

Dinner and A Book Episode #507

Menu:

Chicago Brats with all the trimmings
German Potato Salad
Braised Leeks and Artichoke Hearts with Fresh Basil
Chocolate Sundaes
Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer

These are foods that were introduced and served at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition, or as the fair is called today, The Chicago World's Fair. Since the following items were introduced at the Chicago Fair, I would suggest using as a centerpiece a box of Shredded Wheat, a box of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Mix, a box of oatmeal, a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, a package of Juicy Fruit Gum, a box of Cracker Jacks and a zipper!!! Then play a CD of "Chicago, Chicago, That Toddling Town."

Recipes:

Chicago Hot Dogs or Brats

4 bratwurst
4 tablespoons butter, divided
1 large onion, chopped
1 or 2 cans of beer

Brown brats in 2 tablespoons of butter in a pan. Add chopped onion and the rest of the butter. When onion is soft, add 1 can of beer and simmer until brats are done, about 20 minutes. Add water or more beer of necessary to keep brats from browning too much. Serve in buns with mustard, chopped onions, pickle relish or whatever you like.

Hot German Potato Salad

4 medium potatoes
7 slices of bacon
2/3 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons flour
1-2 tablespoons sugar
1-teaspoon salt
1/2-teaspoon celery salt
Black pepper to taste
2/3-cup water
6 tablespoons vinegar

Boil potatoes in their jackets. Peel and slice thinly. Fry bacon slowly and drain on paper towels, then crumble. Sauté onions in bacon fat until golden brown. Blend in flour and seasonings. Cook over low heat, stirring until smooth and bubbly. Remove from heat. Stir in water and vinegar. Bring to boil, stirring constantly. Boil 1 minute. Carefully stir potatoes and crumbled bacon bits into mixture. Remove from heat, cover and let stand until ready to serve. Serves 4 generously.

Braised Artichoke Hearts with Fresh Basil – Serves 6

2 leeks
3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
9-ounce package frozen artichoke hearts
6 cloves garlic, peeled
6 large leaves fresh basil, or 1/2 teaspoon dried
1 cup firmly packed coarsely shredded Boston lettuce
1 bay leaf
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 to 2 tablespoons chicken stock

1. Trim off root ends of leeks, split lengthwise, and wash thoroughly. Trim off green leaves. Slice white part into 1/4-inch semicircles.
2. In heavy saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons butter and oil over medium heat. Add leeks, artichoke hearts, and garlic, and cook, covered, 5 minutes, turning and separating frozen artichokes.
3. Meanwhile, slice basil leaves into fine sheds or chiffons. Reserve 2 sliced basil leaves for garnish.
4. Add basil, lettuce, bay leaf, salt and pepper to taste to the saucepan. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook gently, stirring to prevent sticking, 20 minutes. If dish becomes too dry, add 1 – 2 tablespoons chicken stock.
5. Adjust seasoning. Add an additional tablespoon of butter to the saucepan. Divide among dinner plates and garnish with reserved basil or serve in a casserole, topped with sliced basil.

Chocolate Sundaes

Sundaes were introduced in Evanston, Illinois, at the time of the Fair.

Serve 2 generous scoops of vanilla ice cream in a sundae dish. Top with Hershey's chocolate sauce, chocolate sprinkles and decorate with a thin chocolate Wafer.

