Three Hollows Food and Cooking

Twenty some-odd years ago, we bought an old farm in the hills of western Maryland. This book is a recounting of some of the adventures and experiences that we've had preparing meals here. It's more memoir than cookbook. Our family is an amalgam of Eastern European Jews, African Americans and Asian and our food reflects and expands on that diversity: eastern and western European, Middle Eastern, African, Asian, Southern U.S., Caribbean, South American and sometimes a blend of these. Food has always been a central part of our family life. As kids, my brother and I used to do our homework in the kitchen, waiting for my father to come home and watching my mother cook. For all of us, life revolves around the kitchen where we spend more time than anywhere else. When I talk on the phone with my brother and sister or my parents and, more and more, my middle son, food is inevitably a big part of the conversation. We all like to eat and we all like to cook.

Before we get too far into this, I want to make a couple of things clear. First, I'm not a chef. Chefs teach and supervise and sometimes run restaurants. Cooks cook. I'm a cook – a pretty good one I've been told, but a cook, not a chef. I don't even use the term "gourmet", partly because I don't really know what it means in the context of the world's cuisine and partly because it just sounds snooty and pathetically Eurocentric. The other thing is the recipes. There isn't a single one in this book that I created from scratch which, of course, is the case for most recipes no matter where you find them. All have been borrowed, adjusted, adapted and fiddled with over the years. Some are pretty close to the originals; some, the authors from whom I borrowed them likely wouldn't recognize. They've come from our extensive library of cookbooks, from a wide range of internet sites and from friends and family. Often, I use these for ideas or inspiration, rather than complete recipes but, not infrequently, the first time I cook a new dish I stick pretty close to the original, particularly Southeast Asian cuisine which I still find less intuitive. There are some sources that I turn to again and again and that, together, form the foundation of my cooking, especially traditional American dishes: Ronny Lundy's *Victuals*, a beautiful and brilliant book on Appalachian cuisine; the late Edna Lewis' *The Taste of Country Cooking* – the bible of southern and country cooking for all the right reasons; the classic *Game Cookbook* by Charles Stuart; and Hank Shaw's wide-ranging, adventurous and inspiring website "Hunter, Angler, Gardener, Cook" as well as his gorgeous book *Buck, Buck, Moose*. I have not given credit to any of the authors from whom I borrowed recipes, mostly because I no longer remember the source. You should feel free to use mine without attribution as well – copy them, modify them, post them, publish them, email them to your mother.

A little background…

The farm. The farm, which we call "Three Hollows", is just under 200 acres and surrounded by a large state forest. It's very secluded with our nearest neighbor a mile away by road. It's a lot of work but it's not really a working farm. Most of the acreage is woods or fallow

fields. The house was built in the mid-1800s and has been largely restored or renovated. The first major project was the kitchen which has a wall of windows facing west across the valley toward Polish Mountain, great cabinet space, a beautiful and treasured farmhouse sink and counters made from old red oak boards reclaimed from the floors of a 200-year old barn. There's also a Mennonite-made farm table that seats 6 or 7 people and serves as additional work space when we're pickling vegetables or processing large animals for the freezer. Built on the dry-stacked stone foundation of the old bank barn, there's another building that we call a guest house with a large garage, a 2-bedroom apartment on the second floor and, in the back, a summer kitchen with a late 1800s wood-fired cook stove and a farm table made from reclaimed hemlock that comfortably seats 12.

The tools. For the most part, the appliances on which we cook are utilitarian, not "high end". The only possible exception to that is the stove. It's a 36-inch, 5 burner, dual-fuel, single-oven Verona in white enamel. The central burner cranks out 16,000 BTUs which is enough to bring the water in our largest canning pot to a boil in less than 10 minutes and we've yet to find anything that won't fit in the oven. The stove is almost a piece of art but, more importantly, it's a real workhorse and a joy to use. I kind of hate to admit it but I'm a little obsessive about the stove and clean the top almost every time we use it so it's in very nice shape even after years of continuous use. Outside, we also have a 2-burner propane stove for frying fish and chicken and for other smoky or strong-smelling foods. The charcoal grill is a large, covered smoker with a side box for cold smoking. It gets used a lot year-round and I've had to install sheet stainless steel on the bottom where I've managed to burn through it. My youngest son and I also built a rectangular fire pit that's big enough to roast a whole pig or goat on a spit and that also keeps us warm when we're cooking outdoors in the winter. The refrigerators are nothing special but we have 3 of them: one large one in the kitchen, a smaller one in the mud room for beer and whatever won't fit in the kitchen fridge when we're having company and an old one in the garage where we store refrigerator pickles and gallon jars of filtered, once- or twice-used frying oil. That one is also where we wet-age meat. We also have a large chest freezer in the garage.

Virtually all of the pots and pans that we use on a daily basis are cast iron: a few smaller Le Creuset pots that my parents gave us, two large enameled cast iron Dutch ovens, four old and well-seasoned skillets of various sizes rescued from flea markets and yard sales and a deep, 14-inch covered fryer that we use mostly outside on the propane stove. The larger pots that we use for canning are all enameled steel and quite old. Our cooking utensils all sit out on the counter in crockery containers and fit into just three: one for metal forks and spatulas, one for whisks and potato mashers and one for wooden spoons and spatulas, most of which I make out of sycamore or hickory cut on the farm. My favorite tools are my knives. I have ten in total but use just two or three of them all the time. They're all carbon steel with full tangs and wooden handles that range in age from 10 or 15 years to over 100. Of the ten, only one was more than $25 and that's a Japanese white steel sashimi knife that I almost never use. Like the cast iron skillets, the others were secondhand. I grind the blades to different angles depending on their purpose and all are

extremely sharp. I wash and dry them immediately after use and touch up the blades at least a couple of times each week.

The ingredients. We grow most of the vegetables that we eat in a 2,000 square foot garden. In a good year, we produce enough for all our friends and relatives. Everything is grown organically and from seed, predominantly heritage or heirloom varieties from various seed exchanges. Whatever can't be sown directly is started from seed in a small greenhouse in the garage equipped with grow lights, heaters and watering trays. The vegetables that we grow or have grown (we rotate some from year to year) include peas, green beans, pole beans, black eyed peas, lima beans, calico beans, jalapeño peppers, bell peppers, banana peppers, white and red cabbage, white and sweet potatoes, zucchini, lemon squash, crookneck squash, Japanese and Italian eggplants, cucumbers, Rose de Berne and Black Prince and Mountaineer tomatoes, tomatillos, butternut squash, sugar pumpkins, kale, collards, chard, carrots, turnips, beets, parsnips, rutabagas, lettuce, garlic, onions and watermelon. We gave up on watermelon because bears pulled the fencing down to get at them. We tried artichokes once but it's too hot here in the summer. We grew 3 large, bushy plants and 3 small, dry artichokes. Because it gets hot and buggy early before then end of May, we've taken to growing the leafy greens in the greenhouse after most of the seedlings have been transplanted. Vegetables that we don't eat fresh or store in the garage which doubles as a root cellar, we generally blanch and freeze, leaving canning mostly for pickled vegetables, chutneys, relishes, salsa and jams. We also have a separate herb garden with green and purple basil, oregano, dill, chives, sage, cilantro, marjoram, savory, lemon and English thyme, tarragon, rosemary and Italian flat leaf and curly parsley. Being an invasive, mint is everywhere. We tend to dry bunches of herbs in the garage although we freeze basil and oregano for pesto. Overall, I would guess that we grow about 75% of the vegetables that we eat.

In Flintstone, a village five miles to our west on the other side of Polish Mountain, there's a Mennonite-owned dry goods store where we buy most of our staples like white, red, brown, black and wild rice; brown, white and evaporated cane sugar; whole and white wheat, oat, teff, spelt, millet and corn flour; two kinds of oats; three different grinds of cornmeal; and both Durham and gluten-free egg noodles. They offer a diverse collection of dried fruits and nuts, beans, seeds and other goods and a well-stocked section with canning supplies. In season, they also sell locally-grown apples and peaches and blueberries and strawberries and mushrooms as well as some of what we don't grow (sweet corn, for example) or don't grow enough of (e.g., potatoes). Local bacon, ham, smoked meats, cheese and fresh brown eggs are always available. They also have a few things that aren't readily available elsewhere: dried tangerines, fresh picked black walnuts, dried morel mushrooms, pearl onions and sorghum. How they decide what to stock is a mystery to me but, when I walk through the doors with the sign that says "we respectfully request that all be modestly dressed – clothed from neck to knees", I know that I'll find something that I couldn't possibly do without.

