

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Penn State
Extension Home Economist
For Lehigh County



When many of us were growing up, there was no "pasta." Of course we knew about macaroni and cheese and spaghetti and meatballs, but that was the extent of our pasta knowledge. Today there are about 600 different shapes, with new ones regularly being designed.

One of the most popular of modern foods, it can be served in a variety of ways and combinations, such as "veggies" and pasta, meat or poultry with pasta and an all time favorite seafood and pasta.

Pasta means "dough." There are two main types — dry or factory made with water and paste, and fresh or homemade with flour and eggs. Some fresh is available in the refrigerated section of your supermarket, but it is considerably more expensive than dry pasta. And occasionally some fresh pasta is frozen.

Although most pasta is made with refined durum wheat, some is made with rice, corn or soy flour. Others are colored and flavored with spinach, carrot or tomato puree. The different flavors and colors will help you make more interesting meals.

Many types of pasta are interchangeable, but some are more suited to particular sauces than others. For example, delicate noodles are compatible with light sauces or cream sauces, but spaghetti is usually enhanced by heavier sauces. Very large pastas, such as manicotti and giant shells are not as good with seafood as smaller shaped pasta varieties.

Pasta should be cooked "al dente" — not soft, yet tender and firm "to the tooth." Cooking times vary for different pastas, so always follow package directions. In most preparations, coordinate cooking times so that pasta and

sauce are done at the same time.

Large pastas such as macaroni and spaghetti must be cooked in plenty of boiling water — at least a quart for every four ounces of dry pasta. Otherwise they become sticky. Miniature pastas, which do not require as much water, are excellent in soups and stews.

When pasta is cooked correctly there is no need to add butter or margarine to avoid sticking. One tablespoon of butter or margarine increases the calorie content by nearly 50% — from 210 to 310.

Contrary to popular belief, pasta is not fattening. Each five-ounce serving of pasta contains about 210 calories and one gram of fat. It is the rich sauces and cheeses we pour over our pasta that make it high in calories and fat. Obviously, a tomato-based sauce is less fattening than a cream or cheese sauce.

When cooking sauces, vegetables, meats or other foods to complement your pasta, and it is necessary to use oil, select olive oil, polyunsaturated vegetable oil or soft margarine. These oils are consistent with healthy diet recommendations from nutritionists.

Remember, too, that the amount of an ingredient used is important. One cup of grated parmesan contains slightly more than 325 calories. But if your recipe calls for one-half cup and this serves four or six people, you can still have great flavor without many calories. And you can substitute cheeses such as mozzarella that have fewer calories.

You'll enjoy your food more if you grate fresh cheeses instead of buying the grated ones. The flavor is fresher and more intense. In addition, you will have fewer calories and additives as well as less salt, fat and cholesterol.

Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off Set For June 17

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Rich with tender chicken and sweet kernels of corn, chicken corn soup is a Pennsylvania Dutch classic that's prized by many.

There are many versions of this hearty dish — some with rivels, some without, some with chopped egg, others without. For those who have a special recipe for chicken corn soup, the Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off will

offer a special opportunity to show off which recipe is truly best.

The Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off is set for Friday, June 17, as part of the county-wide 1994 Pennsylvania Dutch Food Festival sponsored by the Pennsylvania Dutch Visitors Bureau. It will be held at the Doneckers Expo Center at the ARTWORKS in Ephrata, where celebrity judges will make the final

choice among six finalists.

The preliminary judging of recipes will be done by Pennfield Farms and home economist, Mindy Rottmund. The written recipes will be narrowed down to six finalists who will be judged on June 17. Last year, Pennfield Farms sponsored a Chicken Pot Pie Cook-Off.

"Chicken is an essential ingredient in many popular Pennsylvania Dutch dishes. Having a Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off as part of the county's celebration of regional food was a natural," said Tim Horn, marketing director for Pennfield Farms.

Those entering the Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off will also have the opportunity to help seriously ill children in the area. For each individual recipe submitted, Pennfield Farms will make a donation to the Make-A-Wish Foundation which goes toward fulfilling the wishes of children facing life-threatening illnesses.

Entries for the Pennfield Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off must be postmarked and received by May 15. The semi-finalists will be interviewed by phone May 25 or 26, until they are narrowed down to six finalists by May 31. Those finalists will participate in the cook-off, vying for a total of three prizes. First prize is \$300, second prize is \$150 and third prize is \$75. Awards will be presented at the time of judging.

All recipes must be original and not previously published. They should include Pennfield Farms chicken. The final judging will be based on flavor, appearance, texture, ease of preparation, and quality of ingredients.

"Besides the prize money and the benefit to the Make-A-Wish

(Turn to Page B5)



Mindy Rottmund stirs up a batch of chicken corn soup in preparation for the Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off sponsored by Pennfield Farms.



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