

Private Chef, Catering &
 Cooking Classes

I'd be delighted to help you with any
 and all of your celebrations.

Join Me Around the Table
 for an Eat Well-Do Good Dinner!
 Support the fight against Alzheimer's
 Disease &
 Enjoy delicious food & fun!

Treat Yourself to an
 Around the Table
 Chef's Apron

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

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Have you made your New Year's resolutions? Have you vowed to exercise more and eat less? Watch less television and read more? Give up smoking or (say it's not so) chocolate? Learn Italian or how to knit? Get organized, clean your closets and throw out all the old junk? Get out of debt? Work your butt off and do what it takes for that next promotion? Spend more time with family and friends?

How about keeping your New Year's resolutions simple? Simple is good, right?



Stick to just one resolution, live a happy life. Does that sound selfish or self-indulgent? It shouldn't. Remember the old saying, "if mama ain't happy; ain't nobody happy." Well, it applies to papa, the kids and everyone out there. Unhappy people have a horrible habit of dragging the rest of us down with them. Likewise happiness is catching. Your smile, your joy can lift everyone around you. Think of happiness as the highest common denominator.

When the temperature is hovering around -3 and you're facing a mountain of bills from Christmas, happiness may sound easier said than done. **Here are three presents to get you started:**

Stay in the present. How many times have you thought or heard someone say something like, "I'll be happy when..." It could be a promotion, getting married or buying a luxurious sports car. Or maybe you're stuck in the past, remembering your glory days on the high school football team or how great life was when the kids were small.

Whatever it is; stop dwelling or pining or both. By all means, enjoy your memories. Just don't live in the past. Work and plan for the future but embrace and make the most of life today. Love your friends and family. Love what you do. Not everything is or ever will be perfect. Focus on the good things in life. Make changes where you can. Fix what you can. And let go of or find a new perspective on the bothersome stuff that you can't change or control.

Be present. We are ever so proud of our ability to multitask. We don't just fix dinner. Along with stirring and chopping, we supervise homework, pay the bills, answer emails and attend a meeting via conference call. During the call we make a couple of absolutely brilliant comments.

But dinner is overcooked; the permission slip for the field trip ends up in the envelope for the Visa payment and vice versa. Those emails and brilliant comments? Better not to go there. And finally, the family? Well, they'd really like to know what you look like without the phone glued to your ear. Whether it's your child, significant other, friend, colleague, boss or customer, relationships are important. If the conversation is worth having, be it by email, telephone or face-to-face, it deserves your focused attention.

Give presents. Maybe it will surprise you, or maybe not, but giving brings more happiness than receiving. Gifts needn't be expensive or saved for special occasions. They just need to come from the heart. A kind word, your undivided attention or a quart of chicken soup for a sick friend will bring a bit of happiness to both you and the recipient. And don't forget volunteering and donations to organizations that are important you. Meaningful charitable gifts are much more than a tax deduction; they'll brighten your day and the days to come.

Happy 2013 and bon appétit!

Old Fashioned Pot Roast

When the cold winds blow there is nothing like the smell of a pot roast in the oven. Bring friends and family around the table for old fashioned food and good conversation.

Enjoy!

Serves 8

Olive oil

About 3 pounds chuck roast

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped

3 carrots, peeled and finely chopped

4 celery stalks, finely chopped

2 teaspoons herbs de Provence

1/2 teaspoon paprika

4 garlic cloves, minced

3-4 cups dry red wine

3-4 cups chicken broth

2 tablespoons cognac (optional)

1 bay leaf

1 pound mushrooms, sliced

1/2 cup sour cream

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Heat a little olive oil in a heavy casserole over medium-high. Generously season the beef on all sides with salt and pepper and brown each side for about 3 minutes. Remove the beef from the pot and reserve.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the onion, carrots and celery, sprinkle with herbs and paprika, season with salt and pepper and sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and sauté 1-2 minutes more.

Put the beef back into the casserole. Add the wine, chicken broth, cognac and bay leaf. The vegetables and liquid should come about 3/4 of the way up the sides of the pot roast. Bring the liquid to a simmer over medium-high heat. When it's bubbling, cover the pot and transfer to the oven. Cook at 350 degrees, turning the roast 2 or 3 times, for 1 hour.

Sauté the mushrooms in a little olive oil over medium-high heat until lightly browned. Add the mushrooms to the pot roast.

Put the sour cream in a small bowl. A few spoonfuls at time, add about 1 cup of hot braising liquid to the sour cream, stirring after each addition. Add the sour cream to the pot and gently stir to combine. Return the casserole to the oven and continue cooking, covered, until beef is very tender about 1 hour more. Add more wine and/or broth if the pot roast gets too dry.

Remove the meat from the casserole, cut across the grain in thick slices and serve with a generous spoonful of vegetables and sauce.

This dish can be made 2 or 3 days ahead. Bring to a simmer on top of the stove and then transfer to a 350 degree oven and cook until the meat is warmed through.