We're not vegetarians. Our meals are typically built around meat or fish. We don't raise any domestic animals but my friends and I usually take a deer or two in the fall and divide up the meat so there's almost always venison in the freezer. I often take a few squirrels as well and my

wife and I (my kids say that they "won't eat rodents") relish the sweet, acorn-infused meat. There are rabbits on the farm but we're leaving them alone for now because the population is just starting to recover from coyote predation. Our Mennonite neighbors raise pigs, beef, lamb, goats and chickens and there are several butcher shops that sell the meat including a halal and kosher meat processor that services the Muslim and Jewish communities near Washington. We eat very little beef and not a lot of pork. After venison, lamb and goat are our preferred red meats and they're available as whole or half animals or butchered and wrapped. A half of each is more than enough for a year and costs only $7 or $8 a pound. For chicken, which we eat fairly often, we just buy it at the grocery where organic meat is readily available. The grocery store, called Martin's, is in LaVale, 25 miles to the west of us on the other side of Cumberland. Because they serve a large catchment area in Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, the store has an unusually broad range of products including organic and gluten-free selections which is refreshing and convenient in an area where many people think Velveeta and Mountain Dew are food groups. They also have an in-store bakery which turns out surprisingly good baguettes and artisan breads.

We eat more fish than meat, particularly when my son and his girlfriend visit. A couple of years ago, they went from tomahawk steaks and pork belly to a pescatarian diet with an emphasis on Thai, Cambodian and Vietnamese recipes. (She is of Cambodian descent and they have traveled widely in southeast Asia.) There are trout, bass and walleyes in the streams and rivers and lakes nearby as well as bluegills and bass in our pond but I never seem to find much time to fish so we buy most of it. Martin's has a surprisingly good seafood department with a decent although limited selection of fresh fish and shellfish. The fresh fish comes in on Thursday and, if I remember to call earlier in the week, I can usually order whatever's in season – rockfish, bluefish, halibut, cod loins, swordfish, whole snapper and sometimes ahi tuna. It's not cheap but the quality is good and it's nice to be able to find good fresh fish almost 200 miles from the ocean. If we can't find what we want at Martin's, my son brings it out from the seafood markets in Baltimore where they live.

The last category of ingredients that are important to us even though we don't eat them as often as we like is the things that we forage on or near the farm. These include wild black raspberries, ramps, fiddleheads, lamb's quarter, watercress, prickly pear cactus and mushrooms. Not being an experienced mushroom hunter, I limit what we collect to easily recognized species: morels, chanterelles, chicken mushrooms, hen of the woods, black trumpets, blue milk mushrooms and puffballs. The prickly pear cactus is native to Maryland and grows in abundance on the farm, including in the flower garden behind the house. We don't bother with the fruit but the pads, stripped of their spines, peeled and sliced are a wonderful addition to soups and stews. Occasionally, I use them in place of okra. The wild black raspberries are prolific and not at all hard to find. I am by no means an expert forager and don't spend anywhere near enough time at it but find that, when I do have some success, I appreciate the results more than just about any other food. It strengthens my connection to the farm in a very special way.

Meat

*N*ot long after we bought the farm, I was in the woods on the last day of the late muzzleloader season. It was unseasonably warm for early January and, with heavy woolen clothes on, I was getting hot and drowsy. I walked back to the house for lunch and coffee but decided to take the dogs for a walk down to the pond first. A young doe lay on the wet ice near the edge, her front legs splayed apart, with her head back at an unnatural angle. She was dead but still warm. She appeared to have slipped on the ice and broken her neck. Deer are pretty flexible, resilient animals so I was a little skeptical about the apparent cause of her death, thinking that she may have been wounded by another hunter or even hit by a car and only made it as far as the pond. But, when I skinned and quartered her the next day, there wasn't a mark on her and two of the upper vertebrae in her neck were fractured and displaced. The pond is only a couple of hundred yards from the house and barn so I dragged her back and hung her from the gambrel under the pole shed. I field dressed her after lunch then left her to cool overnight. The next morning, I skinned and quartered her, cut out the tenderloins and wrapped the quarters in butcher paper to wet-age in the fridge for a week. It was the sweetest venison that I've ever eaten.

Good Gosht

When I butcher a deer, I usually set aside the shanks from both hind legs, one shoulder and of course the backstraps. The rest is cut into roasts to either be cooked whole or cut up into meat for soups and stews. Meat destined for the grinder – the second shoulder, neck meat, rib meat, brisket and scraps – are put in freezer bags to be ground as needed. Ground meat tastes better when it's ground just before it's used. Meat for stew or soups is cut up as needed, brined (all my venison is brined) then browned and cooked low and slow until it's falling apart tender. "Gosht" is a Farsi (Persian) word that literally means meat or goat but is also used widely across northern India and the Middle East to refer to very tender, slow-cooked meat. Gosht is the foundation for a lot of our venison dishes, many of which have a Persian or northern Indian origin – enough so that all of our enameled cast iron pots and Dutch ovens are permanently stained a dark yellow on the inside from turmeric and saffron. Here are two of those recipes.

CURRIED VENISON WITH PUMPKIN

Ingredients

1 lb. venison from the shoulder or lower part of a hind leg, cut into 2-inch cubes
2 Tbsp. Persian curry powder (see recipe below)
1/2 tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp. ground coriander seed
1/2 tsp. ground mace
1 tsp. powdered fenugreek

2 Tbsp. olive or neutral vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2 large tomatoes, peeled and seed
1 Tbsp. tomato paste
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 lb. pumpkin (or other winter squash), cut into 3/4 to 1 inch cubes
1 large jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced (optional)
1 cup chicken or venison stock
Dried, ground sumac
2 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
2-3 scallions, green and white parts sliced across thinly
Salt and freshly ground pepper

*Persian curry powder for stews and soups (advieh khoresht):

If you start with whole spices, you will need to grind them finely in a spice grinder or coffee mill. Fenugreek, sumac, dried rose petals and dried lime are available at Middle Eastern specialty markets or online or you can make your own. Once ground, thoroughly mix and store tightly covered in a glass jar somewhere cool and dark.

- 4 tablespoons coriander
- 2 tablespoons rose petals dried
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon dried lime (seeds removed)
- 4 teaspoons cumin
- 2 teaspoons cardamom
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 1/2 tablespoon cloves or star anise
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Directions
1. Put the cubed venison in a large bowl along with the curry powder, allspice, coriander, mace and salt and pepper to taste (don't skimp on the salt). Mix well to coat the meat and refrigerate, covered, for at least 2 hours (preferably longer).

2. Heat a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the olive or vegetable oil. When the oil is just beginning to smoke, add the venison and cook until well browned on all sides.

3. Add the onion, tomatoes and tomato paste, and continue to cook, stirring until the onions are soft. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Add the stock, stirring and scraping the brown bits, then add the pumpkin and jalapeño (if using). Bring to a simmer then reduce the heat to low and simmer gently until the meat is very tender. About 15 minutes before you think it will be done, add the fenugreek. Serve with basmati rice, sprinkle lightly with sumac and top with the scallions and cilantro. Warmed flat bread or naan is good with it, too.

VENISON STEW WITH EGGPLANT AND TOMATOES (khoresh bademjan)

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. venison leg, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 6 Chinese/Japanese eggplants or 4 medium Italian eggplants, peeled and sliced into ¾ to 1-inch rounds (for the Chinese/Japanese eggplants) or 1-inch cubes (for the Italian eggplants)
- 1 large onion, sliced thinly
- 2 large cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 3 cups chicken or venison stock
- 6 medium or 4 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded and roughly chopped
- 1/2 Tbsp dried lime or juice of 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon saffron, diluted in 1 tablespoon of water
- 1 teaspoon fenugreek
- 3 or 4 Tbsp cilantro, chopped
- Olive or neutral vegetable oil
- Salt
- Pepper

Directions

1. Salt the venison well. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat and when it just starts to smoke, add the venison and brown well on all sides. Stir in the stock, scraping up the brown bits, add the turmeric and black pepper, bring to a low boil then cover and simmer until the meat is almost tender, 1-2 hours depending on which muscle group it came from.
2. While the meat is cooking, sauté the eggplants in a large skillet in 4 tablespoons of hot oil until nicely browned. Remove eggplant to a plate with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.
3. In the same skillet, add another tablespoon of oil and fry the onion until it starts to caramelize.
4. Add the tomato paste, garlic and saffron and continue cooking while stirring on medium-low for another 4 or 5 minutes.
5. Add the onion mixture, tomatoes, lime or lime juice and fenugreek to the pot with the venison. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer until the tomatoes are starting to soften. Add the eggplant and continue to simmer until the meat is tender and the flavors are melded.
6. Serve with steamed rice with the cilantro sprinkled on top and warmed flat bread if you want.

