

Columns

Try this cookie recipe over fattier treats

I hate to admit it but I did gain a couple pounds over the holiday season. Partially because I cheated way too many times and this is the time of year my daily walking is interrupted by bad weather. I accept the responsibility and will simply stop eating magic cookie bars and fudge. I knew the added fat in my diet would add up eventually but I was having so much fun!

Years ago I learned that fat diets don't work on me so I try to eat healthy and exercise daily without depriving myself of some treats. The main success was not eating fast food and walking; so I guess I should be glad I have enough allergy problems to keep me away from temptation. I will admit that walking outside at least an hour a day made a real difference and I really do miss the walk on days when it rains or snows. I used to walk in all weather but after a few falls I decided that a broken hip or sprained ankle would keep me inside longer than I am willing to do so.

Another downfall in my past, I believed that salads would do the trick. I can recall in the seventies the salad diet was a big draw to all my friends and we would meet at the Pizza Hut and dine on their great salad bar. Unfortunately, some of us ate too much salad dressing on our "all you can eat" lunch which defeated the whole plan. Back then I didn't even need to diet but the pressure of wearing the clothing styles of the day, low rise jeans and crop halter tops, dictated our eating habits. There is no way I would ever get into the clothing I wore back then but I am pretty happy with my current size as long as I monitor the holiday goodies.

My home made salads today

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



are far different from those I had years ago and I learned a neat trick for salad dressing. I don't use any store bought dressing, I use light sour cream and onion powder to make a delicious dressing that tastes just like French onion dip and has very few calories and very little fat. If you add a tablespoon of sugar free catsup it tastes like French dressing. If you add sweet pickle juice and have green pepper in the salad then the dressing tastes like 1000 Island dressing. I eat a lot of mushrooms and plantains, both of which have very little flavor but when seasoned can be made to taste like just about any of the yummy fattening foods you like. One of my favorite restaurant foods is sautéed mushrooms using the fat of the grilled meat and soy sauce. I have experimented with many versions of other seasonings and discovered that using coconut milk, onion, garlic and sea salt makes a close flavor. Plantains when ripe can be used for a verity of dessert flavors and when used less ripe can be used like potatoes. One of my favorite plantain recipes is to sauté them in peanut oil with fresh herbs, mainly sage and thyme. I pour the peanut oil off of the sugar free peanut butter that I like and use the oil in cooking. Of course, if someone in your home has a peanut allergy than you might want to use avocado oil. I choose my meth-

od because it is all peanut oil without additives.

Cooking low fat or low calorie does not mean tasteless. If you are looking to eat a bit more healthy I would suggest that you plant an herb garden this summer and begin making yourself a nice dried herb cabinet. I have labeled jars of individual herbs and herb mixtures. It is cheaper than buying dried herbs at the store, you eliminate all the preservatives and you can eliminate any herbs that you don't like. I am not fond of marjoram which is added to many produced herb mixtures and I like a little less oregano than one generally finds in processed herb mixtures. It is kind of like trying to find out what the 11 herbs and spices are in KFC chicken. It is trial and error but some really nice surprises when you have created a great dish.

I have discovered that one can make some really delicious recipes from foods usually used just as added flavor. One example is celery; normally one adds about a fourth cup to a recipe but believe it or not diced celery can be pan fried with other herbs and spices to create a delicious side dish. I am especially fond of sautéed celery with onion, garlic, basil and lemon. Add a half cup of diced boiled chicken and a little light sour cream and it tastes just like chicken salad without all the fat. Dice and steam rutabagas or turnips

with onion, garlic a little mustard for a delicious side dish to beef instead of French fries. I love wilted lettuce with bacon grease but it is just about as good with peanut or avocado oil and a dash of smoked salt with a lot less fat. I make refried beans out of dark red kidney beans by adding onion, clove, cumin and pepper to the water when I am cooking them. After processing them in the blender I substitute the cooking liquid for the oil and it is just as good as the real thing.

