

## Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' Recipes from Cross Creek Cookery

### Crab Salad (Serves 4 to 6)

- 2 cups crab meat
- ½ cup diced cucumber
- ¼ cup finely cut celery
- ½ cup home-made mayonnaise, made with lemon juice



Serve on crisp lettuce leaves with extra bowl of mayonnaise. Any decoration is a desecration. Serve thin bread and butter sandwiches or cream-cheese sandwiches.

### Mrs. Chancey's Spanish Bean Soup (serves 8-10)

I associate soup with either poverty or formal elegance. The poor make a meal of it. The elegant dabble in it, beginning a long dinner of main courses with a cup or plate of it, aggravatingly small if the soup be good. One small serving of a ravishing soup is infuriating. It is like seeing the Pearly Gates swing shut in one's face after one brief glimpse of Heaven. As happy a gustatory experience as can come to mortal man, is to sit down in one of the Cuban restaurants in Tampa and eat all one can hold of Spanish bean soup... (she writes on and on about the experience of soup with hot crusty chunks of Cuban bread that you eat "as long as you have strength to break and butter them..." but I'll omit that. Fortunately, she continues, Cubans ...are generous folk, and I have been able to bring home to the Creek backwoods the recipes for these hearty and delicious soups. Those of the Mayor's wife are the best in Tampa.

- 1 pound Spanish beans
- ½ tsp soda
- 2 pound ham hock
- 4 large onions
- 4 buttons garlic
- ½ bell pepper
- 4 Spanish sausages
- 4 pig's feet (fresh)
- 4 medium-sized potatoes
- 1 small head cabbage
- ½ tsp saffron (or about 10 cents worth)
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste
- 2 bay leaves



Add soda to water and soak beans overnight. Wash beans well the next morning. Cover ham hock well with cold water, add beans and start cooking slowly. Cut up onions, garlic, bell pepper, and in about twenty minutes add to soup together with bay leaves and saffron. Cut sausages in pieces of four each and add to soup. Cut pig's feet in half, lengthwise, and cook separately until tender; then add to soup and cook slowly. Cut up potatoes and add to soup, and when beans are about done, cut up cabbage as for slaw and add to soup. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Be sure to cook slowly always. More water may be needed at end, but soup is supposed to be very thick. Imported sausage cannot be bought now but domestic will do.

## Mother's Sunday Night Salad (serves 6 to 8)

- 1 cup finely diced tart apples of fine flavor
- 1 cup diced pineapple
- 4 oranges, the meat cut in pieces
- 1 cup seeded Malaga grapes
- 4 sliced bananas
- ½ cup celery
- 1 cup broken nut meats



In mother's firm handwriting I find, "hickory nut meats or pecans are a necessity to make a success."

## Mother's Fruit Salad Dressing

- ½ cup sugar (scant)
- ½ cup of water
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbs flour
- 2 tsp butter

Put water, sugar, and butter in a small pan to boil. Dissolve the flour in two tablespoons water, add to the unbeaten egg and beat smooth with a rotary egg beater. Add boiling syrup and cook over a low flame, stirring constantly, until smooth and thick. Cool. Add a little thick cream, about one-quarter cup, when ready to mix with the fruit salad. Serve whipped cream on top of the salad.

It is possible that the fruit salad we begged Mother to make on Sunday nights, offering to pick out the nut meats as a bribe, tasted so good because it was Mother's—and I was young. Nothing ever seems to take the place of certain childhood favorite dishes. But the combination of fruits could not go wrong.

## Corn Souffle (serves 6)

- 1 can corn or 2 cups cooked corn cut from the cob (feel free to use canned)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbs sugar
- 2 cups very rich milk
- 1 Tbs cornstarch
- 3 or 4 eggs
- 4 Tbs melted butter



Put the corn through a sieve (i.e. drain it well). Add the salt, sugar and milk in which has been dissolved the cornstarch. Add the well-beaten eggs, then the melted butter. Turn into a buttered casserole and bake forty-five minutes in a four-hundred degree oven. This is very good as a vegetable with ham or pork or chicken.

