

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Hi. My name is Joyce.

I'm a glutton.

Those of you who share this same sort of personal downfall may stay and we'll talk through our problems.

The rest of you are excused to go munch on your celery sticks.

Most of the time, I try to keep my food-loving tendencies under control. Exert self-discipline. Avoid serious pigging out.

(Of course, we all have our own personal weak spots. Like ice cream. And popcorn.)

Still, most of the time, food mania and I share an uneasy truce. It also helps if there are no chocolate chip cookies or homemade pie in the house.

Until August hits. Or whenever the first wave of tomatoes turns juicy, red and sweet. Eaten out of hand, from stalk to mouth, still slightly warm from the day's sunshine. Tossed with slivered green peppers and onions, a sprinkling of Italian dressing and dusted with basil and oregano.

Or layered with crisp bacon, crunchy lettuce, on toast, with mayo. Actually, I can do just as well without the bacon, or the toasting, even the lettuce, if pressed for time. Mayo (or salad dressing) is mandatory, however.

One of the saddest — food-wise

— days of the year is the one on which the last homegrown tomato is consumed. When it comes to tomatoes, I'm a glutton.

Not to forget watermelon. A chunk of dripping, pink-red melon satisfies both appetite and thirst. During prolonged hot weather, we can chunk up and chow down a fair-sized melon in a matter of a couple of meals and snacks.

Yes, that was me on my hands and knees on the local supermarket floor recently, retrieving form way back under a produce counter a large, turned-out-to-be-absolutely-delicious, yellow-bellied, striped watermelon. Though not as accessible as the ones right out front, it answered with a resounding, hollow-sounding "thunk" when I rapped.

It was truly a melon well-worth making a public spectacle of oneself to wrestle it onto a supermarket cart.

In between bites of melon, there's cantaloupe to savor.

Baking heat nearly "did in" our six early, lush hills of cantaloupe. Some almost-too-late watering coaxed the stalks to hang on — 'er, droop on — long enough to bring their fruits to harvest under the parching sun. Two late hills are being coddled and fussed over to prolong one glutton's joy of

CHICAGO, IL. — The search has stopped for America's best amateur beef recipes. The top 15 finalists of the 1993 National Beef

fresh, homegrown breakfast cantaloupe for a week or two more. Recent rain was a Godsend for cantaloupes — and everything else.

While drying up my 'lopes, hot, dry weather is just peachy for our local orchards, making peaches extra sweet and flavorful. Even better than a fresh peach is.....two fresh peaches, chopped up over vanilla ice cream. (There's that ice cream passion again.)

But the ultimate August gluttony lurks in fresh sweet corn, yanked off the stalks from a field near the house, promptly plopped into a kettle of boiling water and then slathered with butter — real butter — after a couple of minutes of cooking.

This year's sweet corn was put on one of the last fields to be planted — and nowhere close to a supply of water where it could be irrigated. And while we nearly waded through some fields little more than two months ago, mud-holes were quickly transformed into sun-perched, hard-baked ground by the intense heat. Wonderful, timely rains have renewed this glutton's anticipation of steaming platters of 30-minute-from-field-to-table roasting ears.

I could say this August gluttony is the fault of my parents, who by both teaching and example taught us to love gardening and delight in fresh fruits and vegetables. I could say that, but I'd best not.

They also taught us not to talk with our mouths full.

Competition Hot For National Beef Cook-Off

Cook-Off® (NBCO) have been named, and their recipes represent a diverse array of tempting beef entrees. One finalist will soon win the \$20,000 "Best of Beef" title.

Finalists were selected from across the country, from a pool of 50 semi-finalists who won 1993 state-level beef cook-offs. The 15 will prepare their recipes for judging and viewing at the 20th anniversary celebration of the NBCO, Sept. 11-13 in Cheyenne, Wyo.

At stake is a record high \$39,000 prize total, including \$20,000 "Best of Beef," \$10,000 for first runner-up, \$5,000 for the second runner-up and two \$2,000 honorable mentions. Corporate contributors and Tappan® will also award prizes; Tappan will present cooking appliances to winners and Kingsford will present grilling equipment.

Each of this year's finalist recipes falls into at least one of three categories: Beef for Entertaining; Fast, Flavorful Beef; or Budget-Wise Beef Entrees. Food trends evident among the winning dishes include current ethnic tastes, pizza innovations and healthful main dish salads. In accordance with the interests of today's home cooks, all recipes feature a short list of ingredients and convenient preparation times.

The top 15 finalist recipes, contestants and their home states include the following, mentioned by contest entry category. NBCO winners can come from any category.

Beef for Entertaining category

• "Sesame Beef Salad,"

Michelle Moore, Missouri.

• "Beef Primavera," Nancy Labrie, New Hampshire.

• "Steak with Three Peppercorn Sauce," Marilou Robinson, Oregon.

• "Steak Oriental," Aleta Van Kampen, South Dakota.

• "Calypso Steak," Robin Bonifay Hill, Texas.

Fast, Flavorful Beef category

• "Barbecue Beef Focaccia-Style Pizza," Larry A. Lentz, Kentucky.

• "Italian Bistro Steak Subs," Joyce Lee Sproul, Maine.

• "Pronto Spicy Beef and Black Bean Salsa," Sylvia Harber, Nevada.

• "Caribbean Beef Salad," Rosemarie Berger, North Carolina.

• "30-Minute Beef & Black Bean Soup," Terryl A. Propper, Tennessee.

Budget-Wise Beef Entrees

• "90's-Style Swiss Steak," Ann Dixon, Indiana.

• "Chile Salsa Beef," Robert Logan, Kansas.

• "Fantastic Beef Fajita Stir-Fry," Dana Gregory, Nebraska.

• "Special Beef and Spinach Burritos," Julie DeMatteo, New Jersey.

• "Lemon Herb Roast with Vegetables," Janice Skousen, Utah.

The National Beef Cook-Off is sponsored by the American National Cattlewomen, Inc., in cooperation with the Beef Industry Council and the Beef Board. This year's event is hosted by the Wyoming CattleWomen.



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Cook's Question

(Continued from Page B8)

Sugar-Free Grape Jelly

- 2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin
- 3 cups unsweetened grape juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons liquid sweetener

Add gelatin to grape juice and lemon juice in a saucepan. Place over low heat. Stir constantly until gelatin dissolves. Bring to boil and boil 1½ to 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Add calorie-free sweetener. Stir well to mix. Pour into clean, hot jars. Seal. Cool and store in refrigerator. This jelly will keep well in a refrigerator for 4 to 6 weeks. Do not freeze.

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