

Passion for Cooking

I have always had a passion for cooking. Even as a child I made a most scrumptious mud and rock pie with a topping of poke-berries or boiled in water delicious "maypops." All my friends wanted to come and visit me just to see how I made this delightful feast.

Then as I grew up and was still fascinated with the culinary art, I began an education

that was second to none. My grandmother allowed me in her cooking workshop. It was as if learning voice from Leontine Price! We didn't cook fancy or elegant foods, but this is where I was trained and learned to love the art of just excellent plain foods. I had a small wooden box my granddaddy had made for me to sit on a bench at the end of their long-planked

table. I would move the little box to her kitchen and stand on it to be able to see, stir, roll dough, and add condiments to the yummy foods that she prepared. I remember so well standing next to her old Sears and Roebuck cook stove stirring a big pot of tomatoes for filling quart Mason jars. My granddaddy would always ease by us, grab a spoon and taste the red fruit as it popped and boiled.

Our daughter is an excellent cook and both our sons learned to cook and feed themselves during their college years. I have one grandchild who has shown

an interest in discovering the joys of being clever in preparing good meals. Our eleven-year-old, Eli comes to my kitchen one afternoon a week and I stand back and only instruct and encourage him in his new desire.

His very first meal was Chicken Parmesan, green beans, and home-made blueberry muffins. He kept saying "I am no good at this" but I asked how many times had it done this? I was his sous chef (all the clean-up). The meal was actually delicious, and he was very satisfied with himself that he had accomplished such a challenging main course. He also made blueberry muffins from scratch. He

kept telling me, "Meme, these don't taste like the ones we make from the box." Of course, they didn't, these were completely homemade with fresh blueberries, fresh eggs, and all the fresh at-its-best ingredients we could get. This is what makes the difference in cooking - using fresh, and always homemade ingredients, and the most important - learning from a grandmother.

Eli's Parmesan Chicken
 4 whole chicken breast (the bone-in make a much tenderer piece of meat)
 1 cup of Italian Dressing
 ½ cup of Italian bread crumbs
 ½ cup flour

¼ cup of Parmesan cheese
 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 1 t. pepper
 1 t. salt
 Mix all well in a big bowl. Wash the chicken and pat dry and marinate in Italian Dressing for at least 2 hours. Mix all dry ingredients and remove chicken from marinade and roll in the dry mix. Place on a parchment covered cookie sheet and bake 1 hour bone in, 45 minutes bone out. Remove chicken and pour spaghetti sauce on top of each piece and add a slice of mozzarella cheese. Replace in oven and bake until melted and bubbly. Serve over spaghetti

* Peggy Sims is a lifelong resident of Attala County and columnist.



Peggy's Take

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