

Columns

March is full of food-related celebrations

March madness, the Ides of March, Daylight Saving Time and St Patrick's Day are just a few of the wonders of the month of March. Apparently we are still going to change our time on March 12; at least the event is being written and talked about in the news even if no one can confirm if the law passed to cancel the change.

When I was in junior high and high school I thought the "Ides of March" was a real holiday. All of my history classes, during those years, studied the death of the ancient Roman General Julius Caesar and the Shakespearean tragedy and almost all the classes had a "toga party."

I will never forget the look on my mom's face when I came home from school and announced that I needed a white sheet to use as a toga for our high school Latin class Roman celebration. She was not amused and I can hear my dad as he joked, "Beware the Ides of March, Mom." We did not have an extra sheet in the house but as usual she made sure I had a sheet; we went downtown to JC Penny's and purchased a white twin sheet for the occasion.

We also had St Patrick's Day parties in grade school. Just like for all the other holidays we made green bulletin boards, cut out shamrocks, little pots of gold and leprechauns to decorate the whole room. Green iced cupcakes and green milk was served at most of our parties but the St. Patrick's Day celebration I remember the most was in 7 grade home economics class when we made a traditional Irish meal and served it to the teachers.

There were six home ec. classes, and each class was

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



charged with making one item on the Irish menu, but we had to make enough to feed a group of 30 teachers. I remember my group had to make Irish soda bread but the advanced 8th grade class had to make Irish stew. I wondered in later years if they used the traditional lamb or if the teacher substituted beef.

The term "March Madness" was coined in 1939 by an Illinois basketball official, Henry Porter. I wonder if he ever realized what a tradition he started. The term meant a lot to my dad because he watched as much basketball as he could on TV, but the term really hit home with me in my freshman year in high school. Stephen Decatur High School, in Decatur had very good basketball teams for many years but in the 1960s, the teams went to the State Championships and the March madness was fever-pitched. It was like the whole school was filled with electricity once it was finalized that we were going to State. There were around 1,500 kids in our school and during basketball season it seemed like everyone was in a good mood. Even the teachers "loosened" up a bit and we were pretty sure there would be no homework on game nights.

It is a funny thing about the month of March; it seems like it became a forgotten month after I graduated from school.

Over the last 58 years, since graduation, the month has filled up with special days to recognize. On the "Today" (<https://www.today.com/>) website I counted 147 ways to celebrate March with most days having multiple designations. I did think it odd though that March 15 "Ides of March" celebration day has only that one designation.

A couple of my favorites are March 1 National Pig Day, March 8 National Proofreading Day, March 14 National Save a Spider Day, March 21 National Crunchy Taco Day, March 25 National Walk in the Sand Day, and last but not least, March 31 is National Crayola Crayon Day. Who spends all their time coming up with this busy work?

Many historical events have taken place in the month of March.

March 5, 1872—George Westinghouse Jr. patented the steam-air brake.

March 10, 1862—The first U.S. paper money was issued. The denominations were \$5, \$10 and \$20. The paper bills became legal tender by an act of government on March 17, 1862.

March 13, 1944—Abbott and Costello's baseball routine "Who's On First" was copyrighted.

March 14, 1794—Eli Whitney was granted a patent for the cotton gin.

March 23, 1956—"West Side Story," a musical play by Leonard Bernstein, was copyrighted.

March 27, 1790—The first shoelaces were invented. Gee and I thought March was a boring month. Practically every day in March is a food-related day and I have a couple friends who start their gardening season by planting lettuce and spinach seeds on March 1. Spinach seeds need six weeks of cool temperatures from planting to harvest but the ground needs to warm to 40 degrees. Chives, onions and peas can be panted in later March. Oh boy, gardening time is almost here.

I have made Irish Soda bread for years, my dad, who is Irish, loved it and remembered eating it as a child. His mom made it all the time but my mom did not like it so when I finally had my own kitchen I would make it for my dad.

Grandma McGarry would add raisins to the soda bread recipe as an added treat and they would eat it this way for a dessert. I lost my original recipe but just found this one on the "Real Simple" website (<https://www.realsimple.com/>). Daddy would "salather" (his term) the raisin recipe with hot butter and you could see the joy of remembering his mom as he ate the "soda cookies" (also his term).

ENJOY St Patrick's Day.

Irish soda bread for dessert

3 cups of flour
¾ cup sugar
3 teaspoons of baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ stick of margarine
1 egg
1½ cups of raisins
1 to 2 cups buttermilk (gauge moisture of mixture)

Melt the butter.

Whisk together the dry ingredients. Add the raisins and

1 tablespoon of caraway seeds. Make a well in the center and add the melted butter, the egg, and 1 cup buttermilk. Add more buttermilk for moisture if necessary.

Mix together until no dry spots remain.

Divide the dough into nine mounds, about 1/2 cup each, and divide among two parchment-lined baking sheets.

Bake at 400 F until slightly risen and golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes.

Optional: Brush the mini loaves with more melted butter when they come out of the oven.

Big or small, this traditional Irish Soda Bread—slathered with salted Kerrygold butter and served alongside a perfect cup of tea—is an excellent way to mark St. Patrick's Day. For a riff on the real thing, try our recipe for Irish soda bread with cheddar and dill. Just don't skip the butter.

Highlight of the month is tonight

Welcome to March! Recall in grade school how we learned if March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb and vice versa? Does that still come into play?

The sky highlight of the month actually happens tonight. Hopefully you have been watching Venus and Jupiter in the western evening sky just after sunset. They have been getting closer from our point of view and, tonight, they are a half-degree apart! Venus is on the right and over four times closer than Jupiter.

