

Columns

Try making some 'fair food' at home

Summer is half over; I can't believe how quickly it passes. I enjoy the heat but I am already tired of humidity, mosquitoes, and wild fire smoke. Now it is time for all the County Fairs and festivals to begin. I can clearly remember my first County fair seventy years ago when I was five years old (in 1952) and it was far different than our fairs today. My goodness that sounds unbelievable, I don't feel seventy-five.

My parents had spent a couple weeks telling me all about the upcoming Christian County fair (we lived in Taylorville at that time) and they seemed quite excited at the prospect of our family attending so naturally I got pretty excited too. All my neighborhood friends were talking about it also, so it seemed to me that the whole world was revolving around the fair. I didn't really know what the fair was but we had been to a circus the year before and Daddy told me it was like the circus so I must have figured it was a pretty fun thing to do.

As has been the case for so many years at fair time; it rained the night before and Mom decided it would be wise to wear boots which was a very good idea because when we got to the fairgrounds it was pretty muddy. The mud and water did not dampen our spirits as we walked through a large open building to see the farm animals. I was familiar with rabbits and ducks having been given one of each at previous Easter celebrations but this was my first time seeing real cows and pigs. My Granny kept chickens so they did not interest me but the first cow I saw was pretty amazing. My five year old mind told me the cow was about ten feet tall and I was sure it would trample me if I got very close to it. I was pretty impressed as we

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



watched a cow being milked but I have to say I was not impressed with the milk sample we were given and I did not drink milk for a couple weeks after the trauma of drinking hot milk from a cow.

Another building housed horses and they were pretty neat especially a foal which had been born just as the animals arrived the day before. I really liked the sheep and goats and got to hold a tiny lamb who bleated constantly when taken from its mother. Outside of the horse barn a group of ladies had set up tables displaying things they had made from sheep wool and horse hair. My Mom really wanted a pair of handmade wool mittens but Daddy thought the fifty cent price was too high.

I can recall a row of food vendors and tables as we left the animal barns but for the life of me I can't remember any of the food they were selling. I remember Daddy bought a bottle of Bubble-up which we all three shared. Mom seems to recall cotton candy and caramel apples but she also remembers we did not have money for food and she had brought a couple Snicker bars with us to share. Then we headed to what Daddy called the Midway. There were some Christmas type lights strung from poles along both sides of the muddy walkway and on both sides were small square canvas tents with people yelling at us as we passed by.

Personally I was a bit scared

of these people who were calling to us to come over and play their games. Daddy tried a couple of the games which each cost a nickel for three throws or pitches at bottles or fish bowls. I felt really sorry for the fish as they swam around in the fish bowls and a couple times the bowls were knocked over and the water and the fish spilled to the ground. I was actually horrified as I watched one man scoop up a fish and toss him out the back of the tent.

We finally came to a couple games intended for kids and this is where I fell in love with the game of yellow rubber ducks floating in a long trough. I also can't remember how the game was played because I lost the couple times I played it and was quite disappointed when I won and could not have the yellow duck as the prize. I was terrible at the ring toss, hey I was five, but Daddy did win a fish in the fish bowl throw and I was thrilled. Mom, however, was not happy.

It seemed like we were at the Fair for hours, slogging through the mud, and smelling stinky smells around the animal barns and the games did not really seem like they were aimed at children. I do recall being allowed to ride a merry-go-round but Mom said the other rides were too dangerous. I was disappointed because there were no elephants; Daddy had said the fair was like a circus so I expected elephants and lions. All in all

I was not really thrilled about my first fair and by choice I did not attend another County fair until my first Coles County Fair in 1968. Boy was I surprised at how things had changed!

As I was doing a bit of web site surfing looking for County and State fair foods I found a list of the most unusual fair foods on the "America's 50 Most Outrageously Insane State Fair Foods" (<https://www.thedailymeal.com/>). I would have to say that a couple of these foods are down right scary. For instance, would you eat deep fried scorpion or meal worm covered caramel apples? Both of those can be found at Arizona fairs. However, I did find a couple interesting foods I just might try: "Krispy Kream"burgers in Mississippi, deep fried "Frito" pie in Texas, bacon covered caramel apples all over the USA, and "Keispy Kream" sloppy joe in Virginia (I guess anything on a "Krispy Kream"

donut is good)! Fried "Jello", chocolate pickles, chocolate covered bacon, deep fried "s'mores" or "Spam" curds also seem to be popular. Whatever happened to plain old lemon shakeups and corn dogs?

The "Taste of Home" web site (<https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/state-fair-food/>) has a great section on copy cat fair food recipes which is well worth the read if you find some spare web surfing time. The "Southern Living" web site (<https://www.southernliving.com/recipes/state-fair-food>) has a recipe for deep fried deviled eggs and banana fritters and I have never heard of either of these recipes and will be making the banana fritters this week!

Try some Fair Food at home!

Banana Fritters

Ingredients
Canola oil
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 1/2 cups all-purpose baking mix (such

as Bisquick Original Pancake & Baking Mix)
1/2 cup mashed bananas (from about 2 medium bananas)
1/4 cup whole buttermilk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Powdered sugar

Pour oil to a depth of 3 inches in a large saucepan; heat over high to 360°F. Meanwhile, stir together egg, pancake mix, bananas, buttermilk, vanilla, and cinnamon in a bowl using a fork until combined.

Working in 3 batches, gently drop about 4 spoonfuls of batter (1 heaping tablespoonful each) into hot oil. Cook until light golden brown and puffed, about 3 minutes per batch, flipping fritters halfway through cook time and adjusting heat as needed to maintain oil temperature of 360°F. Transfer fritters to a plate lined with paper towels using a slotted spoon. Let cool 2 minutes.

