

Erika's World

Christmas 2020

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My Dear Friends,

Wow, what a year. They say, "It's gotta get better 'cause it can't get worse." Well, let's hope so. I sincerely hope that all of you are well and safe and still sane. There's really not much to tell. My family and I have been doing what everyone in this country, and most of the world, have been doing...isolating, staying home, wearing masks, and desperately trying to stay away from other people, which is not always possible.

As many of you know, we have a lovely peaceful place up in Vermont, out in the boondocks, and far away from civilization. We were up there in March when the whole Covid 19 virus exploded worldwide. So we decided to simply stay put and ride it out there. It was a good idea, but a few weeks later, our septic system failed, and without a functioning septic system, we had to go back to Connecticut. It took over 3 months to get it fixed, as very few people were working: Everyone was staying home and trying to stay safe. But eventually, in late June, we were back in business, so we were able to spend a good deal of time there in the summer and especially in the fall, the most beautiful time of year in Vermont. We haven't seen any of our friends...only emailed and talked on the phone. But that is, I am sure, how most people have spent the past 10 months. Now things are looking up with three vaccines on the horizon, and I, for one, will definitely be fighting to be first in line to get a vaccination.

I have spent a lot of time reading and cooking and cleaning every closet in our house, and fortunately getting rid of things that I look at and wonder why on earth I ever bought. After 42 years of high heels on TV, my poor feet have suffered terribly with bunions, so I finally had the first surgery on my left foot early in November. I spent two weeks not being allowed to put any weight on that foot and getting around on a little wheelie scooter. Then I was put into a boot that protects my foot, but is actually awkward to move around in. Nonetheless, I have been hobbling about, trying to be a normal Mom and cook and everything else. On Dec 21st, I will hopefully be allowed to wear a sneaker. I can't begin to describe what a joy that will be. Christmas is upon us, but unfortunately, I have been unable to do most of the decorating that I like to do outside. But I am well and safe, so some things just have to be let go. My daughter and son have been with us, and I am so grateful for that. They have been such an enormous help and source of joy and laughter. Those are the good things that this virus has brought.

Speaking of good things, I want to thank and acknowledge Walter, Kit and AJ without whom there would be no club at all. Over the past 40 some years, Walter, who started the club in 1972 I believe, has been a wonder...he has kept everything together through all these years and is a dear friend. So also are Kit and Angie, who do so much work for the club. And I am extremely grateful to all three of them for their friendship and all their efforts over the years.

A few of you have requested recipes, so I am including two. I must however add a disclaimer as these are not original recipes of mine, but simply ones that I have found online or in cookbooks, but my family and I have always enjoyed eating. I am simply passing on favorite recipes to my friends, and hopefully not infringing on any copyrights.

I wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and a healthy happy 2021, with prayers that it will be much improved over this last year, which surely was one for the books.

With love and best wishes to you all,





Skillet Pork Medallions in Mushroom Marsala Sauce

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- . 2 lb pork tenderloins; about 2 small or 1 large, depending on how many people you will feed
 - . Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - . 2 Tbsp salted butter
 - . 2 medium shallots, finely diced
 - . 12 oz cremini or button mushrooms, thinly sliced
 - . 1 Tbsp all purpose flour
 - . ½ cup dry Marsala wine
 - . 1 cup chicken broth
 - . 4 Tbsp heavy cream
 - . 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat leaf parsley and more for garnish
 - . 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 - . 1 Tbsp unsalted butter
-


Trim the tenderloins of the silver skin and any excess fat. Slice them into even slices about 1½ inches thick. Lay the slices flat and press them down with the heel of your hand just slightly. Season with salt and pepper.

In a large pan, heat the 2 Tbsp salted butter and add the shallots and a pinch of salt, stirring for about 1 minute. Then add the mushrooms and cook until they have given up their liquid and are golden brown. Sprinkle with the flour and add the Marsala wine. Cook until the Marsala is almost evaporated.

Add the chicken broth and cook until the mixture is reduced by half. Then stir in the cream and the parsley. Remove everything in the pan to a bowl and keep warm.

Heat the olive oil and 1 Tbsp unsalted butter in the pan until very hot, but not so hot that it will scorch. Add the tenderloin slices, do not crowd the pan, do it in batches if necessary. Cook about 1-2 minutes per side, until the meat is slightly firm to the touch and lightly browned. Return the mushroom mixture to the pan with the meat and heat just until the sauce is hot. Place on a heated platter and sprinkle with more chopped parsley. The tenderloin will be slightly pink inside, which is just fine. Serve with buttered noodles or mashed potatoes or nothing at all your choice.

Note: The original recipe has you cooking the pork first and setting it aside and keeping it warm and then making the mushroom sauce but I have found that doing it that way ends up with the pork being over cooked. If you cook the pork last you can control the doneness. This pork should be tender and still pink in the middle.



Spiced Lamb Burgers with Tzatziki Sauce

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- . 2½ lbs ground lamb
 - . 1 onion, very finely chopped
 - . ¾ cup chopped fresh flat leaf parsley
 - . 1 Tbsp ground coriander
 - . ¾ tsp ground cumin
 - . ½ tsp ground cinnamon
 - . 2 tsp Kosher salt
 - . 1½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
 - . ¼ cup olive oil
 - . Pita Bread
-

Mix lamb, onion, parsley, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, salt, pepper and ¼ cup olive oil in a bowl. Chill for at least 1 hour.

Either use an outdoor grill or a frying pan on the stove. Shape the lamb mixtures into long burgers, not too big or fat, as you will be putting them into the pita bread. Grill the lamb to your liking. Warm the pita breads and serve the burgers with Tzatziki sauce if you like that.

Tzatziki Sauce

- . 2 8 oz containers greek yogurt-plain
 - . ¾ of an English cucumber, peeled and sliced thinly
 - . 2 Tbsp olive oil
 - . ½ lemon, juiced
 - . 3 cloves garlic chopped fine
 - . 1 Tbsp chopped fresh dill
 - . salt and pepper to taste
-

In a food processor, process the sliced cucumber till fairly fine. Remove and place in a sieve. Let the water drain from it. When most of the water is gone, place the cucumbers into a dish towel or cheesecloth and wring and squeeze until all the water is out. Mix all the ingredients together, stir very well and cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.