If you don't like to experiment then I would suggest you look at the "My Recipe" web site (<https://www.myrecipes.com/low-fat-recipes>) or the "Eating Well" web site (<https://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/18016/life-style-diets/low-fat-fat-free/>). Both of these sites have some very creative recipes and I have made many of them. A reader sent the link to the "Skinny Taste" web site and

I have made a couple of their recipes. This chocolate chip cookie recipe is the best low fat recipe I have found for chocolate chip cookies. As I stated I don't really diet I just watch what I eat more closely but I don't deprive my cravings either. A little less salt and fat can do wonders along with an invigorating walk. Just think positive.

Best low fat Chocolate Chip Cookie Ever

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 tbsps butter, melted
1 large egg white
2 tbsps apple sauce
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 cup whole wheat pastry flour
1/2 cup all purpose flour
1/4 tsp baking soda
1/8 tsp salt
1/2 cup mini chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350F. Line two cookie sheets with non-stick silicone baking mats (I highly recommend for best

results) or lightly spray cookie sheets with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking soda and salt and stir to blend.

In another bowl, whisk the sugars, butter, egg white, applesauce and vanilla together until light and fluffy.

Whisk the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients in two additions until the batter is very well blended. If the batter looks more "crumbly" than smooth, add just a drop of water at a time (ONLY if needed) until it smooths out.

Fold in chocolate chips. Drop by level spoonfuls about 1 inch apart onto baking sheets.

Bake 8 - 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, and let them stand 5 minutes before removing the cookies from the pans to cool on wire racks.

<https://www.skinnytaste.com/best-low-fat-chocolate-chip-cookies/>.

Comet ZTF visible Feb. 2

It may be possible to see a comet in the sky this week. Comets are the "dirty snowballs" of our solar system and are notoriously unpredictable. They'll appear as fuzzy cottonballs to our eyes and their brightness can vary day by day.

This particular comet was discovered last March by the Zwicky Transient Facility, so it's called "Comet ZTF." The comet will be closest to our Earth the evening of Thursday, Feb. 2 at a safe distance of 26 million miles. You should be able to see it in binoculars as the comet seems to emerge from the C-shaped spring constella-

In the night sky

By David Leake



tion of Corona Borealis, then it zips northward towards the North Star along the eastern side of the constellation Bootes.

These constellations rise in the east-northeast at about midnight this week. The comet will be moving at roughly a half-fist held at arm's length

each evening and, compared to the horizon, be moving right to left. See what you can see!

David Leake is retired Planetary Director of Staerke Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

Correcting inaccuracies about farming

I saw a couple things on TV this past month that reinforced one of my reasons for writing these columns - to correct misinformation about agriculture.

The first instance was a show where a death had taken place in a huge government cheese warehouse near Washington D.C. The warehouse was necessary because of government subsidies to dairy farmers.

Google and a dairy farmer from Northern Illinois tell me that there is a cheese storage cavern in Missouri but most of the cheese is privately owned. It holds about 10% of U.S. yearly consumption. The big stores of government cheese were distributed out to the public in the 1980s.

The government dairy program is hard to understand. I sat through a session with an American Farm Bureau economist trying to learn the basics without success. Different pricing formulas are depending on the producer's region of the country. It is set up as a risk management tool for dairy farmers. The present program does not attempt to manage supply like those of the past and there are no huge stores of government-owned cheese.

Another inaccuracy was also in a detective show. An olive grove was killed in a

part of a murder mystery. One character said the trees had to have been killed by pouring the herbicide Roundup on the roots. Roundup herbicide is a contact killer sprayed on the leaves of plants. Many of you might have used this herbicide to kill weeds in your driveway or sidewalk. If you wanted to kill a tree, there would be no reason to put it on the roots.

My point is that broadcast TV and even the news is not a reliable source of information about agriculture. Careless use of misleading facts is common. In two recent cases, economists I respect wrote articles based on old farm program facts from the days of supply management. The farm program does not pay us to not grow crops or pay us to grow certain crops.

