

Chicken dishes have classic appeal

FOOD



AILEEN CLARE

It's back to basics in many households, as weekend cooks leaf through old cookbooks and family recipes for nostalgic treats. Such traditional favorites as chicken pie, chicken a la king and chicken Kiev are back on the menus of many restaurants and homes.

Chicken pie and chicken a la king recipes are traditional favorites of Southern cooks. A church, Junior League or auxiliary cookbook is incomplete without more than one version of these favorites. Although some add hard-cooked eggs, peas, carrots, potatoes or turnips to their chicken pie, the favored version simply lets the chicken star in a light sauce baked between two crusts of pastry.

At one time, it was believed that a heavy hand with butter and rich cream guaranteed any dish would turn out right. Today's health-conscious cook may want to use low-fat or skim milk and margarine.

Chicken a la king was a very popular dish in the 1950s and a mainstay for what was then called the "ladies' luncheon." Back then, many a politician dined on this hearty topping served on toast points or in a pastry shell. According to one South Carolinian, the essential ingredients were chopped chicken in a cream sauce and pimento for color. She said she often included a can of condensed cream of mushroom soup with a 1/2 cup milk in her recipe. Others added green peas, sauteed or canned mushrooms and a dash of sherry. The following chicken a la king recipe was created by the

chef of the old Brighton Beach Hotel outside New York City.

Lending an international flavor to renewed interest in chicken dishes is a favorite of czarist days of Russian, chicken Kiev. Once considered an exotic and difficult dish, it is actually quite simple to prepare and more economical than when it first appeared

on expensive restaurant menus years ago.

Although canned white chicken meat may be used in recipes for chicken pie or chicken a la king, the traditional method is to simmer a whole chicken. To do this: place 1 whole broiler-fryer chicken or 1 broiler-fryer, cut in parts in deep sauce-

pan. Add 2 cups water, 1 small onion, sliced, 3 celery tops, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Cover and simmer on low heat about 45 minutes or until chicken is fork tender. Remove chicken from pan into large bowl and cool in the refrigerator. Skim any fat from broth and reserve in the refrigerator. To use, separate meat from bones and discard bones and skin. Cut chicken into bite-size pieces. A 3-pound broiler-fryer chicken will yield about 3 cups diced, cooked chicken and 2 to 2 1/2 cups broth.

In large frypan over medium temperature, melt butter. Add mushrooms, green and red peppers and onion; stir-fry about 5 minutes. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Slowly add warm broth, stirring until thickened, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low.

In medium bowl, beat egg yolks. Continue beating eggs and slowly stir in warm half-and-half. Slowly stir egg mixture into chicken-broth mixture. Heat until sauce is thickened, about 5 minutes; *do not boil*. Add chicken and sherry and heat thoroughly, about 3 minutes. Serve over hot toast points or biscuits. This kitchen-tested recipe makes 6 servings.



A NEW generation is discovering traditional Southern favorites such as chicken pie and chicken a la king.

CHICKEN A LA KING

- 1 3-pound broiler-fryer chicken, cooked, skinned, boned and cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced onion
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup chicken broth, warmed
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 cups half-and-half, warmed
- 2 tablespoons sherry

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