I have one more Persian venison recipe for you but this one doesn't include gosht. It's called koobideh and is ground, seasoned meat kabobs cooked over an open fire on skewers. It's basically Persian street food and is one of my all-time favorites. The trouble with making koobideh with venison is that it's traditionally made with lamb or beef or a combination of the two and needs to have a fairly high (15-20%) fat content in order to be juicy, which it has to be or it isn't worth making or eating. Venison is very low in fat so, to make koobideh with it, you have to add fat and that's where the challenge comes in. I've tried beef tallow which works but leaves a sheen of grease on your teeth and isn't neutral enough in flavor. Duck fat, which is quite neutral, has too low a melting point and just runs out, creating an uncontrollable fire in the grill and too much smoke. Butter doesn't work at all because the whey and protein burn and the water dripping on the coals (if you use salted butter) makes everything taste smoky. Ghee is better but can still causes flare-ups if you take the fat content up to 20% although it imparts a pleasant, almost nutty flavor and great mouth-feel. Pure, un-rendered leaf fat from pigs (which isn't always easy to find) is neutral tasting, has high melting and smoking points and gives fairly good results although I've found that, at 20%, it can be a little heavy. (The fact that I've actually tried all of these should give you an idea how much I like koobideh and venison and, yes, I ate them all.) What I've finally settled on is a ratio of one pound of ground venison to 2 ounces of leaf fat to 1 ounce of ghee. To me, it's as good if not better than lamb and much better than beef. If you come up with a different mixture that you like better, please let me know. I'll happily try it. One more thing: you can't and shouldn't even try to make koobideh with ground meat that was previously frozen or even freshly ground but from meat that was frozen. It has to be fresh or it doesn't hold together and falls off the skewers. If all your venison is frozen, grind it and make burgers; if your venison was ground then frozen, make chili or pasta sauce.

VENISON KOOBIDEH

This recipe starts with 1 pound of ground venison which, in my experience, is enough for 2-3 people. It scales up readily.

Ingredients

- 1 lb fresh, venison meat (shoulder, leg, scraps, etc.) at room temperature
- 2 oz un-rendered leaf fat
- 1 oz ghee
- 1 medium sweet onion, quartered
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp salt (don't skimp on the salt, it helps hold the kabobs together)
- 1 tsp sumac
- 1/2 tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 3-4 shreds saffron

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 4 ripe but still firm tomatoes
- 1 large green bell pepper, stem removed, deseeded and quartered
- 2 large onions, peeled and quartered
- Olive oil
- Flat bread or naan (not pita)
- Flat metal skewers (1-inch is ideal; 1/2-inch will work; round won't)

Directions

1. Before you get started, find two square metal pipes as long as the grill surface is wide. You will place these parallel to each other on the top and bottom of the grate lengthwise. If you have a really deep grate, fire bricks might work. The idea is to suspend the skewers over the fire between the supports so the meat isn't touching the grate which will keep it from sticking and falling off. (Don't remove the grate, though, because if one of the kabobs does fall off, you will want to be able to rescue it with tongs).
2. Mix venison, leaf fat and ghee together well in a bowl. Run it through a meat grinder using the fine blade. A food processor will work if you don't have a grinder but don't overdo it; you want the meat ground fairly finely but not turned into paste (yet).
3. Chop the onion pieces in a food processor until pulpy and very juicy. Strain in a fine metal mesh strainer, pressing it with a spatula to extract as much juice as possible. Discard the juice.
4. Add the remaining onion pulp to a medium bowl.
5. Add the ground venison, minced garlic, salt, spices and egg to the bowl. Knead all of the ingredients for at least several minutes or until the mixture is paste-like and sticks together without falling apart. You're not making burgers; you want it sticky and pasty.
6. Dip your hands in cool water and divide the meat into 10 equally-sized balls.
7. Dipping your hands in water again for each one, place the skewer on top of a ball and squeeze the meat firmly around the skewer, centering the skewer as much as possible. When you're sure that the meat is not going to fall off, start squeezing it from top to bottom, extending it over the middle part of the skewer. Leave the top and bottom of the skewer clear. The meat should be about ½ inch thick all around the skewer. Three-quarters of an inch is OK but no thicker.
8. Set the skewers over a shallow baking sheet with sides, so the meat isn't touching the bottom of the baking sheet. If your grill isn't ready, put the pan in the fridge if it will fit.
9. Melt the butter in a small pan, add saffron and cook very gently for 3-4 minutes. Set aside.
10. Light the grill. The coals are ready when they are gray and covered with ash. The fire should be medium or medium-high but not blazing hot. (Please use natural charcoal, not briquets, and use a chimney to start the coals. Never use lighter fluid.)
11. For the peppers, onions and tomatoes, use smaller skewers, brush them lightly with olive oil and grill them first, keeping them warm on the cool side of the grill if it's big enough or wrapped in foil in a 250° F oven.
12. Put the skewers on top of the supports over the grate. Turn each one over after 30 seconds or so to start cooking the meat on both sides to help it adhere to the skewers. They are

thin and will cook quickly. Don't overcook them or they'll get dry and you want them juicy. I cook mine barely to medium, maybe two minutes, three at the most.
13. When the kabobs are done, put them on a platter, brush them with the butter-saffron mix and cover lightly with foil. They should be eaten while they're still piping hot.
14. Serve with the grilled vegetables and flat bread that's been lightly grilled or warmed briefly in a dry skillet. Some crumbled feta cheese or warm hummus is nice, too, but not traditional.

Moving on from Persian venison recipes, here are two that are more traditional American fare.

VENISON SHOULDER WITH WINTER VEGETABLES

For this recipe, you will need a cast iron Dutch oven or casserole with a tight-fitting lid that's large enough to hold the shoulder with room for the vegetables. If you don't have one that big, it can be made in a baking pan lined with heavy duty foil and with the meat and vegetables covered tightly with foil. Possibly because the heat isn't as steady or because it doesn't self-baste with juice dripping from the underside of the lid, I don't think it's as good but it works. (You can buy a 7-8 quart or even larger cast iron or enameled cast iron Dutch oven for less than $80 if you don't insist on Le Creuset.) Cooking time will depend on the size of the roast and the age of the deer. This recipe also works with venison shanks (4 or more) but you'll need to cook it at least a half hour longer.

Ingredients

- 1 whole 3-4 lb venison shoulder with the shank removed (brined for 12 hours or overnight in a solution of 1/2 cup sea salt to a gallon of water with 10 or 12 crushed juniper berries added for each gallon)
- 1/4 cup of olive oil, ghee or other oil (duck fat is particularly good in this recipe)
- 2 cups of stock, venison stock if you have it or beef bone broth
- 2 large or 3 small garlic cloves, minced
- 1 carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 large stalk of celery, peeled (if you want) and diced
- 1/4 cup flour (optional)
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 sprig fresh sage
- 2 bay leaves
- 12 pearl onions, peeled
- 2 good-sized parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes (substitute rutabagas if you want to)
- 3 large carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 small-medium tart apple, peeled, cored and cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 10-12 small boiling potatoes (red bliss, Yukon Gold or white) left whole, skins on
- Sea salt and freshly-ground black pepper at the table (The brining can add some saltiness so you won't know if it needs salt until it's done.)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 300° F (move the rack low enough to accommodate the pot)
2. Heat oil or fat over medium-high heat
3. Wipe the meat dry with paper towels
4. Add meat to pot and brown well on all sides; remove to a plate
5. Turn the heat down to medium, add the diced carrot and celery and sauté, stirring frequently until they're soft and just starting to brown, then add the minced garlic and continue to sauté for another minute
6. At this point, if you want the gravy to be a little thicker, add the flour to the pot and stir until it's well combined with the vegetables. (I don't think it's necessary as the potatoes and other vegetables added later will give the gravy some body but choose for yourself.)
7. Add the stock to the pot and bring to a low boil. (Stir until thickened slightly if you added the flour.) Take it off the heat.
8. Put the meat back in the pot and baste with a couple of spoons of the stock, add the thyme, bay leaves and sage to the stock, then cover and put it in the oven.
9. Cook for 2 hours, basting with stock every 30 minutes.
10. After 2 hours, the meat should be starting to get tender. Check by inserting a carving fork into it. If it feels fairly tender, add the vegetables and apple and return to the oven for another hour. If it isn't getting tender, put it back in the oven and check it every half hour or so until it is then add the vegetables and apple.
11. After an hour in the oven with the vegetables, the meat should be very tender and pull apart easily with a fork. If not, cook for another 30 minutes.
12. Move the roast to a platter and pull apart into large chunks. Return the meat to the pot to warm and absorb the juice.
13. Serve in bowls with crusty bread on the side to sop up the gravy.

VENISON GUMBO

(This recipe makes enough for 12-15 hungry people. If you need less, just cut everything but the cooking time in half. It also freezes well. It can be reheated gently but don't bring it to a boil or the filé will clump and get stringy.)

Ingredients

- 1 cup duck fat or neutral oil
- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 1 large green or red sweet pepper, diced
- 2 sweet onions, diced
- 4 celery stalks, diced
- 6 minced cloves garlic, minced
- 3 to 4 pounds of venison from the shoulder or hind leg, cut into 1" cubes and brined (1/4 cup sea salt to 1 quart of water with 8-10 crushed juniper berries)

- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 Tbsp smoked paprika
- 1-2 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1-2 Tbsp dried thyme
- 1-2 Tbsp dried oregano
- 1-2 tsp celery seed
- Sea salt to taste (I use coarse smoked salt)
- 3 quarts venison, game or rich bone stock
- 4 deeply smoked duck legs, skin removed
- 1-2 cups fresh okra, sliced into ½- inch rings (omit if you really don't like okra)
- 1 lb smoked andouille sausage, cut into 1-inch rings*
- 2 tablespoons filé powder
- 8 sliced green onions (white and green parts) and 1 packed cup of chopped, fresh parsley

*If you're not a fan of andouille (which I'm not), you can substitute smoked kielbasa (ideally, *kielbasa mysliwska*, a Polish hunter sausage made with juniper berries).

