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**'Patch' books, family recipes fill mom's plate**

By Diana Parker  
The Journal Gazette

Laurie Wilson loves cookbooks. She loves to cook, too.

Wilson has had recipes appear in several of the popular Gooseberry Patch cookbooks. The most recent one is "Slow-Cooker Recipes."

"I probably have 40 of the Gooseberry Patch (cookbooks). I just got a letter that I'm going to be in two more cookbooks. There's going to be an autumn one this fall. I've been in six or seven (Gooseberry Patch) cookbooks. I got started in one and got addicted. It's not just a cookbook; it's got gift ideas, crafts and memorable things to do with your loved ones," the northeast Allen County resident says.

Wilson's passion for cookbooks moved her in 1997 to write a family cookbook.

"I wrote all of my husband's family in the New England states and told them I wanted to write a Wilson cookbook. I got more than 250 handwritten (recipes)," she says, continuing, "I used different fonts for different recipes. A lot of these people have passed away. One of his aunts ('she sent a recipe for Bishop's cake.') was 94 years (old) and she's passed away."

After spending six months typing the recipes, Wilson bought binders, added the recipes and a little bit of family genealogy in the back of the cookbook and gave one to every family member. She figures she created 50 to 75 cookbooks.

When she finished the project, Wilson decided to cook one thing a week from the cookbook. She says she still has family members call and say they made something from the book.

Wilson's late husband, Stan, who passed away in 2003, knew she enjoyed collecting cookbooks.

Reminiscing about him, she says, "He was the love of my life. I literally cooked for him. I lost that, but I'm getting that back. He knew that was my favorite thing to get a Gooseberry Patch book."

She says she never gets stuck in a cooking rut.

"With all these cookbooks, I'll open up one in the afternoon and say 'Let's make this,'" she says.

"Just get in the kitchen and experiment. Even if you start with a simple recipe and doctor it up your own way. The next time say, 'Hey, I'm going to add this and this.' That's how you get recipes," she adds.

Wilson acknowledges that not only is her daughter, Jennifer Barnes of Fort Wayne, a good cook, but so is her son-in-law, Andy Barnes.

"He's an excellent cook," she proudly says. "He makes a chicken recipe (Uncle Nile's Chicken) from my husband's uncle from Walton, N.Y., that's out of this world! And not on a gas grill, it has to be on a charcoal grill. People ask, 'Andy, are you going to make Uncle Nile's chicken?'"

Because she has a habit of just "throwing things together," Wilson's daughter insists she sit down and write the recipe. Knowing her mother likes to scrapbook, Jennifer bought Wilson a scrapbook for cooking.

Remembering her early cooking days, Wilson notes, "I learned from my grandma (the late Elaine Stults)."

Pointing to a white footstool sitting next to her sofa, Wilson says, "That's the white footstool that I sat on in my grandma's kitchen. My husband asked if I wanted to paint it and I said, 'No way! That's got scrape marks from my shoes from when I was little, sitting in Grammy's kitchen.'"

When Wilson was asked what she thought was the secret to being a good cook, she replied, "It's not because of the compliments, it's not a job. (It's) because you love to do it for the family."

**My Grammy's Orange Cream Fruit Salad**

- 20 ounces pineapple tidbits, drained
- 16 ounces sliced peaches, drained
- 11 ounces mandarin oranges, drained
- 3 large bananas, sliced
- 3 3/4 ounces instant vanilla pudding
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- Half of a 6-ounce can of frozen orange juice, thawed
- 3/4 cup sour cream

Combine all the fruit in a bowl. In a small separate bowl, mix pudding, milk and orange juice. Beat with a hand mixer on low for 1 to 3 minutes. Beat in sour cream, fold in fruit. Keep refrigerated. Makes 8 servings.

**Goopy Buns**

- 1 pound ring bologna
- 3/4 pounds processed cheese (Velveeta)
- 1/4 cup mustard
- 1/3 cup salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons minced onion
- 2 large tablespoons sweet pickle relish
- 15 to 20 hot dog buns

Grind meat and cheese together (using a KitchenAid grinder). Add remaining ingredients, except buns, and mix well. Spread on hot dog buns and wrap each in foil. Bake in oven at 325 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Makes 15 to 20 sandwiches.

**Laurie's Easy Cabbage Casserole**

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 pounds ground round
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- Pepper, to taste
- 7 cups chopped cabbage (Laurie uses the pre-sliced cabbage from the grocery's salad section)
- 2 (10 1/2 -ounce) cans condensed tomato soup
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 1/4 cup lemon juice

Sauté onion in butter, add beef and brown and crumble. Drain; add salt and pepper. Place 5 cups of cabbage in a greased 2 to 3-quart casserole dish. Cover with meat mixture. Place remaining cabbage on top. Mix soup, parsley and lemon juice. Pour over top. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

**Laurie's Chuck Wagon Steak**

- 1 1/2 pounds round steak
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 3/4 of a bottle of your favorite barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 bell pepper, sliced
- 1 cup stuffed green olives, sliced
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup cold water

Blend all ingredients, except cornstarch and water, together and pour over meat. Simmer on low for 1 1/2 hours in an electric skillet or low in a roaster until meat is tender. Near end of cooking time, mix cornstarch and water together. Add to meat. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

**Tidbits**

**Q. If you could have a meal with one person – past or present – who would it be?**

**A.** My husband. That would be cool. Jesus would be up there, too, but he's a little busy right now.

*Cook's Corner is a weekly feature. If you know someone to be profiled, write to Cook's Corner, The Journal Gazette, P.O. Box 88, Fort Wayne, IN 46801-0088; fax 461-8648; or e-mail at [dparker@jg.net](mailto:dparker@jg.net).*

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