

They grow up don't they.

My youngest is now ~~18~~ 19.

Funny, I started this blog post way back in December and I only got the first line typed. I have no idea what I was going to write about. But today I will actually write about my youngest turning 19. Today was her birthday. We had some burgers, brats and hotdogs. I did my turn at the grill. There was swimming before the storms came in. And there was conversations with family.

Today was a good day. Cake and presents (at least for the birthday girl) were enjoyed. The spirits were high.

But my youngest just turned 19. She has been a legal adult for the past year. I've allowed her to make her own choices. I would have allowed her to make her own mistakes, I'm not convinced that she made any. ☐ She is a lovely, wonderful young lady.

Today on her birthday, I wish her all the best. While times won't always be good (we know that don't we.), I hope she has the strength and maturity to handle the times she has. My main job as a parent has been 'finished' for the last year. I only need to advise and listen. She does have what she needs to succeed or fail in life. I hope for success.

Happy birthday little one.

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) ☐

It is that time of year again...

I noticed that I was getting hit by a lot of search engines today. They were all finding the same post. Last year around this time I started to review all of the fast food fish sandwiches in our area. Guess what, there is a big search

going on for fast food fish. A new fast food place opened in our area, so I may have to review the Sonic fish sandwich. But for now, I'm going to go in a different direction or TANGENT if you will.

Eating fish during lent? Why?? I did a quick search and found out it was more out of 'eating from the land' than skipping meat. Apparently (I'm not sure about this yet, the web is full of useless information too), eating fish derived from fasting. Apparently you could eat the food you gathered during a fast. This included vegetables, fruits and the like. It also included fish, since anyone could catch fish. Meat from other animals was the province of the well to do or wealthy.

Other sites have said that this developed to allow the working people something to eat with a high level of protein, just to keep their strength and let them keep working the fields. I'm not really sure about the why's yet, but I will continue to work on it. That question just got me curious.

And one more tangent... Easy fish recipe. Works for most firm fleshed fish (Salmon, catfish, ocean perch, red snapper, walleye, ect.)

Aluminum foil

Fish fillets

Tomato slices

Onion slices

Salt

Pepper

Sliced garlic if desired...

Oil of choice or butter

Layer on foil (one serving per foil pouch) from the bottom up onion slices, tomato slices, fish fillets, salt, pepper, garlic, tomato slices, onion slices. Drizzle with oil or add butter pats. Close up foil. Cook...

Over hot coals 10 -15 minutes per inch flip about halfway

through cooking time.

(open one and see if fish is starting to get opaque on the first side, flaky on the second side.) Or use gas grill, or cook in oven preheated to 375.

Wonderful stuff...

Stories of life, love and family

Since I've been sharing some family hints in the kitchen, I remembered many stories and recipes that went together. Most of these stories were due to the fact that my children were picky about the food they ate. Some are more picky, some grew out of the picky stage. As you may be able to tell, some are still in the picky stage. I've decided that my blog is not the 'stage' that I want for these stories and recipes. Some may make it here, just because they were so much fun. Others will not. After this project is finished I may want to share the completed work, at least with my girls. ☐

Why share this here? I think I need a little bit of pestering just to get it done. So I'm asking, maybe begging, for my loyal readers to comment on this post every so often. Ask me how it is going, or even if I worked on it.

Some fun Huh?

Stone Soup

I'm not sure how many people remember the story of 'Stone Soup'. I've heard it many different ways, but the basic story is always the same. Someone who is hungry (beggar, soldier, hobo, ect.) offers to make stone soup when nobody has any food to share. He starts with a pot, some water and a stone. All during the making of the soup, he says out loud how good it would be if he just had 1 more item to add. By the end of the story he has made a pot of soup, getting all the ingredients from those who turned down his meal request earlier. He shares the soup and they all agree it was the best soup ever.

I've made something like stone soup for years with the various leftovers we have had. I don't think I actually used a stone, but I did call it stone soup once or twice. That is when I wasn't serving garbage or poison (family joke, no poison or garbage actually served. ☹). So when you have a lot of leftovers that won't quite make a meal, see if they could be added to a stone soup recipe.

Basic Stone Soup

Cooked Meat

Seasonings

Vegetables

Noodles/pasta if desired

Stock

If the vegetables are fresh you will need to cook them in the stock before adding other ingredients. Use Chicken stock with leftover chicken or turkey. Beef stock with leftover Beef. For leftover Pork, you can use either or combine both. Vegetable stock is also good for all meats. For a cream soup, add milk and thickener of choice at the end of the cooking time. My favorite thickener is leftover mashed potatoes.

Varieties

Mexican – Go wild with your spices, use some taco seasoning. Use a tomato or vegetable stock. Good vegetables in this are corn, green beans, pork and beans, pinto, lima or kidney beans. Left over pasta sauce, marinara, sloppy joes works well.

Oriental – Try adding Ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, soy sauce to the meal. This works well with leftover chicken. Add in oriental vegetables.

Beef Stew. Great when you have leftover beef on any kind. You can even make hamburger stew. Add stew vegetables and use mashed potatoes to thicken the stock.

