

Who's Who In The Kitchen

Mrs. Simmons Likes To "Break Away And Try New Things" In The Kitchen

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

As I entered the home of Camilla Simmons, the aroma of cookies baking wafted through the door to greet me. It was shortly after five, and Camilla had just gotten home from her word processing job at Duke Power, stopping first to pick up her five-year-old, Loni, from school.

"We mixed the dough last night to save time," the young mother explained. Her daughter eagerly awaited the cookies to come out of

the oven, so she could sample one... or two.

Camilla has been cooking since she was a teenager in Gaffney, SC. As the second oldest daughter of a working mother - the oldest was in college at the time - she used to do a lot of the cooking for the family of three boys and three girls. "I enjoyed it very much," she recalled.

"Mom is a very good cook," she added, "especially her potato salad. But I like to experiment on different recipes. My mom did what her mom did, but I broke away and tried new things."

When the family gets together for Thanksgiving at the Gaffney homestead, each of the grown children contributes to the meal by bringing covered dishes. Camilla enjoys special cooking for the holidays. "I've already started pulling out recipe books to experiment with new recipes," she remarked. Among her old standbys is the broccoli casserole which follows.

For Camilla, fixing special foods for the holidays is a tradition. "Holiday baking gets you in the frame of mind for the holidays," she offered. "It's part of sharing a festive time with family, and thanking God for being able to get together one more time."

Holiday season or not, baking is Camilla's favorite form of the culinary arts. She guessed that's because "once it's put together, you put it in the oven and forget about it. You don't have to stand over it and fuss."

Her family-Loni and husband Kermit-enjoy desserts. Her pound cake is one of their favorites. "I'm partial to that, too," she confessed.

Both wife and husband attended Barber-Scotia College before finding jobs in Charlotte and settling here nine years ago. Camilla majored in sociology and psychology and worked for the YWCA before her child was born. After her maternity leave was over, the "Y" didn't have a suitable opening. Fortunately, she said, she had also attended a business college, "so luckily I was able to fall back on that."

Besides cooking, she enjoys cross stitch and reading. The last story she read was a love story. The day of our visit together, she had stopped at the library and picked up, "Master of the Game," by Sidney Sheldon, as well as books for her daughter. "I take Loni by the library all the time to get books for her," she remarked. Loni attends kindergarten at Ascension Lutheran School.

Camilla is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, although she admitted she hasn't been active.

She also attends University Park Baptist Church, where she is a member of the Sanctuary Choir. "I have loved to sing since junior high," she remarked. "I'm a first soprano and I remember auditioning for junior choir and being amazed myself at my range. My



Camilla Simmons takes some fresh-baked cookies out of the oven. The cookies are one of her holiday traditions. (Photo by Audrey Lodato)

CORNBREAD DRESSING

- 6 c. crumbled cornbread
- 4 c. loaf bread
- 1 c. chopped celery
- 3/4 c. finely chopped onion
- 1 c. water
- 1/2 c. butter or chicken stock
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. sage
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 2 c. broth

Prepare bread for dressing. Cook celery and onion in 1 c. water until tender. Drain and add to the crumbs and seasoning. Stir in beaten eggs and enough broth to make a moist dressing. Pour into greased pan and bake at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES

- 3Tbsp. melted butter
- 1 can Eagle Brand Condensed Milk
- 1 c. candied red cherries
- 2 slices candied green pineapple (or substitute fruit cake mix for cherries & pineapple)
- 1 can angel flake coconut
- 2 c. chopped pecans
- Dash of salt
- 1 1/2 c. graham cracker crumbs

Mix and drop by teaspoons on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 325 degrees about 12-15 minutes. Do not overcook.

BROCCOLI CASSEROLE

- 1 pkg. frozen chopped broccoli
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 1 c. sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 small onion, chopped
- Ritz crackers

Cook broccoli just to thaw out. Mix all ingredients. Top with Ritz crackers. Bake at 325 for 35 minutes.

ANGEL COOKIES

- 1/4 lb. butter
- 1 c. plain flour
- pinch of salt
- 1 c. finely chopped pecans
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Melt butter, add other ingredients. Mix thoroughly, then form into cookies. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes. When cooled, roll in powdered sugar.

BAKED SQUASH

- 3 lb. yellow squash
- 1/2 c. chopped onions
- 1/2 c. crackers or bread crumbs
- 2 eggs
- 1 stick butter
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper (season to taste)

Wash and cut up squash. Boil until tender, drain thoroughly, then mash. Add all ingredients except 1/2 stick of butter to squash. Pour mixture into baking dish. Melt remaining butter, then spread over top and sprinkle with crackers or bread crumbs. Bake in 375 F. oven for approximately 1 hour or until brown on top.



