

Who's Who In The Kitchen

Ms. Rosa McNeil Confesses To Being "A True Fried Chicken Fanatic"

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

A visit to Rosa McNeil's kitchen on a recent afternoon found her getting ready to deep-fry some chicken. "I love fried chicken crispy," she explained. "I don't like it half-done. I'll eat it too done before I'll eat it raw."

McNeil, who is blind, tests for doneness by smell, taste, touch, and by listening. "When it (the sound of frying) slows down, it's ready to turn or take out, depending on if you've cooked both sides."

Ms. McNeil confessed to being something of a fried chicken fanatic. While majoring in general office technology at CPCC, she frequented Church's Fried Chicken near the campus. "I ate fried chicken for breakfast, lunch, supper and between-meal snacks, but I never got tired of it." Then she added, "I'd only eat the wings, but still...."

The southwest Charlotte resident admitted she burned up a lot of food before she learned to cook. A student at the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh from kindergarten through 12th grade, she took home economics but, she said, "I didn't do much learning then." She continued, "I learned to cook when I got married. Actually, I really learned to cook better later on when I was on my own—I wasn't rushed then and could do what I wanted to do."

McNeil is in a recipe club with some other blind friends. "We use recipes from TV or wherever we can collect them," she remarked.

The Wilson, NC, native enjoys experimenting with foods. As the chicken was frying, a peach cobbler "experiment" was baking in the



McNeil knows chicken is done when the sound of frying slows down.

oven. From the looks of the cobbler when it came out of the oven, the experiment worked. McNeil also likes to bake cakes: "just about any kind - carrot, pound." Her carrot cake recipe that follows is a family favorite. "This is one my mother makes a lot," she commented. As with other foods, she tests for doneness by feel and smell.

Rosa McNeil is employed as a corresponding secretary in the word processing department of Wa-

chovia Bank. She's been with the bank five years. A brother takes her to work in the morning, but she rides the bus home.

One of seven children, McNeil remarked, "We're all scattered now." All the others are sighted. She lost the vision in her right eye at seven months and in her left eye several years later.

Lack of eyesight doesn't keep Ms. McNeil from being active. The Mt. Carmel Baptist Church member

bowls in a league for the blind and has even been in a tournament in Detroit. She also belongs to the Charlotte Braille Society and is working on becoming a certified brailist. When certified, she will be able to transcribe books into braille for other blind people. Right now, the Society is working on transcribing a hymn book for her.

McNeil and her family participate in outings with the local blind community. One event she especially enjoys is the annual "Get Out and Play Day," sponsored by a local civic organizations. Included is a braille road rally, in which blind participants serve as navigators by reading braille maps for sighted drivers. "I've never come in first place and I always get guys who don't know Charlotte," she laughed, "but it's a lot of fun."

And now, from the fun-loving and food-loving Rosa McNeil, here are a few of her favorite recipes.

FRIED CHICKEN

Wash chicken pieces well. Sprinkle with fried chicken seasoning, pepper, garlic salt, and Accent. Coat with flour that has also been seasoned with above. Deep fry in Mazola Corn Oil. Turn when lower side of chicken pieces are brown (or when frying sound slows down). When chicken is evenly brown and crispy, remove onto absorbent paper toweling.

ROSA'S MOTHER'S CARROT CAKE

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 cups oil
- 5 eggs, separated
- 3 Tbsp. water
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 coarsely grated carrots or 1 1/2 cups
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Mix oil and sugar together. Add egg yolks and water. Mix well. Mix dry ingredients together and add to sugar mixture. Mix for about 5 minutes. Add vanilla, carrots and nuts. Beat egg whites until a little stiff and fold into batter. Pour into 3 9" round cake pans and bake in 300 degree pre-heated oven 50-60 minutes or til toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Frost layers with Cream Cheese Frosting and sprinkle each layer with additional chopped nuts.

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- Mix together well:
- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese, softened
- 1 box confectioners sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla

FRIED FISH

Use trout, mullet, or other favorite fish. Coat with corn meal to which has been added a little bit of flour, along with salt, pepper, garlic salt, and seafood seasoning. (The last two are optional.) Fry in skillet with half inch of oil.

PEACH COBBLER

- 1 stick margarine
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 - one-third tsp. nutmeg
- pinch of salt
- 2 1/2 cups peaches and their juice
- 1 cup milk

Mix all ingredients except peaches and milk. Layer peaches and flour mixture alternately several times. Pour milk over all. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes or til done.

Fill Lunch Boxes With Easy-To-Fix Things To Eat

School lunches become less boring if you vary the menu. Here are a few suggestions that will help you keep them interesting. Try doing a whole week of lunches at one time. Many sandwich fillings such as sliced meat, poultry, hard cheeses, tuna fish freeze well. Then all you have to do each morning is take a sandwich out of the freezer. It will defrost by lunch and taste freshly made.