Stone Chili – Left over Meatloaf, hamburgers, sloppy joe, ect. Add regular chili seasonings, some canned tomato soup and beans.

Try your own variations.

This also works with non leftovers. Just add ingredients until it tastes the way you want.

If you really want a group experience, have everyone (at least 4 people) bring a soup ingredient. Combine all at a Stone Soup party.

I have this and this, what can I make for dinner?

Yes, my daughters have asked this question, or “What can I do with?”

If you ask any of my daughters, you will find out that I

experiment in the kitchen. I tend to think of cooking as science with food. I like to find out what flavors go well with others. I often find out what flavors don't go well with others. Not all of my kitchen experiments work. My daughters may tell you that too. But over the years, a few of these experiments became family favorites. Our family meatloaf recipe is one constant changing experiment. Many different flavors made many wonderful meals. Through all of this experimentation, my girls learned that they could trust me if I said I tried this and it tasted good.

Where is this leading? Well, I thought that if I can get my daughters to read and reply, I'll give a few recipes from various starting points. My goal will always be 1 or 2 pan/pot meals that take very little prep time. I dislike washing dishes, so the fewer I get dirty, the better I like it. Since I'm not sure my daughters will reply, I will open this up to everyone. What do you have in your refrigerator? What's for dinner?

Now that I have one...

Can I do anything else with a double-boiler?

The short answer was yes. You can cook anything that needs low even heat. Most of the time this is chocolate for candies. You can also make many sauces and fondues. There are many recipes on the web just for double boiler cooking. In fact the double boiler was one way to reheat leftovers before the microwave. But can it be used to make a main dinner dish.

For that I needed to do a more in depth search. I've never used it for more than melting chocolate and making custards. Never a main course.

I did a lot of searching and found many sauces for main dishes. I also found that a double boiler was used to reheat the dish as a part of the dish. I even found a recipe for scrambled eggs. While I do like eggs for dinner every now and then, I didn't consider that a main course.

Then I found one. I've never had it before and will try it shortly. So lets try to make Welsh Rarebit. Yes, the double boiler is used to make the sauce, but since the sauce is the main ingredient in this dish, I think it fits my needs. The only thing that isn't cooked in the double boiler is the toast. There is even a variation that uses poached eggs with the sauce and toast. Those could be cooked in the lower portion of the boiler after the sauce is ready. Double use from a double boiler. I like that.

From that I could also make Eggs Benedict. Toasted English muffin, poached eggs and hollandaise sauce, but I have to cook the Canadian bacon.. Hmm not quite a full meal with a double boiler, but close.

Dad, I don't have a...

When my oldest moved out on her own, one of her first needs was a double boiler. Instead of asking how to cook a main or side course, she wanted to start with dessert. She wanted to melt chocolate.

Dad, I don't have a double boiler, can I just heat it on the stove? Hmmm. By being very, very careful I've had some luck melting chocolate over a low heat on the stove top, but it can be tricky and the chocolate can burn or scorch easily. I haven't had much luck with microwave melting, but that could be because my microwave is very old. So I did suggest to my

daughter to use a double boiler. But didn't she just say that she didn't have one?

The good thing is most kitchens have at least one substitute for an official double boiler. A double boiler is a very simple device. One pan is supported over another. The lower pan hold water to boil. The upper pan holds what you want to melt or cook at low/controlled temperatures.

Easy solution a small pan held over another with boiling water. Problem is holding the pan until the cooking is done, it can be tiring. Better is to rest a slightly larger pan on top of the smaller pan that boils the water. But it is a balancing act and you still have to hold the pan. A real double boiler has the upper pan resting in a recess in the lower pan. Can this be done without the special equipment? It can if you have a round stainless steel or oven safe glass bowl. Just rest the bowl in a pan above the boiling water. If you really want to know, the stainless steel bowl works best for me.

More on what you can do with a double boiler later...

New Category

My daughters have asked me many questions over the years. Sometimes about cooking, sometimes about kid issues. I was thinking that I could put some of the answers on my blog. I will be going through some of my past posts to see if any past items could be moved over. I have one question to answer, but I will need to look up a few things and get them written down.

Anyway, the new category is Family Hints....

Very Dangerous Cake

Ok, I've known of this cake recipe for a few months, but I never tried making it until tonight. The reason I say it is dangerous is that you can have a decent hot chocolate desert in under five minutes. Any time of the day, your diet can be blown out of the water. So for sharing the guilt. ☐ Don't skip the chocolate chips....

MINUTE CHOCOLATE MUG CAKE

4 tablespoons cake flour(that's plain flour, not self-rising)
4 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons baking cocoa
1 egg
3 tablespoons milk
3 tablespoons oil
3 tablespoons chocolate chips(optional)
a small splash of vanilla essence
1 coffee mug

Add dry ingredients to mug, and mix well

Add the egg and mix thoroughly.

Pour in the milk and oil and mix well.

Add the chocolate chips (if using) and vanilla essence, and mix again.

Put your mug in the microwave and cook for 3 minutes at 1000 watts. The cake will rise over the top of the mug, but don't be alarmed!

Allow to cool a little, and tip out onto a plate if desired.

EAT! (this can serve 2 if you want to feel slightly more virtuous).