The new Congress will soon begin to write the next version of a Farm Bill. This is done every five years.

Farm Bureau is apprehensive about this latest effort. There are very few farmers in Congress and there are not that many in the House of Representatives that even represent rural districts. That disconnect is tempered by the fact that everyone eats, and 80% of Farm Bill spending is for nutrition programs.

Production agriculture does benefit from the Farm Bill spending. The risk man-

agement ability given to us in the crop insurance program is invaluable. The old federal crop insurance is paid only in the event of a near-complete crop loss. Today's crop insurance helps us manage both price and weather risk, neither of which we have any control over. We get a subsidy on the premiums, but we pay toward that coverage as well.

The conservation title of the Farm Bill is also important to farmers all over the nation. We are more than willing to use conservation practices on our farms. Cost share for reshaping a waterway or installing a dry dam to store surface water briefly seems fair since it benefits not just my farm but water quality for everyone.

I spent the first weekend of January at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting. It is much like the Illinois version with the shaping of policy as the focus of the proceedings. Representatives from the fifty states and Puerto Rico debated various submittals about policy for the nation's farms and ranches. The wide diversity of US agriculture becomes apparent when you look at the AFBF policy book. It is twice as thick as that of the Illinois Farm Bureau and deals with crops we consume here, but do not grow in Illinois.

The producers in those

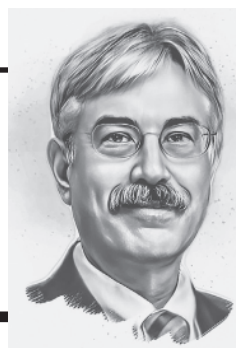
states need the same things we need in Illinois, however. Fair trade policies, good risk management tools like crop insurance and freedom from excessive regulation are nationwide concerns. One concern in agriculture has been that we might be scored for loans and government programs by the so-called ESG, environmental, social, and governance, parameters. These are often arbitrary and counterproductive, at least in my view. A policy against that is in ILFB policy and we submitted that, with success, for AFBF policy.

The annual meeting was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. That island can only produce 10% of the food they consume. Early on we were told that there would not be the farm tours that are usually held when AFBF is going on. The farms are too small to host a large group on a bus tour.

When we flew back to Illinois we went through the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service screening of our luggage. It was a reminder that the virulent pig disease African Swine Fever is present just a few miles away from Puerto Rico in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It would be a disaster for our pork industry if this disease came to the mainland. It is easily carried even in cooked food. China's pork industry is still trying to recover

Douglas County Agriculture

By Larry Dallas



from the outbreak of ASF in that country.

On January 30, 2022, the Biden Environmental Protection Agency released the latest version of the Waters of the US regulations. These are basically the same strict laws Farm Bureau fought in the Obama administration. The federal government claims jurisdiction over any water that flows into a navigable river. They call it a "significant nexus" The water running down your drive during a rain will end up in the Mississippi and we fear that is where the regulation will begin.

The Trump era EPA had rescinded the Obama regulations, back to what we had worked under for years before. As with any government regulation, we are still working out what the new laws actually mean. It is hard to get a straight answer, even from the EPA. The general response is don't worry, we don't care

about your farm pond. Strict reading of what we have seen makes us very uncomfortable and the official that tells us no we won't be regulating drain tile installation can be replaced with one that will not allow that. This all looks like an erosion of private property rights and ILFB will be trying to figure out where this leads.

We need to haul grain but also need our drives to freeze up to keep from wrecking them with heavy trucks. We have been bringing some of our tractors into the shop to do service on them in the down time. We have worked up a long list of parts and filters we think we will need this year to take advantage of implement dealer discounts that occur usually at the beginning of the year.

Thank you for reading about agricultural policy and some of my pet peeves this month.

Send letters to the editor to presseditor1@gmail.com