



## Cook's Corner



Cook's Corner began as a recipe exchange column created by Diana Parker, who has been with The Journal Gazette since 1991. The weekly feature introduces readers to local cooks in their Northeast Indiana or Northwest Ohio kitchens, and includes a variety of easy-to-make recipes based on ingredients you can find in our market.



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- Decatur woman able to spice up holidays

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## Decatur woman able to spice up holidays

By Diana Parker | The Journal Gazette

It's almost 3:30 p.m. on a Monday and Kelly Massman's three children – 15-year-old Zach, 10-year-old Dakota and 7-year-old Kaleigh – have just gotten off the school bus. Each enters the house eager to share what happened at school, and Massman, though engaged in conversation with a visitor, takes time to listen.

About the same time, her cell phone rings and one of the neighborhood children is at the door. She lets the call go to voice mail, and Zach answers the door. Amid all this, Massman tries to keep a neighbor's curious cat from entering her home.

"Every day – this is typical," says Massman, the 33-year-old St. Peter Immanuel Lutheran School teacher's aide and ABC Real Estate Realtor.

As in most families, food is part of Massman's life during the holidays.

"I like to read about, say, Paula Deen and what she has for Christmas or Thanksgiving dinner," she says.

"I'm having my family over, and we usually open the door for stragglers. I love Thanksgiving. It's fellowship and a good time."

Massman and her husband, Darrel, are expecting 20 to 25 people at their Decatur home Thursday for Thanksgiving dinner. She plans to prepare the complete meal, except the bread she asked her sister to bring.

"There'll be turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, pumpkin and pecan pies," she says.

On a typical day, recipe ideas come from Massman's collection of more than 30 Gooseberry Patch cookbooks. One of her recipes is included in the "Autumn in the Country" cookbook.

"I would say those are my favorites to sit down with a cup of coffee or tea and read in an evening," she confesses. "I enjoy reading Cooking Light (magazine); ... Paula Deen and Rachael Ray, too."

In addition to trying a variety of recipes, Massman uses different spices to give recipes a diverse taste.

"I don't cook the same thing very often," she says.

Dakota agrees with an emphatic "No!"

"Half of the spices, I don't even know what they are," says Zach, adding, "The house smells good all the time."

Laughing, Massman says she loves spices.

### Pumpkin Layered Dessert

#### Crust:

- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened

Mix together ingredients and pat into a 13-by-9-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 15 minutes or until golden. Let cool

#### Second layer:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
  - 1 cup powdered sugar
  - 6 ounces of non-dairy whipped topping, thawed
- Beat cream cheese and sugar well. Stir in whipped topping and spread on cooled crust.

#### Third layer:

- 16 ounces canned pumpkin
- 2 (3-ounce) packages vanilla instant pudding mix
- 1/2 teaspoon powdered ginger
- 1 cup Half and Half
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Beat ingredients together and spread over cream cheese layer. Chill for 1 hour. Serve with a dollop of frozen whipped topping and a sprinkle of chopped walnuts. Makes 12 to 15 servings.

### Sweet Potato Crunch

- 3 cups sweet potatoes, cooked, peeled and mashed
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 stick plus 1/3 cup butter, melted and divided
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 cup pecans, finely chopped (for garnish)

Mix sweet potatoes, sugar, one stick butter, eggs and vanilla. Place in a greased 2-quart baking dish. In separate dish, combine flour, remaining butter and brown sugar together. Spread flour mixture over sweet potato mixture. Sprinkle pecans on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

### Sun-dried Tomato and Tortellini Soup

- 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup ( 1/4 -inch thick) sliced carrots
- 2/3 cup chopped celery
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 cups fat-free, less-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups water

- 1 1/4 cups sun-dried tomato halves, packed without oil, chopped ( about 3 ounces)
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 cups fresh cheese tortellini (about 12 ounces)
- 1 cup chopped bok choy

Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrots, celery and garlic; sauté 5 minutes. Add broth and next 5 ingredients (through bay leaf); bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 2 minutes. Add pasta and bok choy; simmer 7 minutes or until pasta is done. Discard bay leaf. Makes 6 servings.

### Margarita Braised Chicken Thighs

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Cooking spray
- 1 cup thinly sliced onion (about 1 medium)
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup dried tropical fruit
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup tequila
- 1 lime, thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine flour, paprika and garlic powder in a small baking dish. Sprinkle chicken with salt; dredge chicken in flour mixture. Heat oil in large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken to pan; cook 4 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Transfer chicken to an 11-by-7-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Add onion to skillet; cook 3 minutes. Add garlic to pan and sauté 1 minute. Combine fruit,

juice and tequila in a microwave-safe dish and microwave on high for 2 minutes. Pour fruit mixture into pan; bring to a boil, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Cook 1 minute. Pour onion mixture over chicken; top with lime slices. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes or until chicken is done. Makes 4 servings.

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