Instructions

1. Bring the stock to a simmer.
2. Salt then brown the venison an all sides in 4 tablespoons of duck fat or oil in a large skillet. Set aside.
3. In a large Dutch oven, heat the duck fat or oil on medium. Whisk in the flour then stir more or less continuously until the roux is chocolate colored but be very careful not to burn it. It will probably take 20 minutes or so.
4. When the roux is ready, stir in the peppers, onions, celery and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are soft.
5. Mix all the dry spices except the filé powder together.
6. When the vegetables are soft, ladle in the stock while stirring constantly. Stir in each ladle of stock before adding another. Turn the heat to medium-high to bring the gumbo to a low boil.
7. Stir in the spices then add the venison and duck legs. Taste and add more spices (but not salt yet) if needed. Lower the heat to a simmer, cover and cook gently for 2 hours and check to see if both the venison and duck legs are tender. They should be very tender. If not, keep simmering the gumbo, checking every half-hour until they are. Take the duck legs out and when they're cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the bones then return to the gumbo with the sausage and okra. Cook until the okra is soft and sausage is heated through. Taste to see if it needs salt.
8. Add the filé powder, green onions and parsley. Simmer gently until the parsley is slightly wilted.
9. Serve in bowls on top of steamed rice with crusty bread and Louisiana hot sauce.

Some time ago, my brother-in-law and I decided to drive from the farm to western Pennsylvania to shoot boar. I say shoot rather than hunt because the place that we went was a

couple of hundred acres with high fences around it but we were after meat, not adventure. The boars were supposedly pure Russian strain imported from Canada in the spring and released to forage until fall. They looked like wild boars and were grumpy and aggressive enough to convince me. We both shot males a little less than 100 pounds. It cost us $150 each so the per pound cost was substantially less than pork chops at the grocery store. The proprietor offered to butcher the pigs for $50 a piece but, out of an abundance of hubris, we elected to just have them field dressed and split lengthwise down the spine with the heads left on. We dumped them into the coolers that we had brought and headed back to the farm.

When we got back, we each had a stiff bourbon, spread brown paper on the kitchen table and went to work. With deer, I take the hams and shoulders then cut them into roasts or occasionally leave them whole. The rest of the deer – tenderloins, backstraps, neck meat, rib meat – I bone out. I stopped cutting through bone, especially the spine, since Chronic Wasting Disease showed up in Maryland. For the boars, though, we wanted rib roasts as well as the hams and shoulders so I went down to the barn and brought my meat saw to the kitchen. Taking off the hams and shoulders and shanks wasn't much different but cutting through the spine and the ribs was a different story. By the time we finished late in the evening, a good part of the bottle of bourbon was gone and the kitchen looked like a scene out of "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" but we had four rib roasts wrapped and aging in the fridge. Over the next 6 months, we roasted the rib roasts, brined and slow-smoked two of the hams, made stew with meat from the shoulders, barbecued the ribs, braised the cheeks with wild mushrooms and made liver pâté. The meat was wonderful – leaner, sweeter and darker than domestic pork with a flavor like a cross between venison and pork. It took some trial and error to adapt pork recipes to wild boar but it was all delicious. The best, though, were the shanks – the best shanks of any type that I've ever had.

Wild Boar Shanks with Mushrooms

Ingredients

- 4 wild boar shanks
- 1-2 cups flour
- 2 Tbsp black (not English) walnuts, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 stalks of celery, chopped
- 1 medium sweet onion, chopped
- 1 lb small mixed mushrooms (quarter if they're large)
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 sprigs fresh sage
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 4 cups game, pork or chicken stock

- Zest from one small orange
- 12-15 pearl onions
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- Salt & Pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup parsley, chopped
- Olive oil

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 275° F.
2. While the oven is heating, toast the walnuts in a dry pan until they become aromatic and light brown then grind them in a spice mill or crush them with a mortar and pestle.
3. Dry the shanks well, season with salt and pepper and coat with flour by shaking in a bag.
4. Heat about 3 Tbsp olive oil in a large, heavy Dutch oven with tight-fitting lid over medium-high heat and brown the meat well on all sides. Set aside.
5. Drain fat/oil from the pot, turn heat down to medium, add butter and 1 Tbsp olive oil, then add celery, onion, carrots and garlic. Cook while stirring until vegetables are soft and just beginning to brown.
6. Add tomato paste and cook for another 3 minutes.
7. Add wine and let reduce for 3 minutes.
8. Add stock, orange zest and black walnuts. Using an immersion blender, blend the vegetables, zest and walnuts into the stock.
9. Add rosemary and, sage.
10. Add shanks, cover the pot and put it in the oven.
11. While the shanks cook, sauté the mushrooms in olive oil until they start to brown then set aside.
12. The shanks will need to cook for at least 3-4 hours, depending on how large they are. Fore shanks will cook in less time than hind shanks which could take up to 5 hours. Every hour or so, check and turn the shanks and stir the sauce. When they seem quite tender, add the mushrooms and and pearl onions and continue to cook for 30 minutes or longer until the meat is falling off the bones.
13. Serve with polenta, sprinkled with chopped parsley. Baguette is nice.

For years, my closest friend and his brother have been coming out to the farm on the Friday after Thanksgiving, the day before opening day of rifle season in Maryland. Although my friend is a well-known scientist, he and his brother refer to themselves as river rats. They grew up in south Jersey, on the banks of the Delaware River, fishing the river and Delaware Bay and hunting rabbits, deer, pheasants and waterfowl in the marshes, farms and pine barrens. Every year, they show up with a cooler or two full of whatever they've collected and frozen since the

last visit, some combination of ducks, geese, pheasants, rabbits, rockfish, tog (tautog) and flounder.

An hour or two before dawn, I drive them in my old woods truck to where they've decided to sit, hunt for a few hours then return to the kitchen to cook. Our traditional, first-day-of-deer-season meal and their favorite is Tuscan rabbit stew, a dish I learned about when my wife and I visited Tuscany, driving a beat up, old rental car through the hills and small towns, eating one amazing meal after another in small, out of the way inns and restaurants.

TUSCAN RABBIT STEW

Ingredients

- 3 rabbits, cleaned and cut up, as much shot as possible removed
- Flour for dredging
- 4 Tbsp olive oil (more, if needed)
- 4 oz Parma ham or prosciutto, roughly chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups game or chicken stock
- 2 cups peeled and coarsely chopped fresh tomatoes
- 4 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 lb mushrooms, sliced
- 1 Tbsp fresh sage, chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- ½ cup pitted Kalamata olives
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- Sea salt and fresh ground pepper on the table (Don't add salt except at the table. Between the brine, the ham or prosciutto and the olives, it doesn't usually need any more.)

Directions

1. Cover rabbit with salt water (3 Tbsp per quart) and soak for at least 3 hours or overnight in the fridge.
2. Dry rabbit on paper towels and dredge in flour.
3. In a large, preferably cast iron, Dutch oven, heat olive oil to medium high and cook until rabbit pieces are brown on both sides. Set aside.
4. Reduce heat slightly and sauté the ham or prosciutto and onion until the onion is transparent.

5. Add garlic and sauté for 3-4 more minutes.
6. Add 2 Tbsp flour and stir to combine well.
7. Add stock, stirring continuously until slightly thickened.
8. Add rabbits, cover and reduce heat to low and simmer for 1 ½ - 2 hours until almost tender. (You can put the pot in a 325° oven for the same amount of time if you prefer).
9. Add carrots, tomatoes, sage and rosemary; simmer for 20 minutes.
10. Add mushrooms and simmer until rabbit, carrots and mushrooms are tender.
11. Add olives and parsley, stir and remove from heat.
12. Serve with spaghetti, rice or polenta, a crusty Italian bread and a simple salad.

In the fall, after the first hard frost, I like to go into the woods to hunt squirrels. In the early part of the season, when the squirrels are fattening on black walnuts, hickory nuts and acorns from white oaks, their meat is very sweet and nutty tasting. There is no finer meat. Later, when they switch to the acorns of red oaks, the meat can sometimes take on a slightly bitter tinge but that's readily resolved by an overnight brine. Another advantage of getting out early for squirrels is that they concentrate in the same places that deer tend to feed and it's a good time to pattern the does and look for scrapes and rubs before the craziness of the rut is in full swing.

