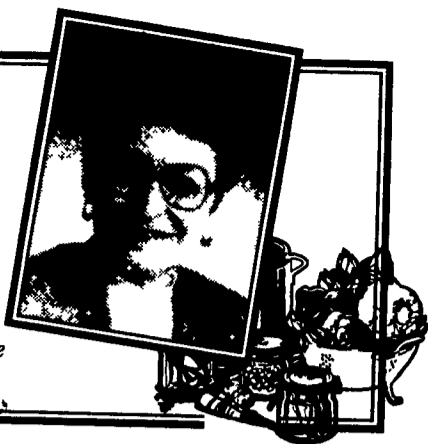


Consuming Thoughts
by
Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home Economist For Berks Co.



As Lenton season approaches, you'll find many specials on finfish and shellfish at the supermarket. If you're looking for a new way to serve seafood, why not try steaming.

Steaming offers one of the best preparation methods for accenting the natural tastes of seafood. The delicate textures and pure flavors are enhanced because the seafood cooks in its own liquid.

Steaming fish and shellfish is easy. In poaching, food is cooked in liquid; in steaming, over liquid. Any seafood can be steamed—fillets, steaks, dressed fish, and shellfish in the shell or shucked.

Fish and shellfish can be cooked over water alone or over liquid to which you've added seasonings such as wine and fresh herbs. Flavored liquid will impart a subtle taste. Seasoning the seafood itself will give a more distinct flavor. Steamed seafood needs little or no fat for cooking.

Shellfish in the shell can be steamed to preserve juices that blend with the cooking liquids to form a broth. Try steaming clams over water, wine or fish stock to which you've added herbs, butter and garlic. When the clams are done, serve the liquid as a dripping sauce. Do not, however, try this with oysters. The shells can't be cleaned well enough to yield a potable broth.

Lean fish such as flounder, grouper and snapper are generally better steamed than oily fish.

A variety of steamers is available, ranging from electric to stove top to bamboo. Or you can improvise. Use a collapsible vegetable steamer, colander, roasting trivet or roasting pan with rack. Always oil the rack or steamer except when steaming unshucked shellfish. Be sure to use a pot large enough for steam to circulate

freely. And use a tight fitting lid.

A great way to steam seafood is to arrange it in a shallow dish above the liquid. Use a low, flare-sided, heatproof platter. If you don't have a rack, support the dish with a trivet or canning jar rings.

Seafood steamed in a dish collects juices. The flavorings are not lost, but are more pronounced. Use the juice in place of sauce or as the base for one.

For a basic steamed fish dish, arrange four fillets or steak on platter. Pour a couple tablespoons of dry white wine over them. Sprinkle with salt, freshly ground black pepper, minced green onion and minced fresh parsley. Set the platter over steam, cover and cook until the fish flakes easily with a fork,

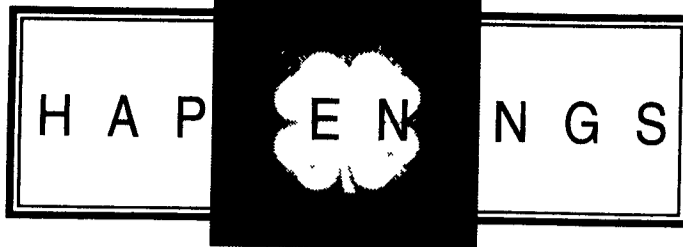
about eight to ten minutes. An easy dinner for four.

A Yunnan pot is popular for steaming. It's an unglazed clay or glazed ceramic bowl with a lid and a central chimney. Food is placed in the trough surrounding the chimney. The pot is set over a saucepan of steaming water. Steam rises up the chimney, condenses on the lid and falls over the food in a light mist.

Cooking in a brown-in bag is also a form of steaming. You can also use packets of aluminum foil. But do not use foil if the recipe contains any acidic ingredients.

The amount of liquid needed for steaming is determined by the cooking time. For most seafood, about an inch is required. With a bamboo steamer, use more. Pour the liquid to within an inch or two of the steamer base.

Start the cooking time when the liquid begins to boil, steam is visible, and food is placed over it and covered. The liquid should bubble but not boil vigorously. Remember that fish will continue to cook in a covered pot after the heat is off. Removed the seafood from the steam as soon as it is done.



Berks County 4-H Beef Club

The first Berks County 4-H Beef Club meeting of the year was held Jan. 27 at 7:30 p.m. in the Berks County Ag Center.

The election of the officers took place and are as follows: president, Kyle Zerbe; vice president, Kelly Dietrich; secretary, Emilie Miller; treasurer, Ben

Weist; news reporter, Kristy Dietrich, Lisa Phillips, and Jill Neiman; and social chairmen, Matt Manbeck and Kelly Phillips.

Other business was the introduction of teen leaders, the formation of committees, and farm visit schedules. The next meeting will be held Feb. 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Ag Center.

Workshop Focuses On Women's Challenges

ANNADALE, N.J. — "Super Nutrition For Women" will discuss the nutrition challenges that women face. Many of the chronic diseases women face are considered inevitable consequences of aging. They don't have to be. As women age, they have unique nutritional needs. Participants will identify

women's nutritional needs to achieve and maintain optimal health. Super Nutrition for Women will be held on March 25, Hunterdon County Library, Route 12, and on March 31, North County Library, Annandale. All programs begin at 6:45 - 9 p.m. and are free of charge. For registration or information, call (908)788-1342.

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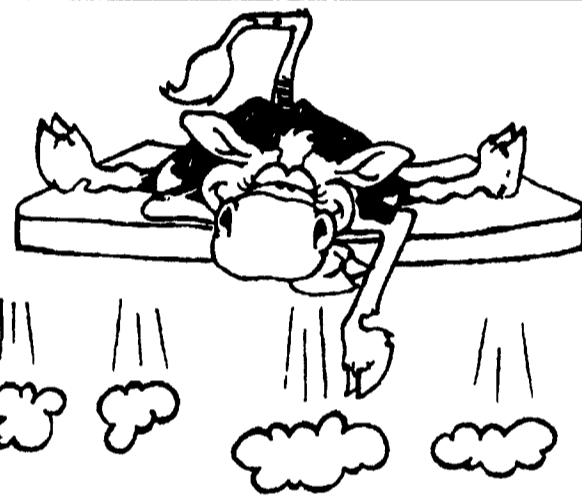
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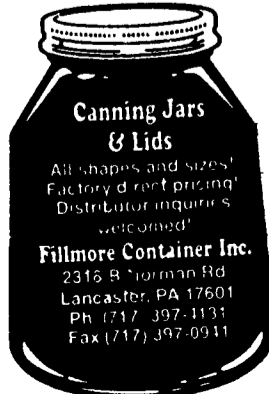
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