

LASAGNA LOAF

If you're like me, sometimes the bargains at Costco are just too much to pass up. The other day I bought an enormous container of ricotta and a one-pound brick of mozzarella with hopes of making a big pan of lasagna. But the party plans fizzled out and as much as I like lasagna, eating twelve portions over the course of the next week didn't seem like the healthiest of ideas. And don't tell me to freeze it unless you can find some space in my freezer.

Speaking of my freezer, way in the back I noticed a container of turkey Bolognese I had made last month. Light bulb! Since it's just my husband and me, I thought I'd make a quickie mini-loaf of lasagna. It took me half the time as my usual from scratch lasagna, but it 's equally delicious.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1/2-pound oven ready lasagna noodles

2 cups leftover turkey Bolognese, heated (or your favorite jarred meat sauce)

2 cups mozzarella cheese (grated, large holes)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Parmesan cheese (grated, small holes)

1 tablespoon butter

FOR BECHAMEL

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons flour

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of milk (warm)

Grated nutmeg

Salt & pepper

FOR RICOTTA MIXTURE

2 cups ricotta

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan cheese (grated, small holes)

1 tablespoon fresh oregano (chopped)

1 tablespoon fresh basil (chopped)

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Salt and pepper

PREPARATION

FOR BECHAMEL

In a saucepan, melt butter until it starts to foam. Add flour and whisk for two minutes until sandy colored, but not brown. Slowly pour in milk and whisk until it starts to lightly boil. Lower flame to simmer for eight minutes to thicken, whisking often. Turn off heat, season with pinch of grated nutmeg, salt and pepper, and set aside. If film forms on top, remove before using.

FOR RICOTTA MIXTURE

In a medium sized bowl, mix the ricotta, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan, oregano, basil, garlic powder, and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

FOR ASSEMBLY

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter a large loaf pan. Spread $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of béchamel on bottom of pan making sure the entire bottom is covered. Place a layer of lasagna noodles on top. (NOTE: Since lasagna noodles are oven ready and not pre-cooked, they need

moisture from the béchamel and sauce to soften them while the dish bakes. Always make sure the whole noodle is covered by some liquid).

Spread a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of meat sauce on top of noodle. Spoon a layer of ricotta mixture on top. Sprinkle a layer of mozzarella, followed by a layer of Parmesan.

Repeat all of above three more times.

Place loaf pan on top of cookie sheet and bake in oven for about 50 minutes.

Allow to cool on top of stove for 30 minutes before serving.

THANKSGIVING LEFTOVER PATTIES

Last year, my plans for a big Thanksgiving dinner got squashed because half of my guests came down with Covid the day before. I had dinner for eight all ready to go, but there were only three of us on hand to consume my feast. Needless to say, as the days went on, I had to get creative with the leftovers, so I came up with this quick brunch treat.

INGREDIENTS (Makes 4 patties)

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of stuffing, broken up

1 cup turkey meat, shredded and chopped

4 roasted brussels sprouts, chopped (or whatever green vegetable you served)

2 eggs, beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup canola oil

salt to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cranberry sauce, for garnish

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, combine the stuffing, turkey meat, brussels sprouts, eggs and panko, Stir until well mixed.

Form 4 burger-sized patties, pressing firmly on mixture.

Heat the oil in a large skillet. Place the patties in the pan and fry until brown on the bottom, about 3-4 minutes. Gently flip the patties and fry for an additional 3-4 minutes.

Remove from heat and drain on a paper towel. Lightly season with salt. To serve, place two tablespoons of cranberry sauce on each patty.

FRESH CRANBERRY SAUCE

It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I realized cranberry sauce does not have to come out of a can. And once you've used fresh cranberries, you'll never go back to canned again. This is such a simple recipe, there really is no excuse not to make it for Thanksgiving. And the beauty is, you can make it well in advance of the big day.

INGREDIENTS (serves 8 – 10)

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange juice

1 teaspoon grated ginger

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon

24 ounces fresh cranberries, rinsed

zest of one orange

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of toasted pecans, chopped

PREPARATION

Combine sugar, orange juice, ginger, and cinnamon in a large saucepan. Heat until sugar dissolves and mixture comes to a boil, about 4 minutes.

Add the cranberries and cook about 4-5 minutes uncovered, until the cranberries start to pop. Skim off any foam that forms.

Remove from heat and stir in orange zest and pecans. Allow the mixture to cool until room temperature.

Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Can be made up to four days in advance of serving.

IT'S WORTH THE SIDE TRIP

One of the perks of being a TV food producer is that you get to eat at some fantastic places. Once while visiting Nashville, I was encouraged to check out the Café Loveless Motel – an out-of-the way spot with the most fantastic country breakfasts sure to clog each and every artery. Country ham with eggs and red-eye gravy, pit-cooked pork barbecue and eggs, chicken and waffles, hog heaven omelets all served with your choice of grits, hashbrown casserole or home fried

potatoes on the side. See what I mean? You're doctor is going to be pissed. And every bite is worth it.



But for me, the things that have me going back whenever I'm within a 100-mile radius are their biscuits and preserves. Imagine the lightest, most buttery biscuits fresh from the oven schmearred with some peach or blackberry preserves. Then imagine eating three of them before your main course comes out. It's not advisable, but impossible not to indulge.



Fortunately the last time I visited I ordered the country breakfast bowl which was a modest portion compared to my husbands three eggs, pancakes, bacon and toast platter that took up half the table. The breakfast bowl ONLY had pulled

pork, fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, shredded cheese, gravy and another biscuit on top. I could have ordered some sausage for two dollars, but I thought it best to show some restraint.