SQUIRREL POT PIE

Ingredients

- Meat from 4-5 squirrels (see instructions)
- 4 Tbsp flour
- 3 Tbsp olive or any neutral vegetable oil plus more as needed
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 3 stalks celery, coarsely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 2 medium russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 large parsnip, peeled, cored and cut into 1/2-inch rounds
- 2 tsp sea salt
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 cups game stock or beef broth
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary, chopped
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, chopped
- 2 Tbsp toasted and ground black (not English) walnuts
- 1 or 2 cups of fresh or frozen, thawed (uncooked) peas
- 1/4 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- Pie crusts for two 9-inch pies (top only)
- 1 large egg

Instructions

1. Clean and cut up squirrels, discarding ribs. In a large pot, cover squirrels with salted water (3 Tbsp of salt per quart of water) to which 8-10 crushed juniper berries have been added, bring to a low boil and simmer until the meat is tender and can be easily pulled from the bones with your fingers. When cool, chop or pull the meat into bite-size pieces.
2. Toss the squirrel meat with flour, shaking off excess.
3. In a large Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it's shimmering. Working in batches, brown the meat on all sides until lightly browned with some crunchy parts. Remove to a clean plate. Add more oil to the pan if needed for optimal browning.
4. When all of the meat has been browned and removed to a plate, add the chopped vegetables to the pot, sprinkle with the salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're translucent and soft, about 5 minutes. Add the tomato paste and garlic and cook until the garlic is just starting to turn golden. Return the meat to the pan and add the broth, scraping the bottom of the pan to loosen any browned bits stuck to it. Bring the mixture to a low boil.
5. When the mixture is boiling, add the herbs, walnuts, pepper, potatoes and parsnips. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook, uncovered, until the mixture thickens, about 30 minutes. Make sure the meat is very tender. The potatoes and parsnips should be somewhat soft but not mushy. Remove from heat, add the peas and parsley and stir to combine.
6. Divide the squirrel and vegetable mixture between the two pie pans and cool completely. Place the pie shell over the mixture, pinching the edges to seal. Whisk the egg and 1 tablespoon water in a bowl and brush it on the pie crusts. Cut four, inch-long slits in each top. Put the pies on a rimmed baking sheet and into a 400° F oven. Bake until the crust is nicely browned and the filling is bubbling, 30 minutes or a little more. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before serving.
7. I like to serve this with fried apples on the side. To make fried apples for 6 people, pare and core 3 large or 4 medium tart apples. Cut them into ¾ inch slices and brown lightly over medium heat in a skillet with 2 Tbsp of butter. When the first side is browned, flip them over and sprinkle a little cinnamon and 1 Tbsp of sorghum syrup on top. Flip occasionally and cook until they're tender but not falling apart.

In 1968, I attended the survival and wilderness skills program at the National Outdoor Leadership School in Lander, Wyoming. It was a fantastic experience and a great start to a life of wilderness exploration and adventure. The final week was a test of what we had learned with participants divided up into groups of 3 or 4 and each group handed a route to follow and topo maps. We took clothes and sleeping bags, tents and the boots on our feet but no food or even fishing gear. (Fortunately, coffee was acceptable.) We were to forage along the way and return to base camp a week later for a final feast. Except when we were crossing back and forth over the Continental Divide at 10,000 plus feet, we were in a rich, alpine ecosystem. There was plenty to eat: sorrel and other greens, lichens and trout that we could catch with our hands. But there were no carbs and little fat in our diet. Probably healthy as hell but we felt hungry almost all the time.

In the evening of our next to the last day, dropping down into the high meadows, we came into a camp of Basque sheepherders who were fixing their supper. The smell of meat roasting over an open fire was an almost painful reminder of how calorie-deficient our diet had been for the past 6 days. Between our fractured Spanish and French and their broken English, we ended up as their guests for supper. They were grilling lamb ribs on a cast iron grate and had bread wrapped around sticks baking just above the lamb. They also had a rough red wine of some sort. It was one of the best and most memorable meals that I've ever eaten.

BASQUE GRILLED LAMB RIBS

This is a very simple recipe and can be made on a grate over an open fire or on a charcoal grill. It can also be made by baking in a 275° F oven for 2 hours or more (although, without the char, it really isn't the same). On an open fire or a grill, you'll need to have a cool side for long, slow cooking.

Ingredients

- 1 rack of lamb ribs (1 to 1½ pounds) per person (more if they're big eaters)

For 5 racks:

- 2 Tbsp dark brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 Tbsp coarse salt (kosher or sea)
- 1 Tbsp smoked paprika
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup each of apple cider vinegar and red wine

Instructions

1. In a bowl, mix the spices together well. Mix 1/4 cup of the mix with the vinegar and wine in a small bowl.
2. Using a sharp knife, loosen the membrane on the bone side of the racks enough to grab then pull it off (holding it with a paper towel helps).
3. Wipe the racks dry and rub the spice mixture well into both sides. Let the racks sit at room temperature for an hour or in the fridge for at least 3 hours (more won't hurt).
4. Light the fire or grill, leaving a cool side, and allow the wood or coals to burn down until you can hold you hand 6 inches from them for a few seconds.
5. If the meat was refrigerated, let it come to room temperature.
6. Put the racks meat side down on the hot side of the grill or fire and cook until a nice char develops but don't let it blacken too much. You want a char, not a carbon coating.

7. Move the racks to the cool side of the grate and cook until the meat is very tender, basting lightly with the wine/vinegar/spice mix every half-hour or so. It will probably take about 2 hours but that will vary with the size of the racks and the temperature of the fire or grill.
8. Remove the racks to a platter and let rest for 5-10 minutes. Serve your guests a half-rack at a time and insist that they use their fingers. Fried cabbage and boiled new potatoes go well with the ribs.

On the internet, you can find lots of recipes for Basque sheepherder bread. I've never tried it but it sounds good. That was not the bread that the Basque sheepherders were making in Wyoming. It was closer to what's sometimes called "campfire bread" which is an unleavened bread more akin to fry bread but wrapped around a stick and held over coals. My campfire bread recipe: mix together 1/2 cup each of whole wheat and white flour, 2 tsp of baking powder, 1 Tbsp of sugar and 1 tsp of salt; add 1/4 cup of ghee, lard or duck fat and knead until smooth and elastic; make 1-inch balls and pull or roll each into a rope about 1 inch thick and 8-10 inches long; wrap the rope around a green stick and hold over the coals, rotating often, until it's brown and cooked through. Again, use your fingers. The dough will keep without refrigeration for a day or two.

In Maryland, the main wild turkey season is a month long, starting in mid-April and ending in mid-May. It's timed to start after the mating season is mostly over. By the time the spring season rolls around, I'm usually preoccupied with the vegetable garden and sometimes trout so I don't do much turkey hunting. There's a short season in November and another in December. Some years ago, I shot my one and only wild turkey. I was hunting deer with a longbow in November and a turkey happened to walk by me while I was standing still next to a tree. (I don't hunt out of tree stands.) At something less than 10 yards, I put an arrow into his back just at the base of his neck. I had read enough to know that roasting a whole wild turkey is very different than roasting a domestic bird so I approached it in the same way that I've always dealt with Canada geese: I breasted it out then skinned the legs and took them out whole. I should have pulled out a couple of tail feathers but it honestly didn't occur to me at the time and, when I returned the next day, the carcass – feathers and all – was gone. Probably coyotes or a bear. I cooked the breast and legs separately and was pleased with the results.

WILD TURKEY BREAST AND WILD TURKEY LEGS

Turkey Breast Fillets

Slice the breast into strips about 1 inch thick and brine overnight (1/4 cup salt to a quart of water with 4 or 5 crushed juniper berries). Mix 1 cup of flour with 1/4 cup of potato starch, 2 tsp sea salt, 1 tsp of ancho chili powder, 1 tsp garlic powder, 1 tsp smoked paprika and 1/2 tsp celery seed. Dry the strips of turkey breast, dust them with the flour mixture and deep fry them at 350° F until well-browned and crispy. Serve with equal parts mayonnaise, ketchup and Dijon mustard

mixed with chopped sweet pickles, hot sauce, dill pickles and pickled jalapeño peppers on the side. It's a hell of an appetizer.

Turkey Leg Soup

Ingredients

- 4 skinned turkey legs, whole (I had to "borrow" 2 more from a friend for this recipe. If you have more than 4, congratulations; you can double or triple the recipe if you have a crowd.) You can substitute Canada goose legs if you want. Frozen is fine with both.
- 1/2 cup duck fat
- 1/2 sweet onion, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 stalks of celery, sliced
- 3 cups game or chicken stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 sprigs fresh sage
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1/4 cup ham, diced
- 1 small tart apple, peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 medium turnip, peeled and diced in 1/2-inch cubes
- 3 Tbsp shelled hazelnuts, toasted in a dry skillet until lightly browned then ground OR 3 chestnuts, roasted, peeled and finely chopped
- 8 oz sliced mushrooms, morels if you have them, otherwise shiitake
- 1 cup wild rice

Instructions

1. Brine turkey legs overnight (1/4 cup salt to 1 quart of water with 8-10 crushed juniper berries).
2. Pat legs dry and smoke for 2 hours at 200-250° F with maple or apple wood. (You're not trying to cook them, just impart a light smoke flavor.)
3. Gently sauté legs in duck fat until very tender uncovered in a Dutch oven or large, heavy pot. (Yes, it's something like duck confit.) Cool and pull the meat off the bones.
4. In the same pan, take out all but 2-3 Tbsp of duck fat, sauté onion until transparent then add carrots and celery and sauté until they begin to soften.
5. Add stock, bay leaf, sage, thyme and ham and bring to a gentle boil then simmer for 15 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, sauté mushrooms in a little olive oil in a small skillet just until they start to brown on the edges.
7. Add apple, hazelnuts or chestnuts, turnips and mushrooms and simmer until apple and turnips are starting to get soft.
8. Add turkey meat and rice and continue to simmer, covered, until rice is cooked. Take off heat and let it sit for 5-10 minutes. Serve with fresh-baked cornbread.

