



Wistful Comfort Food

Comfort Food. It's about real food like warm biscuits and gravy.

By MaryAnna Clemons

Photos by MaryAnna Clemons

Don't be shy about asking for help from young family members when it comes to kneading your biscuit dough.

Glasses serve double duty as a biscuit cutting tool.

Mmmmm. Comfort food! Comfort food cooking is about real food (like warm biscuits and gravy!).

My mother could open her cupboard or refrigerator and create a complete meal for our family in an hour or less. She didn't microwave the nutrients right out of our roast beef stews.

She didn't add fake sweeteners to her homemade apple pies.

She didn't pour and mix potatoes out of a box.

And she definitely didn't order out for fast food (who had the money for that?).

My Long Learning Curve

Since I always thought being in the kitchen was akin to a torture chamber, I didn't learn the tricks and tips my mother wanted to teach me.

Instead, as I moved on, I settled for the convenience of "dinners in a box."

I jumped on the popular food bandwagons of the day, only to be disappointed when it turned out that meat wasn't really going to kill me, that milk with my cookies wasn't really going to give me colon cancer, and that putting real sugar in my coffee is better than chemicals in a small pink packet.

I've tried the diets that called for protein only, and the shakes that added strange green things to it that you'll never taste (riiiighhhhtttt).

And none of it ever gave me a warm feeling inside.

Trouble with Today's Food

The ingredients in our food today don't even resemble real food and I didn't start realizing that until I had my second child, who is now 8.

Due to her condition of Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis at just 1-year-old, I started researching foods (among other things) and realized that some food will aggravate arthritis.

I learned that: Herbs were worthy, underappreciated life forms that can heal, calm and treat humans and animals

Aluminum is hard to detoxify out of our bodies

MSG and Aspartame are almost ubiquitous in our overly-processed world

The latest books showed me that our food is being genetically modified and that producers don't have to (and aren't) labeling these products.



Our First Real Garden

So, I started my first real garden last year. My daughters helped me plant the tomatoes and waited patiently for their first taste of a home-grown tomato.

“This is awesome, how could you have ever let me eat a store bought tomato?” My oldest daughter asked me.

It's About Real Food ...

Comfort cooking isn't about bandwagons, boxed food or diets – it's about real food. It's about connections with the people you love. It's about taking the time to appreciate the gift of being able to create and nourish through food. And most importantly, it's about knowing what you are putting into your child's body--and yours, too.

I've changed everything about the way I cook – sans microwave and Teflon – and I can only wish for lost time with my mother in her kitchen.

... And Quality Kitchen Time

Today, I teach my children how to create meals from simple ingredients, how to cook with sourdough starter, and how to treat common ailments with herbs. We make biscuits, pizzas, bread sticks, oatmeal bars, French fries, pies, soups and more.

I cherish every minute I can corner them in the kitchen with me, and I use that time to tell them stories of a grandma they never had an opportunity to know.

Top

Sourdough No-Rise Biscuits

I used Morrison's gravy mix for the gravy and cooked up some sausage that doesn't use preservatives or MSG --most sausage in your store's meat section has ample amounts of MSG.

For breakfast we'll add in-season melon and hot tea or coffee -- comfort time, comfort food.

Ingredients 3 cups of flour (I like King Arthur's Flour for its quality, and it's never bleached and doesn't use aluminum.) 1 cup of sourdough starter (I take this out to come to room temperature before I use - don't forget to replace what you used. If you used a cup of starter, add a cup of flour and a cup of water, stir, let bubble, return to fridge.) 1 cup of milk (also allowed to come to room temperature) 1 tsp. salt 1 T. baking powder (aluminum free) 2 T. melted butter (or you can use the grease from your sausage) Morrison's Gravy Mix

Preparation

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix dry ingredients and add starter and milk. Mix to a firm feeling dough, about 15 kneads, adding flour as needed to keep the dough from being too sticky. Roll out on a floured surface and cut your biscuits (we used a cold glass to roll and to cut). Place on greased cooking sheet, or grease the biscuits by dunking them in melted butter and then putting on cooking sheet.

Bake 12-14 minutes, checking at 10.

About the Author: A California native, MaryAnna Clemons, lives in Colorado, where she shares 35 acres with four kids, six horses, five dogs, five cats and one chicken.

Top

More Recipes