

Side Dishes



Whenever possible, my mother had me in the kitchen making the side dishes for our evening meal. Salad, rice, vegetables – you name it, I was making it. This picture, taken in 1986 when I was in the ninth grade, shows to what lengths I would go to for a proper salad. This salad contains, iceberg and romaine lettuce, marinated green beans, kidney beans, and garbanzo beans, green onions, marinated artichoke hearts, tomatoes, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, carrots, and celery. Yes, I wrote the ingredients on the back of the picture! Of course, it had to look perfect as if the Queen Mother was coming to inspect it. From my mother I learned presentation is half the meal.

Alison's Famous Potato Salad

Prep Time: 45 minutes

Chill Time: 2-3 hours

5 pounds white or russet potatoes

7 eggs

1 large jar of mayonnaise

16 dill pickle slices

1 medium yellow onion
 Black olives (optional)
 1-teaspoon ground mustard
 1-teaspoon black pepper
 2 teaspoons salt
 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
 2 tablespoons granulated garlic

Garnish:

Paprika

Parsley or cilantro

Scrub potatoes in warm water and set in very large stockpot. Cover completely with warm water by at least two inches. Wash eggs in hot water with a little soap, being sure to completely rinse and remove all residues. Gently place eggs in water with potatoes to hard boil. Bring water to a boil, and cook 35 minutes. While the potatoes and eggs boil, chop pickles into little bits. Dice yellow onion into small pieces. Dice and add olives if desired. Combine pickles, onions, mayonnaise, herbs and spices in a very large bowl. Mix well and set aside.



When finished boiling, remove potatoes from water. Cube potatoes into chunky bite size pieces, do not remove skin, and place them in the large bowl containing mixture. After placing each cubed potato in bowl, stir gently to even coat with mixture. Crack and peel eggs, chopping them into little bites. Gently mix eggs into the nearly completed potato salad.

Lightly sprinkle paprika over the top of the salad. Sprinkle chopped parsley or cilantro over the top for a touch of color. Chill and serve cold.

Alison's Red Grape-Cranberry Sauce



Prep Time: 30 minutes

Chill Time: 2 hours

1 ½ cups fresh cranberries
½ cups fresh red grapes
1-cup sugar
1 cup cranberry juice
½ cup water
½ teaspoons freshly grated ginger

Pour water, cranberry juice and sugar in a 3-quart saucepan and bring to a boil. Once sugar is dissolved, add cranberries, grapes, and ginger. Bring to a rolling boil. Reduce heat and cover for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve chilled, or warm.

Cranberry Raspberry Sauce

Same Prep & Chill Time as Red Grape Sauce

1 (12-ounce) package fresh cranberries
2 cups fresh raspberries

1-cup Merlot (red wine)

1-cup sugar

Combine cranberries, raspberries, Merlot, and sugar in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Mash the cranberries with the back of spoon, as needed. Lower heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Cool at room temperature; pour into serving bowl, cover and refrigerate. Serve hot or cold, as desired. Makes about 4 1/2 cups.

Alison's Secret Mashed Potatoes

5lbs russet potatoes
1 stick salted sweetened butter
8 oz cream cheese
12 oz sour cream
3 tablespoons Italian Seasoning
1 tablespoon crushed garlic
Salt & Pepper to taste

Scrub potatoes and boil for 45 minutes. In a large bowl, combine all other ingredients except potatoes. Mix lightly with a hand mixer. Slowly add potatoes one by one making sure there are no lumps besides the potato skins. Mix until smooth and serve warm. Serves 12, at least!

Cauliflower Gratin

1 (8-inch) cauliflower, trimmed and cut into florets
2 cups milk or heavy cream
3 tablespoons butter, divided use
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese, plus 2 tablespoons, divided use
Salt and white pepper to taste
Pinch of ground nutmeg
2 tablespoons fine breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 375°

In a large saucepan or Dutch oven, bring 4 quarts of water to a boil. Add cauliflower. Boil until cauliflower is cooked tender-crisp, about 9 minutes. Drain, refresh with cold water. Drain again.