Fish, Seafood, Etc.

Early experiences with eating, procuring and cooking food are the foundation for our relationship with food. I suspect that, for a lot of people, having food with murky origins slapped down onto a plate in front of them interferes with development of their understanding and appreciation of the arc between source, acquisition, processing, preparation and consumption. That doesn't mean that you have to grow, harvest, kill and butcher everything you eat in order to appreciate food as more than simple sustenance but Spam and cheese curls probably don't help. For me, my early experiences catching, cooking and eating fish are more central to my relationship with food in general than any other.

When I was a child, perhaps 9 or 10, my family went on a summer vacation to Nova Scotia. My father arranged for my brother and me to go out with a local fisherman who made his living jigging for cod with a handline. That was before the groundfish population crashed in the face of relentless over-fishing. Looking back on it now, after nearly 60 years of fishing in remote and beautiful places, mostly with a fly rod, jigging a heavy piece of metal up and down for hours on end doesn't seem very exciting but, at the time, it was thrilling. I don't remember how many fish we caught but it was enough that my brother and I returned to the cottage where we were staying with several pounds of fillets. My mother cooked them in butter and, as I remember it, just salt and pepper in a big skillet on an old Coleman propane stove while we sat on the rocky beach and watched. It was the most astonishingly delicious fish that I've ever eaten. When I think about it now, I can still taste it. The grocery where we shop often has very nice, fresh cod loin for only a couple of dollars more per pound than the watery, defrosted cod fillets that I would starve rather than eat. When I buy the cod loin, I always buy an extra 1/2 pound or so and try to replicate the simple meal that we ate on the beach all those years ago. I'm trying to create a Proustian experience. I've yet to succeed. I've tried cooking it on a propane stove in an old skillet, I've cooked it slow and fast and in between, I've played with different ratios of salt and pepper and even eliminating them altogether, I've tried every brand and style of butter that I can find, I've even had fresh cod shipped to me overnight from Nova Scotia. But no luck. I might just have to fly to Nova Scotia, hire an old fisherman who still uses a handline to catch cod to take me out and then cook it on a Coleman stove on a rocky beach. Hell, maybe I'll bring my mother. She's only 92 and still cooking.

You can't have my recipe for cod yet because it isn't perfect. Here's a placeholder.

SPANISH OVEN-ROASTED COD

Ingredients

- 2 lbs cod loin cut into 5-6 pieces
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely minced
- 1/2 tsp anchovy paste or 2 anchovy fillets, mashed
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp fresh orange juice
- 2 Tbsp melted butter
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2-3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 3/4 tsp sweet paprika
- 1 bay leaf, finely ground
- 1/2 tsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 4-5 threads of saffron, soaked in 1 tsp of water
- Large, crusty loaf of bread, sliced 1" thick, brushed with olive oil and grilled
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 1/4 cup pitted Kalamata olives, sliced

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Mix lemon juice, orange juice, melted butter and anchovy paste or mashed anchovies.
3. Mix flour, coriander, oregano, bay leaf and paprika.
4. Pat fish dry and dip in the lemon/orange juice mixture then the flour mixture. Let it sit on a plate for a few minutes.
5. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a cast iron skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add fish and sear on each side for a couple minutes until it's lightly browned. Remove from heat.
6. Add garlic, rosemary and saffron to the remaining lemon and orange juice and drizzle over the fish.
7. Bake until the fish barely begins to flake (about 8-10 minutes). Serve on top of grilled bread and sprinkle with parsley and olives. Sliced, fresh tomatoes on the side are nice.
8. Sea salt and pepper on the table (it shouldn't need salt).

When I was a teenager, my parents bought a lot and built a house on a beautiful lake called Highland Lake in northwestern Connecticut. For me, it was as if I had been handed the keys to a magical place where I could explore a world that I had never been part of before. The lake was clear and cold with rocky shores and steep drop-offs. In the depths, there were landlocked salmon and rainbow trout and, along the shores and in the weed beds of the coves, there were bass and pickerel, bluegills and perch. In the summers, my mother's parents would visit. My grandfather, who we always called "Doc"

(he was a dentist and that's what everyone called him), was a Jewish émigré who had grown up in a relatively rural part of Belarus near the border with Ukraine. Doc loved to eat and, in particular, loved to eat with his fingers. When he and my grandmother came to visit, I would get up before dawn and take the canoe or, when I got a little older, the motorboat, out into the coves with a spinning rod and a cup full of earthworms dug the previous night from the compost heap to catch bluegills and perch. It rarely took more than an hour or two before I had a dozen fat panfish on a stringer. I gutted and scaled them, dusted them with flour and fried them in butter. They were usually on the table when Doc came in for breakfast. An hour after everyone else had finished, Doc would still be sucking fish off the skeletons. Every time I fry up small, bony fish, I think about him sitting at the breakfast table, a cold cup of coffee next to his plate, grease on his hands and chin and a smile on his face. A slightly updated recipe follows.

DOC'S FRIED PANFISH

Ingredients

- 10 or 12 good-sized panfish, gutted and scaled, heads removed
- 2 cups milk
- Juice from 1/2 lemon
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1/2 cup corn flour (not cornmeal)
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup neutral oil
- Lemon slices
- Hot sauce

Instructions

1. Rinse fish well in cold water and soak for 30 minutes or longer in the milk with the lemon juice in the fridge.
2. Mix together the wheat flour, corn flour, salt and pepper
3. Take the fish out of the milk/lemon juice mixture, let the liquid run off and roll it in the flour mixture. (A plastic bag could work but the spines will punch holes in it and make a mess.)
4. Let the coated fish sit on wax or butcher paper for a few minutes at room temperature.
5. Heat a cast iron pan over medium-high heat. Add the oil and heat until it shimmers. Add the butter just before you put the fish in the skilled so it doesn't burn.

6. Fry the fish a few at the time until both sides are light brown and crispy. Adjust the heat as necessary so the skin doesn't burn before the flesh is cooked. Drain on paper towels or brown paper.
7. Serve with lemon slices and hot sauce. Use your fingers and take your time.

My parents had friends who owned a beautiful and secluded piece of property on top of a tall hill not far from our lake house. I don't know how big it was but they had a large pond of perhaps 4 or 5 acres that was created by damming a stream. The water was dark and cold and the pond meandered about, following the original path of the stream to form a number of small fingers as the water filled in the contours of the surrounding land. As magical as Highland Lake was to me, this pond was almost mystical. Except at the end near their house, trees – birch, hemlock, sugar maple, mountain ash and red twig dogwood – grew right up to the edge of the water. Lily pads, iris, arrowhead and pickerel rush grew in profusion in the shallows. When I rowed their old wooden rowboat around the corner and could no longer see the house, it was like being in a remote part of the Adirondacks or northern Maine and I felt as if I was in a private wilderness.

The husband was a fly fisher and fly tier. He had quite a collection of bamboo rods of various weights that he used on the local trout streams and lakes and for Atlantic salmon on the Miramachi River when they were still running strong. I had seen fly rods and had read a lot about fly fishing but had never tried one. On the lawn next to their house, he spent hours teaching me about casting and drift and knots and the apparently endless assortment of dry flies and nymphs and streamers. When I had mastered the rudiments of casting, he rigged up what must have been a 4- or 5-weight rod with a floating line and a Royal Wulff dry. Casting from a somewhat precarious position standing in the rowboat near the center of the pond, I caught my first trout on a fly, a 9 or 10-inch brook trout. It was a singularly important moment for me that began a lifetime of passionate and reverent fly fishing.

Of all the fish in the world for which I've fished – and there are a lot of them – trout have always been and will always be my favorite and brook trout hold a special place in my soul. It all started that afternoon on a pond in the hills of northwestern Connecticut and has followed me throughout New England and upstate New York, up into Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Ontario, west to Minnesota and Wyoming and Colorado, further west to New Zealand, home to the mountain streams of western Maryland and Virginia and, eventually, to Japan. Japan was the pinnacle. And I didn't even cast a line.