The next time these two bright worlds will appear this close will be in May of next year, but the event oc-

In the night sky

By David Leake



curs too close to the Sun's glare for us to get a good look at it. So the time after that will be late summer in 2025.

Point being, hope for clear skies and check it out tonight! Then continue to watch as the two will seem to separate with Venus being the higher of the two.

Next Tuesday's full Moon

is the "Worm Moon." As the ground warms, you may start seeing a few earthworms in the grass or on the sidewalk. The Moon isn't as squishy.

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

Try this recipe for the 'full enchilada'

I received this recipe for enchiladas from Linda Overbeck of Alhambra, and I cannot wait to try it! She says she found this recipe in a Taste of Home cookbook. She has some notes about the recipe that I will add at the end.

Creamy Chicken Enchiladas

Submitted by Linda Overbeck

Makes 10 servings
8 oz. cream cheese, softened (may use light)
2 Tbsp water
2 tsp onion powder
2 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
5 cups shredded or diced cooked chicken
20 flour 6" tortillas, room temperature
2 10 3/4 oz cans cream of chicken soup
2 cups (16oz) sour cream
1 cup milk
2 4 oz cans chopped green chilies

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



2 cups (8 oz) shredded Cheddar cheese
In a large mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, water, onion powder, cumin, salt and pepper until smooth. Stir in the chicken.

Place 1/4 cup of mixture down the center of each tortilla. Roll up and place seam side down into two greased 13x9 baking dishes.

Combine the soup, sour cream and green chilies in

a small bowl. Pour over the tortillas, spread smooth with a spatula. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes until heated through. Remove from the oven and sprinkle on cheddar cheese. Bake for 5 more minutes until the cheese has melted.

Linda says she made half the recipe, and she poached 1 large chicken breast which gave her the just the right

amount of chicken. She also said she would use more spices next time she makes it. Linda also said she used cumin seeds instead of powder. She did not say this, but I assume she cracked or crushed the seeds. Because she had corn tortillas and not flour tortillas, she used the corn tortillas but found they wouldn't stay rolled up. Linda says "the filling is very tasty and I will be making this again!"

I have a comment on the tortillas, I have an enchilada recipe that we like and it calls for corn tortillas. One night I made that recipe with flour tortillas because that's what I had on hand. Both my husband and I liked it so much better than the corn tortillas! Now I always use the flour tortillas.

Enchiladas are a Mexican

dish made with corn tortillas stuffed with filling, usually meat and cheese, then smothered and baked in a sauce. Burritos, on the other hand, is a dish made with flour tortillas wrapped around a filling of meat and/or beans, cheese, etc, and designed to be eaten by hand. Enchiladas originated in Mexico, dating back to Aztec times. Back then the corn tortillas were wrapped around fish. The word enchilada is the past participle of the Spanish word 'enchilar', meaning "to add chili pepper to".

The word "enchilada" is often used in our language other than to describe food. For example, the term "full enchilada," meaning the whole package, dates back to the 1950s. There is the phrase "the big enchilada" typically

meaning top boss. And then there is "the whole enchilada" which is an American expression meaning the whole thing. This phrase was popularized when John Ehrlichman said it in conversation with President Nixon back in 1973 when he was referring to U.S. Attorney John Mitchell. That phrase was made famous with the release of the White House tapes from the Nixon era.

Before you know it, Easter will be here, and I am looking for your favorite recipes for Easter dinner. Do you have a great main entree or a favorite spring dessert? Please share with us by sending it to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail it to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks, and Happy Cooking!

Winning big is not a good sportsman achievement

"If you win through bad sportsmanship, that's no real victory." — Babe Zidrikson Zaharias

When you win games by scores of 70-14, 113-28, 120-16 or 101-35, that's not a poor reflection on your opponent, that's a poor reflection on you.

And yet, that's what we saw this week, all around the state of Illinois, as the boys high school basketball tournament kicked off.

I know, some will attempt to justify it by saying that if the losing team doesn't want to get beat by so much, they should play better, but deep down, I think even those who

utter such tired bromides know better. There are times when circumstances conspire to make the talent differential so great that "playing better" isn't a possibility. And that's when coaching comes into play.

Games like these are a great time to work reserves into the game. It's a great time to try to run some clock and work on ball handling and passing. Try different combinations of players. In other words, do everything you can not to embarrass your opponent, because it's really only an embarrassment to yourself and your program, and I can almost guaran-

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



tee that there will come a time when Karma rears her head and you get yours.

I don't know, though. Maybe it's time for me to admit that I'm turning into a relic, wandering around yelling at clouds and telling the neigh-

bor kids to get off my lawn, but it just feels like folks are quite a bit more self-centered these days.

Could it be an unwanted byproduct of the pandemic? I mean, people did nearly riot over toilet paper, just a few

short years ago, so I guess we could have been hard wired by the isolation most of us endured to not be able to see things from the perspective of others. I've heard tales of people complaining about the food at recent charity events, as though the volunteers are highly paid professional chefs or something. As one of those flour-stained wretches, believe me, we're doing the best we can. We want you to get your money's worth and enjoy the product of our labors, and if you don't, we'll gladly try again if you ask. Too much complaining can lead to those who are trying to help out

choosing not to do so in the future.

As always, I'm using this season of Lent to ask all of you to volunteer. Find your jam, no matter what it is, and share it with others. I guarantee that no charitable organization will send you packing if you give of your time and talents. Volunteer. Help out. Be a good sport and try not to embarrass your opponents. I can almost say with certainty that you'll take away far more than you put in when you follow these basic tenets. Years from now, people won't remember if you won by 70, but they will remember if you took strides not to do so.