A scaled-down Thanksgiving for the working cook features (clockwise from top) turkey with no-cook Cranberry, Walnut and Apple Cider Stuffing and Steamed Green Beans Almondine with Herbed Cranberry Puree. For dessert, serve a spectacular festive Chestnut Bavarian Mold with your favorite chocolate sauce.

Prepare A "Sensible"

Thanksgiving Dinner

Let's be sensible about cooking Thanksgiving dinner. If you work and only have Wednesday evening and Thursday morning to shop and cook, there's no way you alone can prepare the multi-course, multi-dessert food orgies of bygone Thanksgivings.

A scaled-down Thanksgiving dinner that won't overwhelm you or your guests is in order.

Plan to do the bulk of your food shopping on the weekend so that you leave Wednesday evening free for

the one involved cooking chore. That's a spectacular festive Chestnut Bavarian Mold for dessert.

Thursday you'll stuff the turkey with a no-cook Cranberry, Walnut and Apple Cider Stuffing.

Then you can make a choice between serving plain green beans or our dressed up version with herbed cranberry sauce. If you choose plain steamed beans, you might want to make a chocolate sauce to serve with the dessert.

CRANBERRY, WALNUT & APPLE CIDER TURKEY STUFFING

(Makes about 8 cups)

- 6 c. stale bread crumbs
- 1/3 c. chopped onion
- 3/4 tsp. poultry seasoning
- 3/4 c. Ocean Spray Fresh or Frozen Cranberries, chopped
- 3/4 c. raisins
- 1/2 c. chopped walnuts
- 1 c. peeled apples, coarsely chopped
- 1/3 c. chopped celery
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 c. butter, melted
- 3/4 c. apple cider

In large bowl, combine all of the above ingredients; mix well. Use to stuff turkey.

STEAMED GREEN BEANS ALMONDINE, WITH HERBED CRANBERRY PUREE

(Makes 8 servings)

- 2 lb. green beans, stringed and ends cut off
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 c. boiling water
- 1 c. firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 c. orange juice
- 1/2 c. dry red wine
- 12 oz. pkg. Ocean Spray Fresh or Frozen Cranberries
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. dried thyme, crumbled
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 c. blanched slivered almonds
- 2 Tbsp. butter

In a large pot, cook green beans in salted boiling water just until tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain and keep warm. In medium saucepan, combine brown sugar, orange juice, wine, cranberries, salt, thyme, and pepper. Cook over medium heat until berries pop and sauce thickens slightly. Puree in food processor or food mill until smooth. Keep warm. In small skillet brown almonds in butter until golden brown. Spoon puree over cooked beans and sprinkle with browned almonds.

CHESTNUT BAVARIAN CREAM MOLD

(Makes 16 servings)

- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- 1/2 c. cold water
- 1 1/2 c. milk
- 6 egg yolks
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 can (15 1/2 oz.) unsweetened chestnut puree
- 1/4 c. dark rum
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 square semisweet chocolate, melted
- 1 pt. heavy cream

In a small saucepan, sprinkle gelatin over cold water. Let stand 10 minutes to soften. In a large saucepan heat milk, just until bubbles appear around the edge (do not boil). Remove from heat; stir in softened gelatin until dissolved. In a large bowl, beat egg yolks and sugar with electric mixer until very light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Slowly add to milk mixture, stirring constantly until smooth. Cook, over low heat, stirring constantly, until custard thickens slightly and coats a metal spoon, about 5 minutes. In a large bowl, beat chestnut puree, until smooth. Beat in hot custard. Stir in rum, vanilla and chocolate. Cool. Chill over ice water, stirring often until mixture mounds when spooned. In a medium bowl, beat heavy cream until stiff. Fold into chestnut custard. Into a 10-cup decorative mold pour mixture. Chill at least 6 hours or until set. To serve: With the tip of a small knife loosen cream around edge. Dip mold quickly in warm water. Onto chilled serving plate invert mold. Garnish with chocolate covered whole chestnuts, chocolate pieces, candied cherries and whipped cream.

Chocolate Triangles

Melt six (1 oz.) squares semisweet chocolate over hot, not boiling water. Spread evenly onto a chilled cookie sheet; chill in refrigerator until firm. Cut into triangles. Place around base of Chestnut Bavarian Mold.

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