

Scratch Biscuits & Gravy

What type of food reconnects you with your heritage? All of us have a food legacy, which is a critically important part of who we are and where we came from. As I consider the years of my adult life, I recall that some of the most meaningful dining experiences I've had were with people who shared their ancestry with me through family recipes.

For me and for so many others in this area of Ohio their stories began in Kentucky. My grandmother, Fairy Wilson, began our chapter 87 years ago in Harlan County and I still revel in the opportunity to listen to recollections that are magical to hear even for the umpteenth time. You probably know what I mean.



I recently joined my grandmother as she prepared a country breakfast for 4 generations of our family. She has many wonderful recipes in her repertoire but for all of us, her scratch pork gravy and homemade buttermilk biscuits are a grand favorite. I hope you'll give them a try and I know she would appreciate it.

Incidentally, if the only biscuits and gravy you've ever tasted were in a restaurant chain...I won't mention names...you've never really experienced the real thing. I tried for years to find a substitute when I lived out of the area. "There is no substitute!"

Pork Loin Gravy

(makes just over ½ gallon)



2 to 3 lb. pork loin pre-sliced, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick slices
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 cups all purpose flour
2 to 3 heaping tablespoons unsalted butter
dash Kitchen Bouquet Browning Sauce
 $\frac{2}{3}$ gallon whole milk
salt to taste

Preheat canola oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium high heat. Place your slices of pork loin into the oil and braise in batches until all of your slices are nicely browned. Transfer the pork loin to a covered casserole with lid and heat in a 275°F oven for about one hour to make it very tender. When fork tender lower your heat to just warm and hold your pork loin for your meal.

Using the iron skillet you browned your pork in, add additional canola oil if needed so that you have at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup drippings in the pan. Bring your heat up to medium to medium high and stir in two cups of all-purpose flour. You'll want a thick paste consistency and you may need to add a touch more oil if it is too dry. Continue to brown your flour into a thick, rich roux continuously pushing the flour with an inverted spatula to prevent it from sticking during this process. Browning will take about 30 minutes and be extra careful not to allow your heat to creep up on you as it may scorch your base for the gravy. During the browning stage of your gravy you may need to add moisture to keep it from getting too dry...do this by stirring in up to three heaping tablespoons of butter as needed.

You now have the base for your gravy and need to add $\frac{2}{3}$ gallon of whole milk, the juices from the bottom of your pork container in the oven, a dash of Kitchen Bouquet to further enrich the color and flavor along with salt to taste. Continue to stir as before to prevent scorching and adjust temperature until almost boiling. You'll need to continue cooking for 30 to 40 minutes, stirring frequently, until thickened and ready to serve. You can always add milk if too thick and your gravy will continue to thicken after being removed from the heat. Cover until ready to serve.

Be forewarned that this gravy produces at least one person at the table who becomes “guardian of the bowl.” They will limit your return trips for seconds and thirds. It helps if you compliment them. In our case it is my handsome Uncle Don, who, by the way, is a phenomenal golfer.

Buttermilk Biscuits

(makes about 24)



In a very large bowl add:
8 cups self-rising flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 tablespoons canola oil
approximately 1 quart whole buttermilk

(Note: Over the years, Fairy switched over to canola oil when preparing dishes for the family to help lower cholesterol. Biscuits were traditionally made with lard up until that adjustment.)

Put all of your dry ingredients and canola oil into the bowl and while stirring gradually add your buttermilk until you have “very wet” dough which is quite sticky to the touch. The key to great buttermilk biscuits is lots of buttermilk. You’ll know you have the proper moisture level when the dough sticks to your finger when touched and has an elastic quality as you pull your finger back.

Transfer your dough to a large wooden bread bowl or tray filled with flour and turn it two or three times to cover it with flour so you can handle it. With the outer edges of your hands, palms up, pinch off enough dough to form one biscuit and delicately shape it. It should be about 2 ½ inches across and 1 inch thick. Pat it down onto a greased baking pan so that the biscuits are just touching. (This pinching and shaping will require a little practice.) Finish up by dusting a little flour over the top of your full pan of biscuits.)

Place your pan into a preheated 400°F oven for about 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

If you'd like to put the whole feast together as my grandmother has done for years, her entire spread includes biscuits and gravy, fried eggs, pork loin, and fried apples. Make sure you have plenty of biscuits for the last treat...honey or sorghum molasses mixed with butter and dribbled over that final hot biscuit.

Please call if you have any questions at (888) 288-0668 or visit us on the web at www.winedog.com. Cheers!