

Look Out World...Here I Come!

Listen up all of you about to don that cap and gown because there are a few things you need to think about as you prepare to make your mark in the world. I know, I know...you're asking what in the world does graduation have to do with food talk? Obviously, you are taking a shallow view of the wisdom that may come from the kitchen.

Let me take you back for a moment to a graduation in 1971. "The world was my oyster," or so I thought, but even though many of my ignorant elders were trying to offer a bit of friendly advice, I would have none of it. You see, I was ready to "have my cake and eat it, too."

It seemed like everything anyone tried to tell me I took "with a grain of salt." I was simply bound and determined to do it my way. At first, everything really seemed to go well. I was riding high in college and it was time to "eat, drink and be merry." Reality really hit home when I graduated from college and jumped into the job market. That's when I got plenty of advice...from my first boss. I remember telling him that life really didn't seem fair and you know what he told me?

Kid, "if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

I'd like to offer my congratulations to all of you out there who are preparing to receive your high school diplomas. I pray that you will have a life filled with the things that really matter and discover what those things are early in life. One of the first things I acquired after graduating from high school was a hardbound gray book filled with lined pages that had nothing yet written on them. I decided to write down recipes in my book and many of those recipes came from people who have gone on to be with the Lord.

Every time I open "my book" I am blessed with wonderful memories that I have been able to pass on to other people who are important to me. After 35 years that book still has some blank pages in it and that is a terrific blessing as well. Such is life!

Here's an outstanding recipe to start your book with, if you wish. It is a recipe that is great for celebrations and you should remember to stop from time to time and celebrate. Food is a great way to share your love with others. (There I go lecturing you again.)

My Favorite Cheesecake Recipe

For your crust you'll need:

- 1 cup sifted all purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup butter
- 2 or 3 tablespoons whole milk

Sift flour with sugar, baking powder, and salt into a mixing bowl. Cut in your butter until the mixture resembles coarse corn meal. Add just enough milk (2 or 3 tablespoons) so that your mixture will hold together. Form your dough into a ball and press it all evenly over the bottom and 2 ½ inches up the sides of an ungreased 9-inch spring form pan. Chill the pan and crust while you are preparing your filling.



For your filling:

- 5 (8 ounce) packages of softened Philadelphia Cream Cheese
- 1 ¾ cups sugar
- 3 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon fresh grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 6 eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream

Cream the cheese in a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, flour, lemon zest, vanilla, and salt. Beat all of it well with a hand mixer on medium and then begin adding your eggs, one at a time, beating your mixture well after each one. Finally, add your whipping cream and blend it in thoroughly with the mixer.

Pour your mixture into the prepared spring form pan and crust. Bake at 500°F for 10 minutes then reduce your heat to 200°F. Continue baking for 65 to 70 minutes, until filling is almost set and surface of the cheesecake is golden brown. Remove from the oven carefully and allow it to cool. Place your cheesecake in the refrigerator for several hours or over night before serving to allow it to properly cure.

Here's another dessert recipe that represents one of the most challenging food conquests my mother was ever able to successfully complete. It involved a family friend who was one of those infuriating individuals that never liked to share recipes. No names will be mentioned to protect all of the players in this drama but I will say that the dessert was so stunning every time it was presented that it was one that simply had to be acquired. Even the name of the dessert has been changed to prevent the beginning of what my kin in

Kentucky would call a real family feud. Keep this one and when you want to leave your guests starry eyed, whip it out on them!

The Great Dessert

1 ½ cups unsalted butter, melted
2 ½ sleeves Ritz Crackers, crushed
8 ounces chopped pecans

Press all but ½ cup into an 8 x 12 inch container. Save the ½ cup to be sprinkled over the top when assembled.

Mix together in a large mixing bowl:

½ gallon vanilla ice cream, softened
2 packages instant vanilla pudding
1 ½ cups whole milk

Pour the mixture over your crust and place the container in either the refrigerator or the freezer. It can be prepared either way with different but equally great results. Let it set up completely. Before serving cover the whole thing with Cool Whip then sprinkle on the reserved Ritz/pecan mix as a topping.

This week I won't be making any wine recommendations but I do want to ask that all of our young graduates take a moment to think about something. Please make the decision not to drink during your graduation celebrations or do anything else that could prove tragic right at the time when you have so many reasons to look forward to the future. Every year families are touched by decisions that took place in just a few seconds and resulted in a lifetime of pain and heartache. We love you, graduates, and are so very proud of you!

Let us know if you have any questions at 888-288-0668 or visit us online at www.winedog.com. Cheers.