I was on a business trip to Tokyo. Tokyo was 24-hour, all-electric, neon-lit, overly stimulating torture. Not my kind of place. I decided to take a day away from the city and explore the area around Mt. Fuji. About an hour south of Tokyo, it's a beautiful, tranquil area of lakes and pristine mountain streams, manicured farms and cathedral-like pine forests. Driving through the countryside with my interpreter, I spotted an older gentleman fly fishing from the bank of a perfectly clear, boulder-strewn stream perhaps 30 or 40 feet across. We stopped and, at my urging, the interpreter approached the angler. In a very deferential

manner, she asked if we could watch for a bit. He nodded but continued to cast and follow the drift of his line. It was very different from the techniques that I had used for years, with very little back casting and drifting with a tight line. He continued to fish, bent forward with the index finger of his casting hand pointed toward the end of the rod. After a few minutes, he lifted his rod and line and walked back to where we were standing. The rod was bamboo, 10 or 12 feet long, tapering to a very thin tip to which a braided line of about the same length was tied. A 4- or 5-foot section of monofilament was fixed to the end of the braided line. The fly appeared to be a nymph of some sort but with the hackle tied backwards toward the eye of the hook rather than toward the hook end as I had always seen. Through the interpreter, he explained the casting technique, the tight-line drift and how important it was to become part of the rod, the stream and the trout. I don't remember hearing the word "tenkara" at the time. My interpreter just said "fishing". Being from the city, she may not have known the word. I subsequently learned that tenkara literally means "from heaven". I now use tenkara quite a lot on the small mountain streams in western Maryland and am looking forward to trying it some day in the Rockies. For me, it is truly the essence of fly fishing. The old fisherman returned to the stream and, before we left, landed two small trout which he unhooked and placed in a basket. The trout, I learned, were actually a kind char called "Iwana", essentially a Japanese brook trout.

That evening, we had dinner and stayed the night at an inn that I was told had been operated by the same family for centuries. Hors d'oeuvres were served on a patio where small fish – Iwana – were being grilled over hot coals on green sticks. That way of cooking fish is called "shioyaki", which translates to "salt grilled". It is a wonderful way to prepare trout that I have used frequently in the wilderness and, sometimes, at home. It also works well for small mackerel and probably would for any fresh, small fish.

SHIOYAKI

This is a very simple method with only three ingredients: fish, sea salt and oil. The fish should be smallish, no more than 12 inches, and very fresh. Leave the heads on. It will probably work best with elongated fish like trout, mackerel and perch rather than wider or thicker fish like bluegills or bass. If they're flat (like a bluegill), it might work if you use two sticks or thin skewers but I haven't tried it. Obviously, if the species that you're using has scales, remove them before you get started.

Here's how you do it:

1. Rinse the fish under cold water and dry them thoroughly.
2. Put them on a plate and salt them heavily so that they're mostly covered in salt. Put some salt in the body cavity, too. (I use coarse but fine should work just as well.)
3. Let the fish sit at room temperature for an hour.
4. Clean your grate thoroughly. Light a fire in the grill or fire ring. Let it burn down to coals but you want it hot.
5. Rinse the salt off the fish and out of the body cavity.

6. Dry the fish well and insert a sharpened green stick through the mouth, along the spine and out next to the tail. Shake them gently to be sure that they're securely fixed to the stick.
7. Oil the fish and your grate well with any light, neutral oil.
8. Cook the fish for about a minute on each side. You want nice crispy skin all around but not blackened. The flesh should be just barely cooked through.
9. Enjoy. These are meant to be eaten off the sticks with your fingers. You can serve them with whatever you like. You won't remember what else you ate anyway.

Besides trout, the pond where I learned to fly fish held an unimaginable number of huge bullfrogs in the shallows among the lily pads and other pond plants. I had heard about gigging for frogs and asked whether I would be permitted to try it. He smiled, disappeared into the basement and returned with a bamboo pole with 5 or 6 feet of line tied to the end of the pole and to a faded piece of red flannel on the other. He also had what looked like an old broom handle with a 3-pronged gig on the end. A few days later, my brother and I returned just after dinner. We rowed the boat slowly along the shore and, when we spotted a large bullfrog, dangled the red flannel above it and gigged it. It was not difficult. In little more than an hour, we had a dozen frogs in a bucket. We took them home, skinned them as I had read about in an outdoor magazine, found a recipe in one of my mother's French cookbooks and fried them up. Doc was there at the time and I think he may have enjoyed the frog legs even more than the panfish.

SAUTÉED FROG LEGS

If you're not squeamish, frog legs are easy to take off and skin. Look it up. They're also available cleaned and frozen but aren't as good as fresh. And, no, they don't taste like chicken. They taste like frog legs.

Ingredients

- 12 pairs of frog legs, separated and soaked in cold, salted water for an hour or two
- 2 cups of flour
- 2 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 cup of finely chopped parsley (either kind is fine)
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- Lemon wedges

Instructions

1. Mix together the flour, salt and parsley and put in a bowl or paper or plastic bag
2. Dry the frog legs on paper towels and coat lightly with the flour mix

3. Heat a large cast iron skillet over medium heat then add butter. You want it to bubble but definitely not brown or burn.
4. Add garlic and stir for 30 seconds.
5. Add the frog legs to the pan. Cook in batches so they're not crowded, adding more butter if needed. When the first side has a light brown crust on it, flip the legs over and continue to cook until the second side is nicely browned and the meat is cooked through. Test doneness with a fork. It should slide right in and not feel rubbery at all but don't overcook it or it'll be dry.
6. Keep warm in a 200° F oven until they're all cooked then transfer to a large platter and pour the remaining butter over the top.
7. Serve with warm baguette to sop up the butter and lemon slices on the side of the plate. Barely steamed asparagus and boiled new potatoes are great as sides.

When we bought the farm, the pond held a couple of large bass, a lot of smaller bass and bluegills that were stunted and over-populated. At first, our plan was to grow more and larger bass so we fished out as many of the smaller bass as we could. Over the next few years, the bluegill problem got worse. I finally talked to someone who claimed to know something about managing ponds for bass and he suggested adding some catfish to help control the stunted bluegills. We added a couple dozen 8-10" channel cats. They didn't seem to have much of an effect on the bluegills. I don't know what they ate but they grew at an impressive rate. Three years later, we were pulling 18-24" catfish out of the pond. They were all that my grandkids could handle on a small spinning rod. As we depleted their populations, the water, which was perpetually muddy from the catfish rooting around on the bottom, cleared up and we eventually figured out that it was easier to grow big bluegills than big bass in a small, shallow pond. We took out all but a couple of the largest bass which we left in for breeding purposes and left the smaller bass alone. They concentrate on the smaller bluegills, leaving more food for the larger bluegills.

Five years later, we have a good population of 8+ inch bluegills which are a lot of fun to catch on a lightweight fly rod and, as Doc found out, are damn good eating. So are fried catfish fillets but I wanted to try something else. There are lots of recipes for catfish – grilled, smoked, poached, baked, broiled – and I tried quite a few but was always disappointed. I was on a business trip to Durham, NC and we stopped at a hole-in-the-wall joint where they had catfish stew on the menu. I had never heard of it so I ordered a small bowl to go with a pulled pork sandwich. I ate two more bowls and never got around to the sandwich. Turns out that it's standard fare throughout the South and tends to reflect local tastes. I found three or four recipes that I liked a lot and combined what I thought were the best features of each to come up with a recipe that has become one of my favorites.

CATFISH STEW

Ingredients

- 4 pieces thick sliced, smoked bacon, diced
- 1 sweet onion, diced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 28-oz. cans whole tomatoes, crushed (or use your own stewed tomatoes)
- 2 medium or 1 large potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- 1 tsp ancho chili powder
- 1/4 tsp pinch celery seed
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp hot sauce
- 2 lb. catfish filet, cut into 1-inch chunks, thin edges removed and reserved*
- 2 ears uncooked corn, kernels cut off the cob (frozen will work if you don't have fresh)
- 1 cup sliced, fresh okra (omit if you really don't like it)

*Fresh, farm-raised catfish is widely available but wild catfish is far superior. The texture is firmer and the taste is cleaner. Try your local fish market. If they don't have it, go fishing. If there aren't any near you, go with the fresh, farm-raised fish. If all you can get is frozen, don't bother; substitute fresh cod or some other firm-fleshed white fish.

Instructions

1. Add bacon to a Dutch oven or large pot over medium heat. Cook until crisp.
2. Add onion, celery, carrot, and garlic and until softened.
3. Add tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, chili powder, celery seed, bay leaves, sugar, hot sauce and 1½ cups of water. Bring the mixture to a simmer then add the catfish trimmings. Cover and simmer until the catfish and vegetables are tender.
4. Add the catfish chunks, okra and corn and cook uncovered until fish is flaky. Season with salt, pepper and more hot sauce to taste.
5. Serve in bowls over steamed rice with fresh-baked cornbread. Salt, pepper and hot sauce on the table.

