

## **Bon Appétit!**

*by Marilyn Reeves*

My dear mother – may she rest in peace – was at best, a very mediocre cook. But, to her credit, she tried. Since Dad kept our larder filled with the pride of his hunting and fishing expeditions, we ate a lot of elk and venison and trout. She would coat the slabs of wild meat with flour, add herbs like rosemary and thyme, and fry it to the tender consistency of old shoe soles. The trout was rolled in corn meal and also fried. To this day, I won't even look at a piece of wild meat nor consume any kind of fish other than tuna. I wonder why?

Her idea of spaghetti was some sort of casserole with hamburger, spaghetti noodles and tomato soup. Chow mein was celery, onion and bean sprouts simmered in a pot for hours until limp and mushy, but she did add soy sauce. So her cooking left something to be desired, and – call it vanity – but I think I'm the better cook.

Unlike a lot of single retirees, whose meals consist of opening a can of soup or microwaving a TV dinner, I actually do cook for myself. Breakfast is pretty much the standard fare, and I usually eat a sandwich for lunch. But dinner consists of meat, potatoes or some other side dish, a hot vegetable, and salad. If I fix a casserole, I eat the left-overs – sometimes storing them in small containers in the freezer until I'm ready to enjoy them again – but little goes to waste.

The problem I've been having lately is that my 71-year-old tummy has started to rebel against many of the foods I like to eat. I make some pretty mean stuffed shells filled with mozzarella and ricotta cheeses and topped with a tomato sauce that has been slow simmered in my crock pot with Italian sausage, herbs and garlic. Those stuffed shells are delicious if I do say so! My tummy thinks otherwise, however, and will protest by keeping me awake half the night with stomach cramps. It simply won't behave itself like it used to. But at least those stuffed shells taste good going down.

My desserts, on the other hand, are nothing to brag about. Mom had me beat hands down when it came to baking. She could roll out pie dough on the kitchen table and somehow manage to pick it up and place it in the pie pan, fill it with scrumptious fresh apples, peaches, cherries or berries, add sugar, cinnamon and butter, and then – miracle of miracles – top it all with yet another nice, manageable round of dough that baked into a flaky crust. Try as I might, I end up having to paste my pie dough together like the pieces a jigsaw puzzle. Even wax paper doesn't help. So my mother remains the queen of pie baking – I didn't inherit that gene.

But if you would like some nice beef stroganoff made with pieces of tender sirloin, fresh mushrooms, onions and garlic simmered in a red wine sauce – come onna my house. I'm gonna make you happy.

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