

On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards) Joyce Bupp



have some sort of heating element which keeps the sauce, or cooking medium, of choice at optimum temperature. Electrified, with a temperature control, they can hold a hot cooking oil into which everyone sociably hanging around dipping pieces of meat, seafood, potato, veggie, for the few brief moments it takes to cook them, then promptly munching them.

Lacking a specific fondue cooking pot, one could probably improvise. A little creativity with a deep-fryer, or even a crockpot, probably would have possibilities, depending on the cooking or sauce base ingredient.

Little folks in our extended family would no doubt consider such a dipping-dunking-eating event a "fun-do." But, safer for little hands than something with hot oil would be a classic cheese dipping sauce that would be perfect during this annual observance of June Dairy Month.

What I've always considered traditional fondue features cheese as the base of the hot dipping sauce, eaten by skewering a chunk of sturdy, chewy bread on the end of a long fork. With a pretty little plate handy to catch any drips, of course, between kettle and consumption.

A bunch of people hanging around a cooking pot, battling each other over an area in which to eat with long, sharp forks has the potential for a fun and intimate social gathering. We won't even talk about "food fight" potential, if kids are involved.

Extending the "fun-do" could be chocolate sauce for dipping dessert. Working on the same principle, a good chocolate is melted over a low heat setting in

the fondue pot or similar appliance. Dessert dippers might be chunks of pound or angel-food cake, cherries, strawberries, banana, maybe even well-drained pineapple.

One thing for sure. From-scratch cooking of the "fun-do" sort could save on the dishwashing and cleanup. And table-setting chores.

What better reason could there be to jump on the cooking-as-entertainment bandwagon?

Why Do Farmers Use All The Water?

NORCROSS, Ga. — It seems like there is rarely enough water in the Western U.S. to meet everybody's needs. Especially after several years of prolonged drought in many areas, tempers get short when there is insufficient water to go around.

A common cry from the urban areas is that agriculture uses more than its fair share of water. Some estimates have been made that more than 80 percent of developed water is going to agriculture in many areas. Attention has been drawn to the fact that agriculture loses too much water through cracks, seepage, and evaporation from the miles of canals and pipelines. These losses should be addressed when financing is available.

What is not well understood is the huge amount of water that is indirectly delivered to cities in the form of food. A report by the Water Education Foundation documented the amount of water required to produce various foods in the Western U.S. Their basic approach was to divide average evapotranspiration by average yields to determine the gallons of water per pound of food produced. Since some of the water delivered to a farm is unavoidably lost as deep percolation, runoff, or soil moisture storage, the irrigation efficiency was assumed to be 70 percent.

Using a typical 2,300-calorie menu proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the following meal was constructed. The gallons of water required to produce that particular food item are shown.

Do farmers use a lot of water? Yes ... and we all benefit tremen-

dously from their productivity. The water may not come from our faucets, but instead it comes to us in every bite we take.

Proper plant nutrition is a vital key to achieving efficient use of water. Nitrogen deficiencies have an impact on the ability of a crop to convert available water into yield. Phosphorus is important in stimulating seedling root development. This helps the plant explore more soil, increasing the recovery of nutrients and water. Potassium is often referred to as the regulator nutrient, influencing the water dynamics in plants. Nutrients play an essential role in allowing plants to convert water and sunshine into food.

| Breakfast | Water/Gallons |
|---|---------------|
| 1 medium orange | 14 |
| 2 eggs | 126 |
| 2 slices toast | 22 |
| 2 pats butter | 92 |
| 1 cup milk | 48 |
| 1/4 cantaloupe | 40 |
| Total | 342 |
| Lunch | |
| Taco Salad | 806 |
| (Tomato lettuce hamburger chips and cheese) | |
| 1/4 cantaloupe | 40 |
| Total | 846 |
| Snack | |
| 1/4 cup almonds | 160 |
| 1 cup yogurt | 88 |
| 1 cup orange juice | 49 |
| Total | 297 |
| Dinner | |
| Chicken broccoli stir fry | 180 |
| 1 cup rice | 50 |
| 2 slices bread | 22 |
| 2 pats butter | 92 |
| Fruit cup | 35 |
| 1 cup milk | 48 |
| Total | 427 |
| TOTAL: 1,912 gallons per day | |

Imagine that. A food marketing analysis that recently landed on the reading stack reports a fascinating new wave of home entertainment.

Cooking. From scratch. I pondered that while standing at the kitchen sink, peeling potatoes, chopping onions and celery for a family-sized kettle of homemade chicken corn soup. From scratch.

But this trend isn't about concocting a kettle of soup. It's about having guests hang out with you while you fix the food, sipping on beverages and munching on tidbits that they chow down as quickly as they are ready to eat.

Gee, we've been doing that for years, and calling them "doggie roasts." They're generally held

around a big ole' bonfire in a fire pit, complete with oozing, sticky-sweet, charred-skin marshmallows. Most recent of these family, after-dark gatherings had the added attraction of festive "s'mores," with the melting marshmallows tucked between layers of chocolate bar and graham crackers.

Note that this entertainment was promptly followed by a collective march of grandchildren to the bathtub, before they became permanently stuck to clothing, grass, toys, or the lawn furniture.

The cook-from-scratch home entertainment wave fits handily with the return of a cooking appliance that also waxes and wanes in popularity. Fondue pots are handy, portable and generally

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