



DISHIN' WITH DEBBIE!

FOOD FOR HIGH ACHIEVING INDIVIDUALS

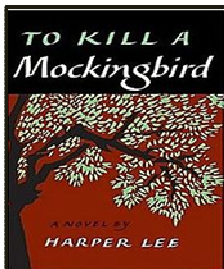
Welcome to the May version of Dishin' with Debbie! Spring is just popping out all over- FINALLY! What was up with that winter? I thought it might never end! May is a playful month with almost endless possibilities and a bunch of holidays (a.k.a., excuses to cook and to eat!), like Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day and Memorial Day.



So,



to all of you Mothers out there. May all of your offspring appreciate you as much as they should!



This month's focal book is To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee originally published in 1960. Do you know this is the only book that she ever wrote? (Don't tell anyone, but I thought "she" was a "he" for a long time. What kind of name is Harper for a girl? ? AHA! I just googled it and her real first name is Nelle. Harper is her middle name. THAT makes more sense!)

If you have never read this book, (and I would be surprised if you had not if you went to high school or college in the United States. It's pretty much required!) it's a book that is very powerful and delivers profound messages on racial inequality and injustice yet still manages to be entertaining.

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

— [Harper Lee](#), [To Kill a Mockingbird](#)

As a special treat, this month's entire column is coming to you from Tracey Meyers. Those of you who have not been lucky enough to make her acquaintance must do so- and soon. This woman is a trip (in fact, if the amount of entertainment value Trace provides would be translated into an actual trip, it would be from here to the Milky Way. ☺)

Listen to what Tracey has to say:

I spent seven years in the colorful, colloquial South in my "salad days." Lived in Hot-lanta and Greenville, SC and travelled through South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Alabama... the setting of this tale of racial injustice and loss of innocence...

Last week I returned from a conference in New Orleans and spent a day riding through the wilds of Louisiana to "The Farm"... the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola... a history lesson and a reason to pause and reflect on how far and how near those days of Harper Lee's South really are. (Editor's Note: One wonders why they didn't keep her when she went to the pen. Must have been an oversight! ;-))

Hm. BUT... I also got to put sum Souf' in ma Mouf! (Editor's note: people in the south tend to talk funny- I think she's trying to say she had some fine southern cuisine...)

This is my very favorite Vegetable Plate... the thing I always get when I find myself at a True South® "Meat and Three"... minus the meat because, you know, vegetarian. Kindly excuse the lack of fatback... you won't miss it... Serve this as a side dish or scoop beans over hot, cooked rice and

serve a big slice of hot buttered cornbread with some greens and macaroni and cheese on the side.

Pinto Beans and Rice

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of dry pinto beans, soaked overnight, picked through and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup of chopped celery
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon vegetable base (like Better than Bouillon brand)
- 1/4 cup of chopped pickled jalapeno slices
- 1/4 cup of green or red salsa, optional
- About 10 turns of the pepper mill
- 1 teaspoon of kosher salt, or to taste
- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon of Cajun seasoning (I LOVE Everglades Salt if you can find it)
- Hot, cooked rice

Directions:

- 1.) Soak beans overnight or use quick boil method.
- 2.) Sauté the vegetables with butter-flavor PAM or oil in a stockpot until onion is softened and slightly caramelized. (Editor's note: half olive oil and half butter makes very nice caramelized onions)
- 3.) Add the minced garlic and cook for about a minute.
- 4.) Stir in the beans, vegetable base, jalapenos, salsa and pepper.
- 5.) Add enough water to cover, plus about 2 inches (about 2-1/2 quarts total) and bring to a boil.
- 6.) Reduce heat and simmer for about 1-1/2 to 2 hours, stirring regularly.
- 7.) Add additional water 1/2 cup at a time only if the beans thicken too much.
- 8.) Add salt and seasoning, taste and adjust as needed.
- 9.) Remove a cup of the beans, mash them with a fork and put them back in the pot; stir.

You can do these in a crock pot if you want to get them started before you go to bed so they're ready in time for dinner which is lunch. Here's how:

- 1.) Start soaking the beans in the morning.
- 2.) Drain, rinse and place into crockpot.
- 3.) Sauté vegetables; add to crockpot.
- 4.) Stir in all of the remaining ingredients, except for the salt, Cajun seasoning and rice.
- 5.) Cook on high until beans are tender, 6 to 8 hours, or low 9 to 12 hours. Length of time will depend on freshness of beans.
- 6.) When they're done, remove 1 cup of beans and mash, return to the crockpot and stir in.