Dust fritters liberally with powdered sugar. Serve immediately.

Two solar eclipses coming up

The planetary traffic jam continues in the western evening sky. Tonight, Mercury is to the upper right of brilliant Venus though the two are pretty low. Friday evening, it will appear Mercury is nearly touching the star Regulus, but you may need binoculars and an unobstructed western horizon to check out the pair.

This weekend brings us the peak of the Delta Aquarid meteor shower. Every year about this time, our Earth plows through the dust trail of Comet Machholz. Though this shower favors the southern hemisphere, you might see 15-20 "shooting stars" in the hours before sunrise. The comet orbits the Sun once every five years or so but there's

In the night sky

By David Leake



evidence that the meteor particles we're seeing in the upper atmosphere left the comet 20,000 years ago!

As July closes out, we have another full Moon Tuesday evening. The Sturgeon Moon gets its name because of the large numbers of sturgeon in the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, a fish essential for Native American tribes.

It has also been called the Grain, Corn, or Lightning Moon. Watch it rise in the southeast as the Sun is setting. This is the first of two full Moons in August.

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

Real Life Wellness: The importance of hydration

This headline shouldn't shock anyone who has been reading my articles. I have preached the importance of hydration forever. So, this article is going to look at hydration a little differently. I'm going to tell a little story about my wife's grandma plus provide a little science about water absorption.

She died at age 96. She lived a good long life and really had nothing wrong with her other than she literally dried up from chronic dehydration. She had blood work done 3 months before she passed, and every blood marker was in the normal limits except for her severe dehydration. The doc-

tor told her that if she didn't start drinking more water, it was going to kill her...and it did.

As we age, your thirst craving becomes weaker and weaker. When was the last time you craved a big glass of water? There could be many reasons for this, but the less you move during your day, the less fluid movement goes on in your body. If you don't move, everything stagnates. This also leads to decreased water intake.

Also, your ability to hold on to the water you drink also lessened with age. Our cells tend to absorb less water, so we tend to go to the bathroom

more. There are also multiple reasons for this. The most important is your cell membranes become unhealthy and doesn't keep water inside the cell. Your cell membrane health comes down to one very popular and effective supplement...fish oil. Omega 3 fats are crucial for a healthy cell membrane. These fats make the cell membranes pliable but waterproof.

Another reason your cells don't remain hydrated is the loss of the electrolyte content inside the cell. Here is your science lesson for the day. An electrolyte is a mixture of molecules that carries a electric charge. Examples of positive electric charged molecules are

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



Sodium, Magnesium and Calcium. An example of a negatively charged molecule is Chloride.

This charge is important because it helps to keep water where it belongs. If your cells don't have enough electrolytes inside of it, then water doesn't become attracted to the inner fluid and you become dehy-

drated. This process is called Osmosis. Osmosis is when water passes through a membrane (in this case the cell wall) to equalize the number of electrolytes inside and outside the cell. Your body always likes to stay in balance. This is another example of balance throughout the body.

This brings me back to another dead horse I have been beating and that is using Sea Salt in your water and to cook with. Regular Table salt contains only Sodium and Chloride. Those are only two of the four most important electrolytes needed for hydration. So, when you drink enough water and have proper electrolyte balance across the cell membrane, your cells stay healthy, and you stay hydrated.

I loved my wife's grandma. She had her life in her own hands and made the wrong decision about water and it did her in. Please don't make that same mistake!

A disaster story: Nutmeg not a substitute for nuts

Recently I shared a cooking "disaster" story, which led to a reader sending this story. Laurie Nielson of Monroe Center, Illinois, had a major cake making blunder that she will probably never live down. This is her story.

"My first cake I made was a spice cake. I followed the recipe, except we didn't have 2 cups of nuts so I found nutmeg, but we didn't have 2 cups—so I used all the nutmeg. My brother ate it first, spit it out and was hollered at for hurting my feelings. My grandparents and grandparents did the same thing. I learned nutmeg is not nuts! The outside

birds wouldn't eat it. I had to clean up the cake on the lawn.

"Next story: I baked brownies for a family reunion. I am not good at measuring. The brownies looked good and I frosted them. A family member used their knife to cut the brownies, the knife got stuck and no one could remove the knife. The entire thing ended up in the garbage, pan, brownies and knife!"

In defense, Laurie does say she was in high school when she made the brownies.

With this hot weather, cold salads are always delicious. Marian Burris of Reno, Nevada, sends this delicious sound-

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



ing pasta salad recipe.

Summer

Pasta Salad

8 oz dry rotini pasta
1/2 cup red onion, sliced.
1 yellow pepper, diced

1 small zucchini, diced
1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
3/4 cup carrots, julienned
1 cob corn, grilled with kernels removed
1/2 cup radish, sliced
1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
2 Tbsp fresh herbs

Dressing

1/2 cup vegetable or olive oil
3 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp sugar
1/2 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp garlic powder
salt and pepper

Cook pasta al dente according to package directions. Drain and run under cold water to stop cooking. Combine all dressing ingredients in a mason jar and shake well to combine.

Combine pasta and remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Toss to combine. Top with additional feta cheese and herbs if desired.

Marian says "leftovers can be kept in an airtight container

in the fridge for up to five days. Stir to refresh before serving." I love pasta salads, and when I make it, I do not add the dressing to the bowl of pasta. I place the dressing next to the bowl of pasta, let people add their desired amount of dressing (some like only a little dressing and some like a lot). I find the pasta keeps better longer without the dressing.

If you have a recipe or a great story to share, please send to letscook!@herald-pubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!