## Hopping John (serves 4)

1 cup cow peas  
¼ lb white bacon (I'm using regular bacon which has a bit less fat)  
½ cup rice  
3 cups water  
Salt to taste



Boil together cow-peas and bacon cut in slices in three cups water, adding one-half teaspoon salt. When tender, add the separately cooked fluffy rice. Cook a few minutes more. Serve with cornbread. A small onion is sometimes diced and cooked with the peas. (Let's do this; it sounds good)

Cow-peas are a summer staple in the South. They are served, with apologies, on city tables, without apology on country tables, and greeted with gusto at both. We have black-eyed peas, little white conch peas (perhaps the best) and whippoorwill. Rural Florida folk cook green peas, which we call English peas, and fresh lima beans, which we call Fordhooks, with white bacon, but here I part company with the rest of the Creek. Nothing but Dora's butter, with perhaps a little of her cream, is delicate enough for their pale sweet taste.

## Sweet Potato Souffle (serves 6-8)

2 cups boiled, mashed sweet potatoes  
¾ tsp salt  
2 cups rich milk or thin cream  
½ cup honey  
2 tbs cornstarch dissolved in 4 tbs of the milk or cream  
3 beaten eggs  
1 cup broken pecan meats  
Marshmallows



Blend all ingredients except marshmallows, in order. Place in deep buttered casserole or baking dish. Bake slowly thirty to forty minutes, or until set, so that silver knife thrust into soufflé comes out clean. Cover top with marshmallows. Continue baking until marshmallows are puffed and brown. Serve immediately. This is one of the most luscious and utterly deadly dishes that I serve. I constantly expect guests to fall in convulsions after partaking. It is possible to omit the marshmallows, dotting with butter instead, and/or the pecans, but one might as well go the whole hog.

## Hush Puppies (serves 3 to 4)

1 cup cornmeal  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
½ tsp salt  
1 small to medium onion, minced  
1 egg  
¼ cup milk or water



Mix together the dry ingredients and the finely cut onion. Break the egg and beat vigorously. Add the liquid. Form into small patties, round or finger-shaped. Drop in the deep smoking fat until they are a deep brown. Serve hot at once. I have a strange recipe from St. Simon's Island, off the coast of Georgia, that adds a little sugar and a small can of corn to hush-puppies. Sugar is anathema in any cornbread except the most delicate cornmeal muffins. It is more than inappropriate to the hearty honesty of hush-puppies. As to the canned corn, this is a free country and the experimenter may legally add it if he so wishes. He may not legally, however, then call the results hush-puppies. From a rural correspondent I had passed on one of those flashes of genius that touch cooking at fortunate moments. His mother, he wrote, made hush-puppies in small round cakes about two inches in diameter, then with her finger poked a hole in the center as for a doughnut. This gives twice the amount of crisp, crunchy crust, the very best part of the hush-puppy, and does away with any tendency to a heavy center. I recommend it earnestly.

Hush puppies are in a class by themselves. They are a concomitant of the hunt, above all of the fishing trip. Fresh-caught fried fish without hush puppies are as man without woman, a beautiful woman without kindness, law without policemen. The story goes that they derived their name from old fishing and hunting expeditions, when folks ate to repletion, and the hunting dogs, already fed, smelled the delectable odors of human rations and howled for the things they scented. Cooks or sportsmen tossed the remaining cornmeal patties to the dogs, calling, "Hush, puppies!" and the dogs, devouring them, could ask no more of life, and hushed.

## Grandama Traphagen's Sugar Cookies

2 cups sugar  
1 cup butter (no substitute)  
3 eggs  
1 cup flour  
¼ tsp soda dissolved in  
3 Tbs hot water



Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add eggs, well beaten, then flour, then soda dissolved in hot water. Add enough more sifted flour to handle and roll out—not a flake more than is necessary. Cut in rather large rounds, about three inches across. Place on buttered cooky sheet and bake in hot oven (four hundred and twenty-five to four hundred and fifty degrees) about twelve minutes, or until golden brown. They must not be too brown. They are rich, of course, crisp when fresh, inclined to a delectable chewiness after standing.

