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Jam Muffins

2 cups all-purpose flour	1 cup milk
3 T. sugar	1 egg, beaten
3 tsp. baking powder	¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted
½ tsp. salt	6 tsp. jam, more or less (any flavor of jam will do)

Preheat the oven to 425°.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.

In a medium bowl, mix together the milk, egg, and melted butter. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and then add the liquid mixture into the well all at once. Stir just until moistened. Do not overmix.

Fill greased muffin cups two-thirds full; add ½ teaspoon jam (or a bit more if you desire) to the top of each muffin, and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until done. Remove the muffins from the pan and cool them on a wire rack.

Makes about 10 muffins

Lemon Muffins

2 cups all-purpose flour	2 T. sugar
3 tsp. baking powder	1½ cups milk
½ tsp. salt	¼ cup cooking oil
1 box instant lemon pudding mix	Powdered sugar for sprinkling (optional)

Preheat the oven to 425°.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, pudding mix, and sugar. In another bowl, mix together the milk and cooking oil and pour it into the flour mixture, stirring just until blended. Do not overmix.

Fill greased muffin cups two-thirds full and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until done. Remove the muffins from the oven and place them on a wire rack to cool. Sprinkle them with powdered sugar if desired.

Makes about 8 muffins



**The experts recommend
using unsalted butter**

in baked goods. Now, I might be a baking cretin, but I never keep unsalted butter around, and I've been baking goodies without the use of unsalted butter for many years without so much as a peep from anyone.



Cornflake Baked Chicken

½ cup mayonnaise
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. garlic salt

½ tsp. dried rosemary
1 (3 to 3½ lb.) frying chicken, cut into pieces
1½ cups crushed cornflakes

Preheat the oven to 350°.

In a bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, salt, garlic salt, and rosemary. Place the crushed cornflakes in a shallow dish, such as a pie pan. Brush the pieces of chicken with the mayonnaise mixture and then roll them in the cornflakes.

Place the chicken, skin side up, in a lightly greased baking pan; don't crowd the pieces. Bake the chicken uncovered for 1 hour or until all chicken pieces are thoroughly cooked.

I've used this recipe with boneless, skinless chicken breasts with great success, although I reduce the bake time by about 20 minutes. How long you bake the chicken is contingent upon the size of the individual pieces.

Serves 5

Cottage Pie

2 T. butter
2 cups leftover cooked meat (any kind), diced
3 T. flour

1 can vegetable soup plus enough water to
make a total of 2 cups
Leftover mashed potatoes (or make a fresh batch,
enough to cover your pie)

Preheat the oven to 375°.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter and add the diced meat; cook, stirring, until the meat is hot. Add the flour and stir until well blended to make a roux, then pour in the soup mixture and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture has thickened into a runny gravy.

Turn out the complete contents of the skillet into a 9 x 9-inch baking dish. Top the meat mixture with a thick layer of mashed potatoes. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the potatoes are lightly browned on top.

Serves 5

Note: I often make this dish using ground beef that I cook fresh. Just omit the butter in this recipe when cooking the meat, and do not drain off the fat after browning the meat, but use the fat to make the gravy. This will give a nice flavor to the finished dish. Add butter to the fat only if needed to equal 2 tablespoons. Add the flour and proceed as directed with the soup and other ingredients. Also, I usually use a pint jar of my home-canned vegetable soup in place of a store-bought can of soup. Really, this is the sort of recipe that doesn't take careful measuring. Just throw what you have on hand into the pot and top it with mashed potatoes that have been made with rich milk and plenty of butter.

Basic Per Loaf Bread

For each loaf you wish to make, use the following measurements.

1 cup warm water, about 110° (or use half water, half milk)	1 T. honey, sugar, or other sweetener
1 tsp. melted shortening, butter, or vegetable oil	1 tsp. active dry yeast (for 4 loaves, use 1 rounded tablespoon)
1 scant tsp. salt	3 cups all-purpose flour

In a mixing bowl, stir together the water, melted shortening, salt, and sugar. Sprinkle the yeast over the top of the mixture and let it stand until the yeast dissolves and starts bubbling a bit, about 10 minutes.

Stir in half of the flour (1½ cups flour for each loaf) and beat the batter until smooth. You can use an electric mixer for this part if desired, but you can also mix it by hand using a large wooden spoon. Add enough of the remaining flour to make a dough ball that holds together and comes away from the sides of the bowl.


Place the dough onto a floured work surface and knead well for 5 to 10 minutes, adding more flour as needed to keep the dough from sticking.

Put the dough into a large greased bowl and turn the dough to grease all the surfaces. Cover the bowl with a towel and let the dough rise until doubled, about 1 to 1½ hours.

Punch down the dough and then lightly knead it for a minute or so, grease all the surfaces once again, and let it rise in the greased bowl a second time until doubled. Punch down the dough and form it into a loaf (or however many loaves you've decided to make). Place the loaf seam side down into a greased loaf pan and let it rise until almost doubled, about 45 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 400°. Place the loaf in the preheated oven and then immediately turn the heat down to 350°. Bake about 30 minutes or until done. Remove the loaf from the oven, grease the top if desired (to help keep the top soft), take it out of the baking pan, and cool it on a wire rack.

Makes 1 loaf



When rising sourdough or yeast dough, the rising time will be affected by the ambient temperature. Cooler temperatures mean longer rising times, so take that into consideration when you are estimating what time the baked goods will be ready. I've found that 70 to 72 degrees works the best for me.