Collard Greens

Ingredients:

- 2 large bunches of collard greens, cleaned, rinsed, rolled up like cigars and chopped
- Water to cover plus an inch
- 2 large pinches of kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of Cajun seasoning (like that Everglades Salt I told you about up above)
- 1 cup of chopped onion
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- Couple dashes of hot sauce
- 2 cups of vegetable broth
- 1-2 tablespoons of sugar
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Vinegar pepper sauce, for the table

Directions:

- 1.) Put all this minus the pepper flakes and vinegar pepper which you HAVE to have... in a large stock pot.
- 2.) Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 45 minutes if you like them firmer; 1-1/2 to 2 hours if you like them more cooked down, stirring occasionally.
- 3.) Add vegetable broth if liquid cooks down too low.
- 4.) Taste, season with additional salt and pepper as needed; sprinkle with dried pepper flakes, if desired.
- 5.) Serve with the pepper vinegar on the table.

Notes:

For turnip greens, peel and dice the turnip root and cook about 30 minutes in the stock pot covered with water while you strip, wash and chop the greens. Proceed with the recipe as above.

Real South Cornbread

Get yourself a box of Jiffy cornbread mix and follow the directions on the box. Here's the most important part: Throw the box away before anyone comes into the kitchen to see what smells so good. Trust.

Bake it in a honest to goodness cast iron skillet, though. Gets 'em every time. Slather with butter and make sure there's a hunk of butter on a plate for the table, too. (Editor's Note: or make honey butter, which is just wonderful. Beat one stick of softened BUTTER together with half a cup of honey. You can also add a teaspoon of cinnamon, nutmeg or ginger to spice things up a bit.)

Mac 'n Cheese

Ingredients:

- 3 cups macaroni, uncooked
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1½ cups milk
- salt & pepper
- paprika (optional)
- 1 cup smoked cheddar cheese, shredded (GOT to have SMOKED Cheddar)
- 6-8 oz. Velveeta, shredded or cubed
- 1 cup sharp cheddar
- 1 cup Colby/ Monterey Jack , shredded

Directions:

- 1.) Preheat oven to 350.
- 2.) Cook macaroni until just a little less than al dente. (Look on the back of the box to see how long you need to cook your pasta for it to reach al dente.) DO NOT overcook; this stuff is going in the oven in a minute.
- 3.) Drain pasta and set aside.
- 4.) In a large bowl, add milk, heavy cream & cheeses (**except for the smoked cheddar**) and stir to combine.
- 5.) Taste the milk mixture and add salt and pepper until it tastes right. I can't tell you what that is but you will know.
- 6.) You can add onion powder, garlic powder, paprika, etc. You're on your own here. (Editor's note: Experiment with this. It's fun!)
- 7.) When you are content with the taste, stir in the eggs.

- 8.) Put the mostly but not all the way cooked macaroni in a 9" x 9" inch baking dish and pour the milk/cheese mixture over macaroni making sure the cheese is well distributed.
- 9.) Top with smoked cheddar cheese. (I add a little more Colby Jack as well.)
- 10.) Sprinkle with paprika and/or black pepper, if desired.
- 11.) Bake for 35-45 minutes. **Do not over bake.** It may be a bit loose when you take it out of the oven but it will firm up as it cools.
- 12.) Let set for 10-15 minutes (if you can STAND it!)

NOW: Make you some peach cobbler or some banana budding with the Nilla wafers all stuck around the side of the bowl and some Sweet Tea and EAT. You might wanna put on your Eatin' Pants[®] because this is not Diet Time. It'll make you slap your Mama, it's so good... which is Suth'rin speak for letting you know this food is so good you will flat lose your mind...

Alrighty then- I hope you enjoyed this month's stroll through the mind of Tracey. Hopefully, you didn't get lost in there!

If anyone else would like to be the featured cooker in a Dishin' with Debbie- step right up!

That's all for this month, but start thinking about what culinary delights are conjured up in your mind by Little Women (or Little Men) by Louisa May Alcott.

So you can be ready for the rest of the year:

- July- The Da Vinci Code- Dan Brown
- August -The Life of Pi - Yann Martell
- September - The Book Thief - Markus Zusak
- October - It- Stephen King
- November - The Hunger Games - Suzanne Collins
- December - Water for Elephants, Sara Gruen

Send me those recipes as soon as you can! I will be forever grateful to you to not have to come up with them all on my own.



Please send recipes to dereihart@pa.gov. Hurry up and do it now so you
Debbie

UNTIL NEXT MONTH- KEEP ON DISHIN'!