## Black Bottom Pie

I think this is the most delicious pie I have ever eaten. The recipe from which I first made it was sent me by a generous correspondent, and originated at an old hotel in Louisiana. It seemed to me it could be no better. Then another correspondent sent me a recipe for black Bottom Poe that varied in some details from the first one. Having tried both, I now combine the two to make a pie so delicate, so luscious, that I hope to be propped up on my dying bed and fed a generous portion. Then I think that I should refuse outright to die, for life would be too good to relinquish. The pie seems fussy to make, but once a cook gets the hang of it, it goes easily.

### Crust

14 crisp ginger cookies

5 Tbs melted butter

Roll out the cookies fine. Mix with the melted butter. Line a nine-inch pie tin, sides and bottom, with the buttered crumbs, pressing flat and firm. Bake ten minutes in a slow oven to set.

### Basic Filling

1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups milk

1 Tbs cornstarch

4 Tbs cold water

1 Tbs gelatin

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar

4 egg yolks

Pinch of salt

### For Chocolate Layer

2 squares melted chocolate

1 teaspoon vanilla

### For Rum-Flavored Layer

4 egg whites

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp cream of tartar

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar

1 Tbs rum

### Topping

2 Tbs confectioners' sugar

1 cup whipping cream

Grated chocolate

Soak the gelatin in the cold water. Scald the milk, add one-half cup sugar mixed with the cornstarch, pinch of salt, then beaten egg yolks. Cook in double boiler, stirring constantly, until custard thickens and will coat the back of the spoon. Stir in the dissolved gelatin. Divide custard in half. To one-half add the melted chocolate and the vanilla. Turn while hot into the cooled crust, dipping out carefully so as not to disturb crust. Let the remaining half of the custard cool. Beat the egg whites and cream of tartar, adding one-half cup of sugar slowly. Blend with the cooled custard. Add one tablespoon rum. Spread carefully over the chocolate layer. Place in ice box to chill thoroughly. It may even stand overnight. When ready to serve, whip the heavy cream stiff, adding two tablespoons confectioners' sugar slowly. Pile over the top of the pie. Sprinkle with grated bitter or semi-sweet chocolate.

## Orange Ice Box Cake

This is technically a cake, but is so light and delicate that I include it among the light desserts.

1 cup orange juice

Grated rind of 1 orange

3 eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar

1 Tbs butter

1 cup heavy cream

1 Tbs cornstarch

2 sponge cake layers

Blend the sugar and cornstarch, add well-beaten egg yolks, butter, orange juice and grated rind, and cook in double boiler until thick. Cool. Beat together the egg whites and the cream and add to the cooled custard. Split the sponge cake layers and spread the mixture between layers and over the cake. Let stand in ice box overnight or at least six hours.



## Sweet Potato Pone

2 ½ cups raw grated sweet potatoes (yams)  
1 cup molasses  
2 eggs  
2 cups rich milk  
1 Tbs melted butter  
1 tsp ground ginger or grated orange rind  
1 Tbs brown sugar  
½ tsp powdered cinnamon



Add the molasses, well-beaten eggs, milk, melted butter and ginger or orange rind, in order, to the grated potatoes. Turn into a well-greased baking pan and bake about forty-five minutes in a moderate oven, sprinkling the brown sugar and cinnamon over the top at the end of the first twenty-five minutes.

This is a dessert peculiar to the Deep South, and the ingredients vary according to what the household possesses. I remember the time my friend Moe accepted, somewhat to my distress, an invitation to a family Christmas dinner my first year in Florida. He made no comment as he made his way through the meal that had taken me days to prepare. I said to him, "This is a typical Yankee Christmas dinner. Now tell me, what is a typical Cracker Christmas dinner?" "Whatever we can git, Ma'am," said Moe. "Whatever we can git." Sweet potato pone is made according to whatever we can git. The most rudimentary sweet potato pone is a thick, gelatinous pudding. Small fry consider it a treat of treats. Old Martha makes this type by peeling and grating raw sweet potatoes. To two cups of the grated potato she adds two tablespoons flour, three tablespoons of grease from fried white bacon, one-half teaspoon soda, one cup of Florida cane syrup, and enough water to make a rather thin mixture. This is baked in a shallow pan in a slow oven until set and slightly browned. When Martha has eggs, she adds an egg or two. When she has milk, she uses milk instead of water. When "the chillen" are coming to visit, she uses butter instead of the bacon grease. On these occasions she may have cream to churn and she chants: "Come, butter, come. Grandma waitin' for the chillen to come." From this simple recipe, sweet potato pone graduates to an elegant recipe like the one above (which we will taste).