Prepare béchamel sauce. In a medium saucepan, heat milk to a boil. Remove from heat and set aside. Melt butter in a heavy-bottomed, large saucepan on medium heat. Add flour and stir for about 2 minutes (do not brown).

Remove from heat. Add hot milk in a thin stream, whisking constantly. Increase heat to medium-high. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil gently for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in 1/2 cup cheese. Add salt and white pepper to taste. Add nutmeg and stir.

Pour 1/3 of sauce in a 12-inch oval gratin pan or an 11 x 7-inch baking dish. Add drained cauliflower in a single layer. Season cauliflower with salt and pepper. Pour remaining sauce over top. Sprinkle with breadcrumbs and cheese. Cut remaining butter into small pieces and place sporadically on top of cheese. Gratin can be covered and refrigerated at this point for several hours.

Bake in a preheated oven for 30 minutes. If you want a browner, crisper top, place under broiler, watching carefully to prevent burning. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Fruit Salad

1 small watermelon
1 honeydew melon
1 cantaloupe
1 bunch red seedless grapes

1 bunch green seedless grapes
2 peaches
1 small basket strawberries
1 can pineapple chunks
3 kiwi



Slice watermelon in half. Using a melon ball scoop, remove the insides of both halves of watermelon, reserve halves. In a large bowl, combine watermelon balls, honeydew balls, and cantaloupe balls. Open can of pineapple chunks. Pour juice and chunks over the melon balls. Wash grapes and pluck from bunches, add to melon chunks. Wash and slice peaches, strawberries, and kiwi, add to melon mixture. Stir fruit together lightly to evenly coat everything with pineapple juice. Scoop fruit into the watermelon halves. Chill and serve.

Greek Salad



1 medium cucumber, peeled and chopped or English cucumber unpeeled
2 medium tomatoes, diced
1 medium red onion, diced
1 bunch green onions, diced (optional)
1 bunch parsley, chopped (optional)
8 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

Dressing:

¼ cup red wine vinegar
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon pepper
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon Italian Seasoning

Serve on pita or flatbread, or over a bed of romaine and spring greens and spinach.



Mushrooms in Burgundy

Preparation Time: 1 hour
4 servings

1-pound mushrooms
½ bell pepper
1 onion
½ cup butter



1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
¼ cup brown sugar
½ cup burgundy wine
Fresh ground black pepper

Wash the mushrooms and cut each one in half. Wash bell pepper and slice into small pieces. Peel and chop onion. Melt butter in a 3-quart saucepan and sauté onion until tender. Meanwhile mix together mustard, Worcestershire sauce,

brown sugar and burgundy. Season to taste with black pepper.

When the onion is not opaque, add mushrooms and peppers to pan, sauté a few minutes stirring often. As the mushrooms begin to brown and reduce in size, add the sauce. Simmer the mixture on low for 45 minutes, or until the sauces I reduced and thickens.

Pseudo Caesar Salad

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
2 servings

7-8 leaves Romaine lettuce
2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons Caesar or Italian dressing
¼ cup croutons

Wash lettuce and tear into bite-size pieces, place in a salad bowl. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese, dressing and croutons and toss lightly.

Matt's Green Bean Casserole



1 can French cut green beans
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1-cup mozzarella cheese or Swiss cheese
1-cup milk
1-cup French fried onions

In a casserole dish, combine the green beans, soup, cheese and milk. Stir thoroughly. Bake in a 375° oven for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle the French fried onions on top. Return to oven for an additional 5 – 10 minutes. Serve warm. Makes 5-6 side dish servings.

Swiss Cheese Green Bean Casserole

2 (14-ounce) cans French-style green beans
 2 tablespoons butter
 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 1-cup sour cream
 1-teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 1-teaspoon sugar
 3 green onions, slice
 1 cup Swiss cheese, shredded
 Paprika

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a 2-quart casserole dish and set aside.

