from skillet. Lower the heat and saute onions until golden ~~and drain of the fat~~. Place potatoes, onions and fish stock in a pot and cook slowly until the potatoes are just tender, not mushy. ~~Make a roux by cooking the flour and margarine together, stirring constantly and when golden color, add to the pot and stir gently to blend.~~ *cook in fat* Cut the fillets into bite size pieces (1") and add to the pot, add the ~~bacon~~ cubes and cook gently about 10 minutes, being careful not to overcook. *on low +* ~~Just before serving, add the cream or milk, and beat through gently. DO NOT BOIL.~~ Add salt and pepper to taste and serve with crackers. A pat of margarine with a dash of paprika and a pinch of chopped ~~onions~~ *onions* makes a nice garnish. Serves 4.

Per serving: 945 calories, 73 g. protein, 38 g. carbohydrate, 54 g. fat, 844 mg. sodium.



COVER- "Mom"

by Timothy Harney
1988/89 acrylic and collage
45 x 43 1/2



Groundhog
Graphics