Be sure to vary fixings. Start innovating with sandwich breads... use a piece of white with a peice of whole wheat, for example. Make sandwiches with frankfurter and hamburger rolls, pita bread or even croissants.

Favorite sandwich fillings can be mixed 'n matched: ham and American cheese, American cheese and turkey, turkey and ham; turkey, cream cheese and cranberry sauce; cream cheese, cranberry sauce and nuts.

Avoid soggy sandwiches. Wait to add lettuce or tomatoes until you put the sandwich into the lunchbox.. or put them in a plastic bag to be munched separately.

Hollow out the bottom of a roll and fill with minced chicken mixed with whole berry cranberry sauce or fill the roll with cold baked beans or a cooked vegetable salad.

As an alternative to mayonnaise as a salad dressing, substitute cream cheese or cranberry sauce blended with softened butter or margarine.

Put in two drinks - pink grapefruit juice cocktail for recess, cranberry juice cocktail for lunch. Two of the new lightweight Ocean Spray paper bottles will fit the same space as a thermos (good for only holding one drink!). And there's no breakage. Keep a supply of six flavors, in the freezer, ready to pack with your lunch. They'll be just the right temperature by noon.

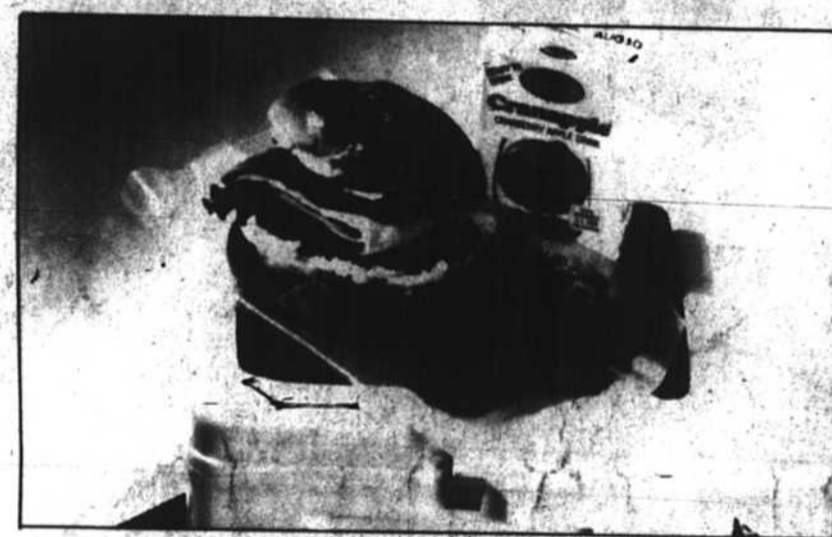
Small plastic bags filled with crunchy raw vegetables make for nutritious munching. Include a lunch box "surprise" a couple of days every week. A delicious easy-to-fix dessert is fruit 'F'cheese-cakes." Cover the bottom of a plastic cup with cream cheese, top with fruit chunks and sprinkle with ground nuts or coconut.

Freezing Is Simplest Way To Preserve

Freezing is one of the simplest and least time-consuming ways to preserve foods at home. It maintains the natural color, fresh flavor, and nutritive values of most fruits and vegetables. Frozen vegetables and fruits are ready to serve on short notice because most of the preparation they need for the table is done before freezing.

One of the most important steps in preparation for freezing vegetables is to blanch them. Blanching involves heating the vegetable to slow down or stop enzyme action. Enzymes help the vegetable mature, but if they're not stopped, they can cause loss of flavor and color. Blanching times vary with different vegetables.

A few simple steps are all that are necessary for home freezing. First, wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water. Sort according to size, unless they are to be cut into uniform pieces. Peel, trim, and cut into pieces. Blanch by using one gallon of boiling water for each pound vegetables.



Mix 'n match fillings and breads to make school lunch boxes more varied.

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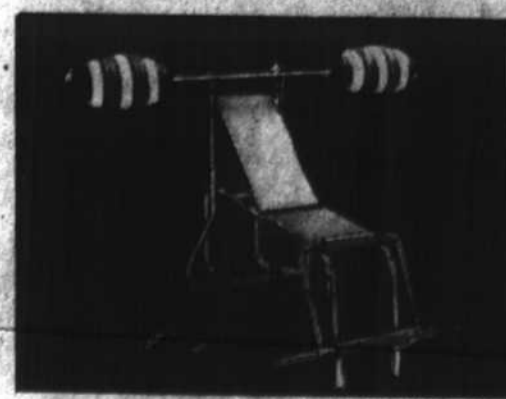
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