

Chemist says new hamburger-cooking method reduces fat

From Associated Press reports

BOSTON — A chemist experimenting on his kitchen stove has whipped up a formula for healthier hamburger—a way of cooking ground meat that takes out three-quarters of the saturated fat and replaces it with vegetable oil.

Dr. Donald Small said typical Americans could lower cholesterol levels nearly 10 points if they used his method to cook one-third of their red meat.

Frying hamburger Small's way requires several extra steps. The secret is cooking the meat first in vegetable oil and then rinsing it with boiling water. Any amateur chef willing to take the time can easily do it.

Small is a physical chemist and physician at Boston University School of Medicine with a long interest in heart disease and fats and a yen for cooking.

"I like red meat, and I don't like eating tofu," he said. "I thought if there was a way of removing saturated fat and cholesterol from meat and it still tasted OK, it would be worthwhile playing with."

So Small set to work with his skillet. The results of his dabbling were published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine in an article titled "Chemistry in the Kitchen."

Here's his recipe: Heat a pint of vegetable oil to about 175 degrees. Add two pounds of ground beef, pork or lamb and stir until the meat juice begins to boil. Cook and stir with the juice barely bubbling for 10 more minutes while breaking up the meat.

Put the meat and oil into a strainer and save the liquid. Then pour a cup or two of boiling water over the meat in the strainer and save the water with the rest of the liquid. Put the liquid in the refrigerator for an hour and then skim off the hardened fat.

Pour the rest of the fat-free liquid back onto the meat.

The meat is then ready for use in any dish that requires ground meat, such as spaghetti sauce, tacos, soup, meat loaf and casseroles.

Dr. Scott Grundy, an authority on diet and heart disease at the University of Texas, said some cooks who try to follow Small's method might be put off by the expense of using vegetable oil and the extra work needed to fix dinner.

"But in theory," he added, "it sounds like a nice idea that could get rid of the saturated fat in meat."

With his method, Small said, 72 percent to 87 percent of saturated fat is removed from raw ground beef or pork, as well as nearly half of the cholesterol.

Meat cooked Small's way is also leaner overall. It removes 68 percent of the total fat, compared with 59 percent

during ordinary cooking. However, the major difference is the composition of the fat that is left behind. Small's way replaces about two-thirds of the fat that remains in conventional cooking with polyunsaturates or monounsaturates.

"We use the technique at home and serve it to friends," said Small. "They can't tell the difference. There is no oily fat floating on the top of your spaghetti sauce and no grease on tacos.

So it's actually better."

Many health experts believe that saturated fat in the diet raises blood levels of cholesterol, which in turn causes heart disease. Dietary guidelines recommend limiting saturated fat to 10 percent of the day's total calories.

Drs. Walter Willett and Frank Sacks of Harvard University called Small's work a "delightful lesson in food composition."

ARTS CALENDAR

Thursday, Jan. 10

CHRIS CHANDLER (political satire) at Columbia Street Bakery. Call 967-9150 for details.

MOJO HEADS at Skylight Exchange. Call 933-5550 for details.

"AMERICAN BUFFALO" by David Mamet at the ArtsCenter, 8 p.m. Call 929-ARTS for ticket information.

Friday, Jan. 11

DARK PATCHES FALL at Columbia Street Bakery.

THESEX POLICE at Cat's Cradle. Tickets \$5 at SchoolKids Records. Call 967-9053 for details.

CHRIS CHANDLER (political satire) at Skylight Exchange.

PIERCE PETTIS at The Cave, \$3. Call 968-9308 for details.

"AMERICAN BUFFALO" by David Mamet at the ArtsCenter, 8 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 12

ADA at Columbia Street Bakery.

THE JODYGRIND at Cat's Cradle.

LOLI OATES at Skylight Exchange.

THE BAD DOG BLUES BAND at The Cave.

"AMERICAN BUFFALO" by David Mamet at the ArtsCenter, 8 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 13

JAM w/ RICH CORTESE and ART GRUSKIN at The Cave.

VOCAL DUETS AND SOLOS FROM THE THEATRICAL STAGE: MUSIC OF W.A. MOZART, NOEL COWARD AND LEONARD BERNSTEIN at Hill Hall Auditorium, 8 p.m. Call 962-BACH for details.

OPEN JAZZ JAM at the Carrboro ArtsCenter, 7:30 p.m. Participating musicians admitted free.

"AMERICANBUFFALO" at the ArtsCenter, 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 15

IRISH MUSIC PICKING at Columbia Street Bakery.

TRACY DRACH at The Cave.

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600-lb. butter sculpture draws crowd

From Associated Press reports

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A sculptor spent three 14-hour days in a cooler to create a startling likeness of Benjamin Franklin, knowing that it would end up in peoples' stomachs just a few weeks after it was done.

Raymond Mackintosh of Toronto used about 600 pounds of Pennsylvania butter to build the life-size sculpture of Franklin for a special display at the 75th Pennsylvania Farm Show, running this week through Friday.

The sculpture, displayed in a refrigerated booth, regularly draws a crowd.

It portrays one of the state's most colorful historical figures standing erect, intently reading a piece of paper. He holds a pair of glasses in one hand near his chin.

It is detailed down to the knee wrinkles in his hosiery, the ruffles at the bottom of his sleeves, the frayed edges of the paper and the buckles on his shoes.

"I wouldn't have the patience for that," said one spectator, Joanne Herr of Columbia. "He did a good job."

"It's an artistic way of promoting a product," said her husband, Elmer.

Officials from the four dairy organizations that sponsored the sculpture estimated its worth at about \$5,000.

After the show ends Friday, the statue will be taken down and the butter donated to a local soup kitchen.

Mackintosh, who also has created special effects and masks for such films as "Jacob's Ladder," said he took a break from his current movie, "Body Parts," to shape Franklin in butter.

"Actually, it's an interesting material to work with," he said in an interview from the "Body Parts" set in Canada.

"I had to work in cooler temperatures and it was cold. I was fighting hypothermia. Fatigue sets in quicker," he said. "You have to stay warm while concentrating on what you're doing."

"Butter is tricky, but then you get used to it. I like it, it's very responsive." He used wooden and wire tools he made himself to craft the intricate details. The sculpture hides a steel frame that supports its weight.

"I know it's a temporary thing, but if people enjoy it, then it's fine. It lives on in their memory. A lot of people base past experiences on seeing a butter sculpture. It sticks with them," he said.