

Spending time with grandma creating memories

Gerry is writing today

Here is another story of a Christmas gift that keeps on giving after the big day is over. My Georgetown grandchildren are carrying on the family tradition of giving and making gifts that last.

Alex, age 14, wanted to give his parents something he made, so in September, we conspired to make a case of pickled beets for his mom and a case of plum jam for his dad. On December 24th, he also made fudge and brownies for his brother's gift.

Yummy all round!

Michael, age 11, gave his parents each a gift card for three homemade dinners with the guest of your choice, by chef Michael. Michael hoped, but also knew, that his parents would choose each other, because they pretty well do everything together he said.

Well, the Saturday after New Year's, Michael phoned me and asked if I could help him with his first dinner for them. Michael and I made our plans on the phone and I agreed to pick him up at 4 p.m. on Sunday to get to the grocery store to shop. At the grocery store, he showed me his recipe for Thai chicken with linguine, taken from his *Farmer's Almanac* he had received for Christmas.

We shopped for the specific ingredients, even buying a new jar of crunchy peanut butter for the half cup that we needed. We thought that was important. Back at our house, Michael made clear that he was the chef and I was the sous chef and could I prepare the Caesar salad and he would do the main.

Michael and I organized the kitchen and kept everyone out while we cooked. I taught Michael about mis en place, a culinary term meaning everything ready before you start to cook and then away we went! As he called his parents and brother to the table, right at our agreed time, he set out the bread and Caesar salad and informed them that he couldn't join them for this course— he would be too busy.

Now, as I said, I made the Caesar and used a good bottled dressing, real bacon, freshly grated parmesan and croutons. But just as I was mixing it, Michael appears by my side and squeezes in some anchovy paste and informs me that he thinks we need a little extra of this. I was impressed.

Michael had chosen a relatively quick and easy recipe for an adult, even though the name didn't indicate that. I cooked the whole wheat pasta while he cooked the Thai chicken. He decided to mix it all together for service and serve it tableside in the large frying pan he used. With his

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&
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apron, tongs and a smile on his face, he had his tools ready.

The dish was delicious by any adult standards and Michael was genuinely happy with his endeavors.

We will encourage Michael, as we all should do with our children and grandchildren to try whatever their heart's desire.

I enjoyed working with Michael, well, not really work-

ing, but spending quality time with him. Michael says that the evening was fun and when I asked him what he learned, he said "nothing really— I pretty well knew everything!"

I spent a lot of time with my grandmother and learned a lot from her in her kitchen— nothing specific, but the warm memories and the unknown lessons learned that have carried me to my heart's desire for years.

A note from Lori: I was the recipient of this dinner and it was delicious! The recipe shown today is not the same one Michael (below) prepared, as his was fresh out of the *Farmer's Almanac*. This is another Thai chicken dish that we love and cook often at our house that I'm sure you will enjoy!

Have fun and keep cooking!

Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com

Thai Chicken Stir Fry

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into strips
- 1/2 package vermicelli rice noodles
- 1 shallot, minced fine
- 1-2 jalepeno peppers
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger, grated or minced fine
- 2 cloves garlic, minced fine
- 1 bunch asparagus, blanched, refreshed, cut on a bias
- 1 red pepper, seeds removed, sliced thinly
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms (shitake preferably)
- 1 small can baby corn
- 4 tbsp light soy sauce
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 2 limes, juiced
- 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- toasted sesame seeds for garnish

Method

1. Prepare the vermicelli by placing dry vermicelli in salted, boiling water. Turn heat off under noodles. Allow to sit in the hot water for approximately 1 minute. Keep a close eye on the noodles; they do not take long to cook. Then drain and rinse. Set aside.

2. In a large non-stick pan, cook chicken (no additional oil needed). Do not overcrowd the pan. Cook in a couple of batches if necessary. Set chicken aside.

3. In same pan, cook shallot, jalepenos, ginger and garlic until soft and aromatic. Add red pepper strips, baby corn and shitake mushrooms and cook until soft. Remove from heat.

4. Combine soy sauce, olive oil, fish sauce, lime juice and rice vinegar.

5. Add the soy sauce mixture, the chicken and the drained noodles back to the vegetable mixture and heat through.



6. Serve with a sprinkle of toasted sesame seeds on top for garnish.

Cook's note: this dish is excellent hot or cold. Make lots so you can take it for lunch to work the next day! If you'd like it hotter, just increase the amount of jalepeno peppers or add some curry paste at the start of the recipe with the garlic, ginger, jalepenos and shallots.

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