

Dinner and A Book

Episode #410

Menu:

Sherry Buttered Prawns
A Recipe for Chicken Curry in the Indian Manner
Chilled Asparagus with Capers
White Wine
Bread Pudding with Chocolate and Bourbon
Tea
Stilton Cheese, Almonds, Raisins
Port

The recipes are from The Jane Austen Cookbook by Maggie Black and Deirdre Le Faye and are authentic English recipes from the early 1800's. A woman, Martha Lloyd, who lived in the Austen household, wrote over one hundred recipes and although typical of the period, the recipes were created by each household of the day for balls, picnics and supper parties. The recipes have been updated for modern tastes.

Recipes:

Buttered Prawns for Four People

1 lb. fresh or frozen cooked prawns with head and shells on
2/3 cups dry white wine
1 pinch of grated nutmeg
1 slice bread, 1/2 inch thick, cut horizontally (Spread butter on the slice of bread)
Small pinch of salt
A few grains of Cayenne pepper
4 Tablespoons softened butter blended with 2 Tablespoons flour
Chopped fresh parsley

If using frozen prawns, thaw them. Behead and shell the prawns whether frozen or fresh. Put the heads and shells in a pan with the wine and 2/3 cup water. Add the spice and simmer until the liquid is reduced to 2/3 cup. Strain it into a clean pan. Toast the bread on both sides and butter one side. Cut into 4 or 6 wedges and keep warm. Add the salt, Cayenne and butter-flour mixture to the liquid in the pan and place it over low heat. Cook gently, stirring continuously, until the butter melts and the sauce thickens. Add the prawns and cook for 2-3 minutes to heat them through. Serve the prawns and sauce on the toast, buttered side up, as an eighteenth-century corner dish at dinner or as a modern supper dish. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

A recipe for Chicken Curry in the Indian Manner

Cut up 2 pounds of skinless, boneless chicken

Place in a stewing pot with water and cover. Cook until tender. Separate the broth and the cooked chicken. In a serving pot, melt 1/2 cup unsalted butter. Sauté 1 chopped onion and 2 cloves garlic until tender. Add 2 Tablespoons curry powder. Coat the chicken. Add 1 pint of the chicken broth. Cook until heated through. Season with salt and pepper. Squeeze the juice of one Seville orange. Serve hot.

For a modern touch of color and taste, add 1 large chopped tomato and 8 fresh basil leaves.

Chilled Asparagus with Capers

Cook 1 bunch fresh asparagus until cooked but still fresh green in color. Chill in the refrigerator. Sprinkle with olive oil and red wine vinegar, salt and pepper and sprinkle with 1 Tablespoon bottled capers.

Bread Pudding with Chocolate and Bourbon

5 buttered slices of white bread, trimmed

1/2-cup butter

1/2-cup brown sugar

2 eggs beaten

Pinch of ground cloves and nutmeg

1/2-cup milk

For a modern touch, add 1 cup chocolate chip bits and 1/2-cup bourbon

Set oven to 350 degrees. Cream together butter and sugar, and beat in the eggs. Add milk, cloves and nutmeg, bourbon and chocolate chips. Mix together well. Turn the pudding into a lightly greased 3-2/3 cup soufflé or casserole dish. Place in a bath of water such as a larger pan or casserole with water up to the edge but not over the pudding. Cover and bake 1 to 1-1/4 hours. Can be served warm or cool. Good with whipped cream.

To present a Jane Austen evening, begin the evening with a glass of sherry. Decorate the dining room with scenes from 1700-1800 English life, especially portraits of lovely young girls in Empire gowns. Play a compact disc of English gavottes and minuets. Decorate a shiny wood table with a centerpiece of mounded artichauts or a cake stand centered with a full pineapple surrounded by lemons, bright red apples and shiny green granny smith apples. Stream ivy sprigs from the cake stand and along the center of the table. Use brass candlesticks, silver serving pieces and silver cutlery all of which you have borrowed from your grandmother or great aunt. To the right of the plate, place a wine glass for white wine, one for water and one for port. Name each person at the table after a favorite Austen character: Emma, Mr. Knightly, Harriet Smith, Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth Bennett, Mr. Collins etc. and have each one play the role of the chosen character. After dinner entertain each other with piano solos, vocal duets and choose readings from Jane Austen novels. Discuss the role of women in 1800-century England as well as the changing style of dining at the time of the appearance of Emma.