In sauté pan melt butter and add flour, cook and stir for 1 minute over medium heat. Add sour cream and heat. Remove from heat and add salt, pepper, sugar and onions, stirring to mix. Add green beans, gently mixing well and pour into prepared dish. Sprinkle with cheese and paprika.

Bake for about 20 minutes or until cheese bubbles and turns golden brown. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Holiday Stuffing

This is a stuffing springing from the motto ‘Waste not, want not’. While chopping onions for the baked beans, I realized I had too many diced, so I

decided to save them until I could think of a better use for them rather than throwing them away. Since I had my cutting board out, I began to work on the vegetable tray. Lo and behold, I had left over bits of carrots and celery; into the bowl with them. I then started to shred carrots for the carrot cake. I only needed two cups, but wound up with more. Into the mishmash bowl they went. Turning my attention to making the stuffing, I ran across this bowl of forgotten tidbits. Well, into the stuffing they went, along with a small, tart, granny smith apple.

½ large white onion, diced
 1 carrot, shredded
 1 celery stalk, chopped
 1 small granny smith apple, cored & diced
 1 cup of wild rice
 1 cup of wheat berries



Bring water to boil in a saucepan, cook rice and wheat berries, boil 45 minutes until rice and wheat berries are cooked. Add in chopped vegetables, apple, and flavorings of your choice like sage, thyme, etc. Stuff in turkey and cook.

Apple-Onion Turkey Stuffing

This bread-based stuffing is flavored with a zesty wine broth. Extra crunch is provided by the apples and almonds.

- 5 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups soft bread crumbs
- 2 apples, peeled, cored and chopped
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 cup chopped almonds
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice

Melt butter and sauté onion until translucent, about 5 minutes; add breadcrumbs to onions, stirring to combine. Gently stir in apples and white wine; cook for 5 minutes longer. Stir in



lemon juice, nutmeg and allspice; mix well. Stuff into a turkey or bake at 350° on a buttered and covered baking dish for 30 minutes. Makes 8 servings.

Stir in breadcrumbs, stuffing mix. Set mixture aside until ready to stuff turkey. After the stuffing is done, serve it in the half of the pumpkin that didn't get used while making the homemade pumpkin pies. See above.

Root Vegetable Gratin



I use a mandolin to cut the vegetables into thin slices; they will turn tender when baked with chicken broth and a little cream.

- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled
- 1 butternut squash neck
- 1 medium rutabaga, peeled and halved lengthwise
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 3/4 cup Japanese bread crumbs
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Preheat the oven to 375°. Using a mandolin, slice the potatoes and squash lengthwise 1/8 inch thick. Slice the rutabaga crosswise 1/8 inch thick.



Spray an 8-by-12 inch glass baking dish with cooking spray. Arrange half of the potatoes in the dish, overlapping them slightly; season with salt and pepper. Top with half of the rutabaga and the squash, seasoning each layer. Repeat the layering. Pour the broth over and around the vegetables.



Cover tightly with foil and bake for 1 hour, until the vegetables are almost tender when pierced. Remove the foil and pour the cream over the gratin. Bake for about 30 minutes longer, until the liquid has thickened.



Preheat the broiler. Mix the bread crumbs with the oil and season with salt and pepper; sprinkle over the gratin. Broil 3 inches from the heat for 2 minutes, until golden, rotating for even browning. Let the gratin stand for 10 minutes, then serve.

Tricolor Pasta Salad



3 pounds of tricolor pasta
 1 can small whole black olives
 1 package grape tomatoes
 16 oz. finely shredded parmesan cheese
 1 bunch green onions, diced
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 jar yellow pepperoncini, thinly sliced
 1 bottle Light Cheese Fantastico dressing by Bernstein's

Boil pasta in salted water. Combine all other ingredients with the cooled pasta in a large bowl and toss until everything is covered in the dressing.