One of my favorite parts of the planet is the Canadian Shield, the two-thirds of eastern Canada and the northern part of Minnesota where the the rivers drain north through the thin soil and over the rocks to Hudson Bay. In particular, I love Quetico Provincial Park in northwestern Ontario, an absolutely enchanted, 2,000 square mile wilderness area of lakes and rivers and forests, of 2 billion year old rocks washed by meltwater from the last glaciers that receded just 10

or 12, 000 years ago, a place of wolves and bears, moose and deer, beavers and otters, geese and ducks and grouse and loons and eagles, of cedar and birch and poplar and white pine and spruce and pickerel rush and lichens of every description. No signs, no cell phone towers, no toilets, no motors, no instructions. On a 10-day trip, we often won't see another person except on the first and last days. The only way to explore Quetico is by canoe, paddling the lakes and gentler rivers and portaging around rapids and waterfalls. The fishing is amazing – northern pike, smallmouth bass, brook trout, walleye and lake trout – and we eat fish two or three times a day. We consume a lot of pan-fried fish and an occasional stew or soup on holdover days but we have one meal that is truly special: poached lake trout. Because we have to carry everything on our backs during the portages, we take very little fresh food, depending instead on our ability to catch fish which has worked out just fine so far. Other than whisky and wine, the only foods we take that aren't dried is butter, onions, lemons and half a dozen fresh eggs. Sacrifice is one thing, torture is another. Our spice kit is pretty comprehensive, too. Lake trout have a delicious oiliness and firm sweet flesh which makes them just about perfect for smoking or poaching. Poaching, which results in something vaguely "lobsterish", is our preferred method when we're in Quetico. We only ever make this in the wilderness so the recipe that follows has dried ingredients that would be fresh if we were home in the kitchen.

POACHED FRESH LAKE TROUT

Ingredients (for two people)

- 2-3 lb. fresh lake trout, gutted, skinned and filleted; skin, head and bones reserved
- 1 cup dry white whine
- Juice and zest from 1/2 a lemon
- 1/2 large onion cut into quarters or 2 Tbsp dehydrated onion (not powder)
- 2 Tbsp dehydrated celery (not celery salt or seed)
- 1/2 Tbsp dehydrated garlic (not powder)
- 2 tsp peppercorns
- 1/2 Tbsp dried dill
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp sea salt
- Juice from 1/2 a lemon
- 1/2 stick of butter

Instructions

1. Put everything except the fillets in a pot with about 3 cups of clean lake water (tannin-stained is fine, in fact, preferred).
2. Bring to a boil and simmer for one hour. Strain the solids as best you can by holding the top over the pot and pouring it into a second pot or a bowl if you only have one pot. Burn solids in your campfire or bury them well away from camp.

3. Bring the stock back to a gentle simmer. Cut fillets into 2-inch chunks. Put them into the stock and simmer very gently for 10 minutes or until barely cooked through.
4. Meanwhile, melt the butter then mix in the lemon juice.
5. When the fish is done, take it out of the stock with a spoon or fork and put it on plates. Either dip it in the melted butter and lemon juice or pour some over.
6. We often eat this with fry bread to soak up the butter and "juice". (To make fry bread, mix 2 cups of flour, 1 tsp salt and 1/2 Tbsp baking powder. Mix in enough hot water to make a thick, sticky dough. Pour a little oil over the dough, knead briefly and tear off small balls, pulling and flattening them with your hands to make thin rounds. Fry the rounds in shallow hot oil until they're nicely browned on the outside and cooked through.)

Growing up in southern New England, we had ready access to fresh striped bass whether we fished for it or our friends did. The firm, sweet meat is as good as from any fish that swims. We loved it and ate quite a lot of it – broiled, pan-fried and grilled fillets and, best of all, baked, stuffed whole fish. My mother would rub the skin with butter and stuff the cavity with toasted bread cubes, chopped tomatoes, chopped onions, sliced cucumbers and herbs then wrap it in foil and cook it on the grill over a low fire. When it was barely done, she would unwrap it and let it finish with the grill open. It was incredibly moist and flavorful. We served it with sliced lemons and, often, fresh corn on the cob and a crusty bread. It was fantastic hot or at room temperature.

When I went off to college in Ohio then graduate school in Minnesota, I missed the steady supply of striped bass but, when I moved to Maryland, I discovered that striped bass – called rockfish here – was at least as available in Chesapeake Bay. We eat it as often as we can get it, using the recipes and cooking methods from New England. When my son and his girlfriend gave up meat and their tastes moved toward Asian cuisine, we expanded the repertoire of recipes and have found that it's really just about perfect every way except deep fried. Here's a recipe that my son found and that we love.

STEAMED STRIPED BASS WITH GINGER AND SCALLIONS

Ingredients

- Neutral oil for frying
- One 3- or 4-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and cut into thin sticks, plus 1/2 Tbsp minced ginger
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp rice wine
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil
- 4 or 5 scallions, cut into 1-inch lengths
- Four serving-size fillets of wild striped bass (rockfish), skin on
- Sea salt and freshly ground white pepper

- 2 tsp Chinese fermented black beans, rinsed and minced
- 2 jalapeños, thinly sliced into rounds and seeded
- 2 Tbsp roughly chopped cilantro

Instructions

1. In a skillet, heat 1/4 inch or so of the vegetable oil over medium heat. Fry the ginger sticks until golden brown, stirring frequently so that they don't burn. Transfer the ginger to paper towels to drain, leaving the oil in the skillet with the burner off.
2. Whisk the soy sauce with the rice wine, sugar and sesame oil. Set a bamboo or metal steamer over a wok or large, deep skillet with a lid. Add 2 inches of water to the wok or skilled and bring to a boil. Spread the dark green parts of the scallions on a plate that will fit inside the steamer. Set the fish on top of the scallions, skin side up. Make 3 shallow cuts in the skin of each fillet. Pour the soy mixture over the fish and rub it all over. Season the fish lightly with salt and pepper. Spread the black beans and minced ginger on top. Set the plate on the steamer. Cover and steam until the fish is just cooked.
3. Just before the fish is done, reheat the oil in the skillet. Add the rest of the scallions and the jalapeños and cook over medium heat until they begin to soften.
4. Transfer the fish and its juices to shallow bowls. Top with the fried scallions, jalapeños and ginger matchsticks. Sprinkle with the cilantro and serve. Rice on the side is OK but a crusty bread is better.

I've always loved Brazilian food, especially the hearty, flavorful soups and stews. The combinations of flavors and ingredients that result from the blending of cuisines from indigenous, African, European and Caribbean cultures with additional contributions from the Middle East and India make for wonderfully satisfying and exciting food. That's my idea of "comfort food". I particularly like the seafood soups and stews. Here's one that I adapted from several different recipes.

MOQUECA (BRAZILIAN SEAFOOD STEW)

Ingredients

- 2 quarts shrimp or seafood stock[1]
- 4-5 medium ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped into 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup ghee or olive oil
- 2 cups thinly sliced yellow onion
- 2 cup sliced red bell pepper
- 2 dedo de moça chiles, chopped[2]
- 1 cup (8 ounces) dry white wine

- 1 cup full fat, unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb fresh, firm, white fish (cod, sea bass, etc.), cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 lb fresh, large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/2 lb fresh, lump crab meat, picked over for shell and cartilage OR 2 lobster tails, gently steamed in the shell, then shell and vein removed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 tablespoons dendê (red palm) oil[3]
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- Lime wedges, for serving
- 1/2 packed fresh cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped, for garnish

[1] If you don't have or don't feel like making shrimp stock, you can add a cup of dried shrimp to the seafood stock, simmer for 30 minutes and strain the shrimp out. It's not absolutely necessary but contributes additional flavor and depth to the stew.

[2] You can find these in jars in specialty food stores or online. If not or if you didn't plan ahead, substitute an equal amount of jalapeño or poblano. If you do, add 1/4 tsp cinnamon when you add the peppers.

[3] If you don't have or can't find red palm oil, add 1 tsp of sweet paprika and 3 or 4 strands of saffron to warm (not hot) olive oil and let it sit for 30 minutes or more.

Instructions

1. Heat 4 tablespoons ghee or olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high.
2. Add tomato, onion, bell pepper, and chili pepper. Cook, stirring often, until onion and bell pepper are softened.
3. Add wine then cook, stirring occasionally, until mostly evaporated.
4. Stir in shrimp or seafood stock. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-high then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, until it reduces by half. Reduce heat to low; stir in 1/2 cup of coconut milk and 1 teaspoon of sea salt.
5. Toss shrimp and fish with 1/2 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper and 1 teaspoon of sea salt. Heat 4 tablespoons of ghee or olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add the shrimp and fish then cook, stirring occasionally, until opaque and barely cooked through. Remove from heat and transfer to a bowl.
6. Stir dendê or olive oil with paprika and saffron and 1/2 cup coconut milk into stew. Add crab or lobster, shrimp and fish and heat on low just until everything is warmed through. (Do not boil.)
7. Serve over rice, garnish with cilantro leaves, lime wedges on the side and a good, crusty bread.