## Hot Breads

A stranger who meant to be kind wrote me a "fan letter" about one of my books. We had a mutual acquaintance, it seemed, and of this acquaintance my correspondent had inquired as to my appearance. The answer was, "She looks like a woman who is a good cook and enjoys her own cooking." A. J. Cronin, that presumably saintly author..., questioned my ability to go off into the backwoods with a Dutch oven and emerge with "an Emily Post dinner for twelve." He called me "a plump impostor. If these brutal descriptions be true, the cause is undoubtedly Southern hot breads. She has much to say about bread. It is an old tale that the south is known as the land of the hot biscuit and the cold check...A female Northern friend of mine married a male Kentucky friend of mine. She refused at first to be bothered with the hours-long trouble of making Kentucky beaten biscuits. Just as the marriage was about to go on the rocks, and rightly, she saw the light. Beaten biscuits now hold the happy household together...Idella and I think that we improve on most backwoods biscuits. We use regular flour instead of self-rising, use probably more shortening, and mix in ordinary fashion in a bowl, measuring as we go...I am torn between the type of fluffy, tender, falling apart in layers biscuits made by my mother and my grandmother and by me, before I became a Floridian and the biscuits made by the best of Cross Creek cooks...Idella's Crisp Biscuits, for example. Here is a listing (sans recipes) of various hot breads from which some will be baked for us:

Florida Backwoods Biscuits, Mother's Biscuits, Idella's Crisp Biscuits, Hoe Cake, Corn Pone, Oven Cornbread, Cornmeal Muffins, Aunt Effie's Custard Johnny Cake, Spoonbread, Crackling Bread, Hush Puppies (we'll have these for sure), Parker House Rolls, Zelma's Ice Box rolls, Breakfast Muffins, Idella's Luncheon Muffins, Sour Cream Muffins

A few more excerpts of Marjorie's extolling and explaining bread:  
(some of the recipes may be found on line; all are in [Cross Creek Cookery](#))

I told a tale in Cross Creek that sounds like one of Irvin Cobb's yarns, of a Northerner who visited the south and never got to taste a hot Southern Biscuit. He was a great talker, and as the maid passed the biscuits he would take one, butter it, put it down, and launch into conversation. Reaching for his biscuit, his hostess would say, "Oh, no! You must have a hot one." She would ring for the maid and the biscuits, the guest would take one, butter it, put it down, give forth, only to have his biscuit snatched from him as he was ready for it. As the tale goes, he left the South without experiencing one of its greatest delights.

Bread to the Floridian is cornbread. This is as it should be, for corn is plentiful, it may be bought cheaply when not raised on the place...There are infinite gradations of cornbread, from the hoe-cake of slavery and Civil War times when it was baked on hoes before an open flame and the soldiers baked it on their bayonets before the bivouac fires, up to the melting softness of spoonbread. Corn pone is hoe cake dressed up a little...the pone is cooked in a deep iron skillet over a slow flame, the batter, just thick enough to hold together...I think I never ate a poor spoon bread. Most of the good recipes are similar, the variance being largely in the number of eggs.

Two recipes for rolls have played a part in my life. The first is almost certainly responsible for my later years as a cook, for it was in learning to make superb Parker House rolls when in cooking school at the age of twelve, that I first knew the delights of culinary acclaim. I still have, somewhat damaged by Florida cockroaches, my class cook-book of that early era. The other recipe for rolls comes from my friend Zelma, the local census-taker...It is as simple a recipe as I know for raised rolls, as delicious, as convenient...It reaches its perfection when baked out of doors in a Dutch oven. Cast iron has never been improved on for cooking. Let no modern cook feel pity for our fore-mothers who baked their breads and heir meats in a Dutch oven on an open hearth.



Parker House Rolls



Idella's Crisp Biscuits



Hoe Cakes



Zelma's Ice Box Rolls



Spoonbread, Corn Pone, Cornbread

