

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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Eating meat for the whole week

By Evelyn Lee

The following review is by a reader who was given a cookbook from the Times. The included recipes were selected and prepared by the reader.

Oh my gosh! This cookbook is so cute. Pink binding, and a delightful cow in black pumps embroidered on the cover. Very cute scrapbook-style artwork decorates the pages of this spiral-bound cookbook, and the hunks-of-meat recipes include beef, pork and lamb, plus some sauces and marinades. The authors explain all the types of cuts, including how to shop and cook using different methods to create the tender tasty flesh we love to eat.

The authors realized many women have a secret craving for eating meat, so they formed the Meat Club to have a group open to gabbing about, cooking and enjoying meat.

The club rules are simple:

- "You have to be a girl."
- "You have to love to cook and eat meat."
- "You have to love to talk about meat (any kind)."
- "What's said in the Meat Club stays in the Meat Club!"

Count me in!

I love to eat meat, though I've always stumbled when it comes to cooking it. Tough, undercooked or rubbery are my specialties. But the Meat Club Cookbook helped me create some tasty meaty dinners with little effort. If you get this cookbook you gotta love meat, because the recipes hold nothing back when they encourage big slabs and lusty quantities.

After making continued efforts every year to eat light and keep my husband's and my arteries clear, I decided to go for it and cook meat recipes from this book every day for a week. We indulged in three extra-meaty beef dishes, and three different pork dinners. I confess I did not try any of the lamb recipes, because the thought of eating baby animals makes me feel very sad. Let them experience life first, then when they reach adulthood we can eat them. Yes, I do enjoy being a carnivore.

We started the week of meat with the Three-Way Filet with Basic Compound Butter. The meat cooked up tender and tasty, but I felt adding the butter sauce made it too greasy and kind of gross.

Tuesday, we indulged in Apricot Chops. The meat was cooked just right and the fresh thyme and mustard mixed with the apricot jam blended very well with the pork chop taste.

Wednesday was Royal Broil with Balsamic Bliss. The meat ended up undercooked, even though I increased the time spent broiling. Maybe my choice of London broil was thicker than the authors intended, but the raw results were a disappointment.

Thursday was Drunken Beef night. Fabulous! This stew included a decadent amount of meat and started with half a pound of bacon cooked just for the grease! (The fried bacon was removed for some other use.) Then I added 21/2 pounds of sirloin cubes and 21/2 pounds chuck cut up, and the 5 pounds of meat were then simmered for two hours in the "juice" of a full bottle of pinot noir. Yeah baby! Loved it!

Friday, my husband began to complain that his big toe hurt. Come on, man! Suck it up. A little gout won't kill ya. That

night we enjoyed Bacon Basil and Apple Sandwiches. French baguette sliced and covered with fresh basil leaves, 15 slices of cooked bacon, and two Granny Smith apples sliced thinly and layered on top. The recipe was meant for four, but we devoured it between the two of us. The tart sweet apple complemented the salty bacon, and it was dee-lish.

Saturday, I wanted to try something exotic and went with the Wild Mood Moroccan Patty Cakes. I really enjoyed these ethnic style mini meatloaves shaped like giant patties. The spices and raisins mixed in with the ground pork butt were unique and quite tasty. Sunday, at last we rested from the meat.

It may be exhausting to eat from this book every day of the week, but I would definitely recommend "The Meat Club Cookbook (Girls Only)." Guys, you can even sneak a peek and cook up some great meaty dishes. The authors include lots of tips and funny comments at the beginning of each recipe, and with their help and friendly instruction, I now have some meat dinners I can cook with success.

Want to be a critic? New cookbooks are available at our Walnut Creek office. Write Nicholas Boer at nboer@cctimes.com.

DRUNKEN BEEF

Serves 8

Evelyn Lee recommends leaving the butter out.

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

8 ounces bacon

2 1/2 pounds top sirloin, cut into 1-inch cubes

2 1/2 pounds chuck, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 tablespoon flour

1 750 ml bottle pinot noir or Burgundy wine

10 carrots, peeled and chopped into 1 1/2-inch pieces

12 pearl onions

1 garlic clove, minced

1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme

2 bay leaves

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a large cast-iron casserole over medium heat (I used a very large nonstick frying pan, which worked great). Add the bacon and brown for approximately 5 minutes until softened, but not crispy. Remove the bacon and save for another use.

2. In the same pan, cook the meat in batches until browned evenly, 4-5 minutes per side. Once browned, return all the meat to the pan and sprinkle the flour over it. Mix well.

3. Add the wine to cover the meat. Add the carrots, onions, garlic, thyme and bay leaves. Stir. Cover and cook over low to medium heat for 2 hours. The meat should be tender enough to cut with a fork. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Per serving: 850 calories, 60 g protein, 15 g carbohydrates, 53 g fat, 215 mg cholesterol, 390 mg sodium, 3 g fiber.
Calories from fat: 56 percent.

-- Times analysis

BACON, BASIL AND APPLE SANDWICH

Serves 3-4

1 sweet French baguette

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

8-10 fresh basil leaves

15 slices thick-cut bacon, cooked

2 Fuji or Granny Smith apples, cored and thinly sliced

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

• Cut the baguette in half lengthwise. Spread the mayo on both cut sides. Start layering with the basil, bacon, and then the apple. Season with salt and pepper. Cut into servings and enjoy!

Per serving: 340 calories, 11 g protein, 20 g carbohydrates, 24 g fat, 30 mg cholesterol, 630 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.
Calories from fat: 65 percent.

-- Times analysis

WILD MOOD MOROCCAN PATTY CAKES

Serves 4

1 tablespoon curry powder

1 tablespoon ground allspice

1 tablespoon ground cumin

1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon salt

1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

2 pounds ground pork butt

1 small onion, diced

1/2 cup raisins

1/4 cup ketchup

1/4 cup panko bread crumbs

3 tablespoons olive oil

1. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients except oil well with a fork or by hand.

2. Take one-quarter of the mixture and shape into an evenly round 4-inch patty. Repeat to make four patties.
3. Heat the oil in a large saute pan or skillet over medium heat. Add the patties to the pan, leaving enough space between them to cook evenly. Cook over low to medium heat for 8-10 minutes per side, until golden brown and cooked though. Use a frying screen if you have it to prevent hot grease from spattering. Serve hot.

Per serving: 660 calories, 43 g protein, 22 g carbohydrates, 44 g fat, 150 mg cholesterol, 260 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.
Calories from fat: 67 percent.

-- Times analysis

- BOOK: "Meat Club Cookbook (Girls Only): For Gals Who Love Their Meat!" (\$18.95, Chronicle Books, 136 pages), 53 recipes.
- AUTHORS: Vanessa Dina, Kristina Fuller and Gemma DePalma.
- REVIEWER: Evelyn Lee of Pleasanton.

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