Basic Sourdough Bread

6½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour	1½ cups water
1½ cups active sourdough starter	3½ tsp. salt

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients except the salt. Cover the bowl and let the dough sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes. Sprinkle the salt over the dough and mix it again to fully incorporate the salt throughout the dough. Keeping the dough in the container, stretch and fold the dough every 30 minutes or so, about 5 or 6 times, covering the bowl each time while the dough rests. Keeping the bowl covered, let the dough rise in the bowl until about doubled, usually 4 to 8 hours or overnight.

Gently turn out the dough onto a floured work surface and shape it into 1 or 2 loaves, then transfer the dough to a baking sheet. Cover the dough with plastic wrap so it doesn't dry out and let it rise for 2 to 4 hours or until almost doubled. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 400° to 450° (a higher temperature will result in a darker crust).

Slash the top and bake the bread for 40 to 45 minutes or until done. Cool it on a wire rack.

Makes 1 large or 2 small loaves



Old-Fashioned Vegetable Beef Soup

¼ cup vegetable oil	6 cups water
1 small onion, diced	1 (16 oz.) can cut green beans (don't use French-style) or 1 pint jar home-canned green beans, drained
3 stalks celery, sliced	1 (8 oz.) can baby lima beans, drained
2 carrots, peeled and sliced	4 tsp. salt
½ small head cabbage, coarsely shredded	½ tsp. pepper
1 zucchini, chopped	½ tsp. basil
1½ lbs. beef stew meat, cut into bite-size pieces	
6 medium (or 4 large) potatoes, peeled and diced	
2 (14½ oz.) cans diced tomatoes, undrained or 1 quart home-canned tomatoes	

In a heavy-bottomed soup pot, add the oil, onion, celery, carrots, cabbage, and zucchini, and cook until the vegetables are lightly browned. With a slotted spoon, remove the vegetables to a large bowl and set them aside for now.

In the same pot, use what is left of the oil to cook the beef cubes, stirring frequently, until all the pieces are well browned on all sides. Add the reserved cooked vegetables and all the other ingredients and heat to boiling. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and simmer the soup for about 30 minutes or until the meat and potatoes are tender.

Serves 8

Note: If you are cooking for those who don't love lima beans, you can substitute a cup of frozen peas, only adding them during the last few minutes of cooking. This is a beautiful—and versatile—soup.

Quick and Easy Tomato Soup

2 (6 oz.) cans tomato paste	¼ tsp. garlic powder
2 quarts water	1 T. sugar
2 stalks celery, chunked into thirds	Pepper to taste
1 T. sugar	1 bay leaf (optional, but good)
1 tsp. salt (go easy on the salt; you can always add more later)	¼ to ½ cup milk, half-and-half, or heavy cream
¼ tsp. each oregano, basil, thyme, rosemary, onion powder, and celery seed	1 T. butter
	1 T. flour

In a large pot, combine all the ingredients up to the milk; stir to mix well. Bring the liquid to a boil and then turn the heat down to simmer for 20 minutes. Remove the celery pieces and bay leaf. Taste the broth and adjust the seasonings if needed.

Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a small saucepan, then whisk in 1 tablespoon of flour to form a roux. Stirring constantly, gradually add about 1 cup of the tomato soup to the roux. Keep stirring while you wait for the mixture to thicken, and when it does, stir the mixture into the soup pot. Continue stirring as you add the milk, and heat until the soup is hot but not boiling.

Serves 6 to 8



Apple Crisp

During apple season, this is an easy go-to recipe when you want a quick and satisfying dessert. Get a head start by mixing up several batches of the crumb topping ahead of time, put them in tightly covered canning jars or plastic bags, and refrigerate them until needed. They'll keep just fine for a week or so.

1 cup brown sugar, packed	½ cup cold butter
1 cup flour	2½ lbs. apples (about 7 or 8)
2 tsp. cinnamon, divided	2 tsp. lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 350°.

Lightly grease or butter a 9-inch square baking dish and set it aside.

In a small mixing bowl, stir together sugar, flour, and 1 tsp. cinnamon. With a pastry blender, two forks, or your fingers, cut in the butter until the mixture is crumbly; set aside.

In another mixing bowl, peel, core, and thinly slice the apples. Gently mix in the remaining teaspoon of cinnamon and the lemon juice. Spread the apples in the prepared baking dish and sprinkle the crumb mixture evenly over the top.

Bake, uncovered, for 50 to 60 minutes or until the apples are tender and the crumb topping is golden and crisp. Let the dish cool for about 30 minutes before serving.

Serves 4 to 6

Apple Crumb Pie

This is a tasty variation of the more usual top-crust apple pie. It doesn't take any more time and is a great change of pace.

6 apples suitable for pie	¾ cup flour
1 cup sugar, divided	½ cup butter
1 tsp. cinnamon	1 unbaked pie shell (see Mama's Pie Crust, page 191)

Preheat the oven to 425°. Lay out the unbaked pie shell in a pie plate and set aside.

Peel and core the apples and cut them into thin slices. In a small bowl, make a mixture of ½ cup sugar and the cinnamon and then sprinkle it over the apples, gently mixing. Put the apple mixture into the unbaked pie shell.

Using your fingers, blend the remaining ½ cup sugar with the flour and butter to make coarse crumbs. Sprinkle the crumbs over the apples and bake. After 10 minutes at 425°, reduce the oven to 350° and continue baking for 35 minutes or until the pie is done.

Serves 6 to 8



When choosing apples for baking it's a great idea to ask the advice of local growers or grocers. They'll have good input. Here is my list of apples that hold up well to baking: Braeburn, Cortland, Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, Jonagold, Jonathan, McIntosh, and Northern Spy.