As we waddled outside after breakfast, we had no choice but to check out their take-away store. Of course there was a cookbook and I rifled through the pages to check out their biscuit recipe. As it turns out—it's a secret. But for eight bucks, you can buy a 2-lb bag of their biscuit mix. Just add some cold buttermilk and you've got biscuits for an army. But of course, don't forget to grab some of their peach and blackberry preserves. And I'll tell you another secret—if you

can't make it to Nashville, you can get it all online at lovelesscafe.com.

EASY POTATO WEDGES

I'm always looking for a quick and easy side dish. These potato wedges are a perfect accompaniment for most chicken or meat dishes. They're reminiscent of French fries, but baked without all the fat from deep-frying. They still come out crispy on the outside and they have a bit of a zing from the spices. If you're looking for a lighter alternative to fries, give this recipe a try.

INGREDIENTS

8 large red potatoes

3 Tbsp olive oil

FOR MAGIC RUB:

2 Tbsp paprika

2 Tbsp kosher salt

1 Tbsp ground pepper

2 Tbsp garlic powder

1 Tbsp onion powder

1 Tbsp brown sugar

2 tsp chipotle powder

1 tsp cayenne

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp cumin

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Wash the potatoes and dry with paper towel. Cut each into eight wedges. Pat the cut potatoes with a paper towel to remove any surface water.

In a small bowl, mix all magic rub ingredients together. (You'll have extra, so store in an airtight container. It will keep for up to three months.)

Place cut potatoes in a large bowl. Drizzle olive oil over potatoes and toss with a large spoon.

Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of the magic rub over potatoes and toss with large spoon.

On a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, place the potatoes in one even layer trying not to let any of the wedges cover each other.

Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and flip wedges over. Bake for another 15 minutes.

This is a great side for any chicken or meat dish. As a snack, they're great served with catsup, barbeque sauce, or a garlic aioli.

THE POWER OF BARBRA

There truly are moments you remember all your life. On a blustery fall day in 1968, for some inexplicable reason, my mom wanted to take me to the movies to see a picture called *Funny Girl*. Me, and not my brothers—this was a first!

We arrived early at the theater and my mom said we should just go inside, even though the previous showing had not ended. As we walked down the aisle of the darkened theater, Barbra stepped into the spotlight to sing “My Man.”

I was an impressionable ten-year-old. I didn’t know anything about the movie or the story. I certainly hadn’t had my heartbroken (unless you count the time my boyfriend Donny had an asthma attack while trying to give me my first kiss in summer camp), and yet here I was, weeping real tears, just from this three-minute performance. Barbra’s ability to express such raw emotion had touched a nerve in me that I didn’t even know I had. From that moment on, I have watched in awe as her talent, passion and determination have made her a truly remarkable woman and a national treasure.

Flash forward forty-one years to the Village Vanguard for a one-night only event promoting Barbra’s new CD *Love is the Answer*. Columbia records created a contest for a handful of the luckiest people in the world to be in the audience. There were over 40,000 entries. I put out the word to everyone I ever met who knew about my love for Barbra to enter. And on the day the winners were announced, I waited and waited, knowing my odds were against me. And then I got a call...

“People, people who need people,” sang my cousin Spencer.

“Spence, that’s not funny,” I said.

“Oh no...people who have tickets, are the luckiest people in the world.”

Spencer won two tickets! And he was going to take me!

We got all dressed up and headed downtown for the big event. The Village Vanguard is tiny. There was room for only 93 people, and the seating was random. We wound up in two seats at table 36. Amazingly, it was right near the stage. We were just eight feet from Barbra. Just for the record, we had better seats than President Clinton and Hillary, then the Secretary of State! As show time neared, you could feel the love in the room. The musicians came on stage, and then there was Barbra ... She looked fabulous, relaxed, and was utterly charming. She was in great voice and did I mention we were only eight feet away? I could hear her voice directly as well as through the speakers.

She's always said she's an actress who sings and she truly tries to "get in the right mood" for each song. For the heartbreakers, she really did have tears in her eyes. I know because I could see them!

Hearing Barbra with a quartet was also incredible. The experience was extremely intimate and personal. I wish I could say it was a dream come true, but in my wildest dreams I could never have imagined such an incredible evening. My friend Janis, who has known me since day one of my Barbra fascination, reminded me of the years gone by; the blue marble egg she gave me after we saw *Funny Girl* for the umpteenth time, my homemade Barbra posters covering the walls of my teenage bedroom. I grew up with Barbra, watching her grow as an artist and as a powerful woman.

As I watched Barbra perform, it was striking how she has now come full circle. When she first auditioned at the Vanguard, she was hungry and determined to be a star. You could hear that in her voice back then; her passion and talent were raw and pure ... almost desperate.

It's something we fans have tapped into. It's all that

vulnerability that we experienced, too. We could connect to Barbra because she felt the things we were feeling. It's clear now that she is a woman who has lived life and learned from it. She seemed comfortable in her own skin and able to enjoy the moment. Her voice was still pure and she could express emotions in each and every song, but she approached them as a mature fully formed person. No longer desperate, but wise. Not afraid to give love, and not afraid to receive it.

Even if Spencer hadn't won the tickets and I didn't attend the performance, I would still feel equally blessed because of all the friends and family that wanted this for me. I'm more than grateful; I'm cognizant of that fact just as Barbra sings, "Love is the answer."

Barbra has influenced me in many ways, and even more than her talents and her unbelievable body of work, I'm impressed by her bravery. Barbra speaks her mind and uses her celebrity to fight the good fight. I like to call it the Power of Barbra, and when I need to fight the good fight, I summon up that power. It's the Barbra inside of me!

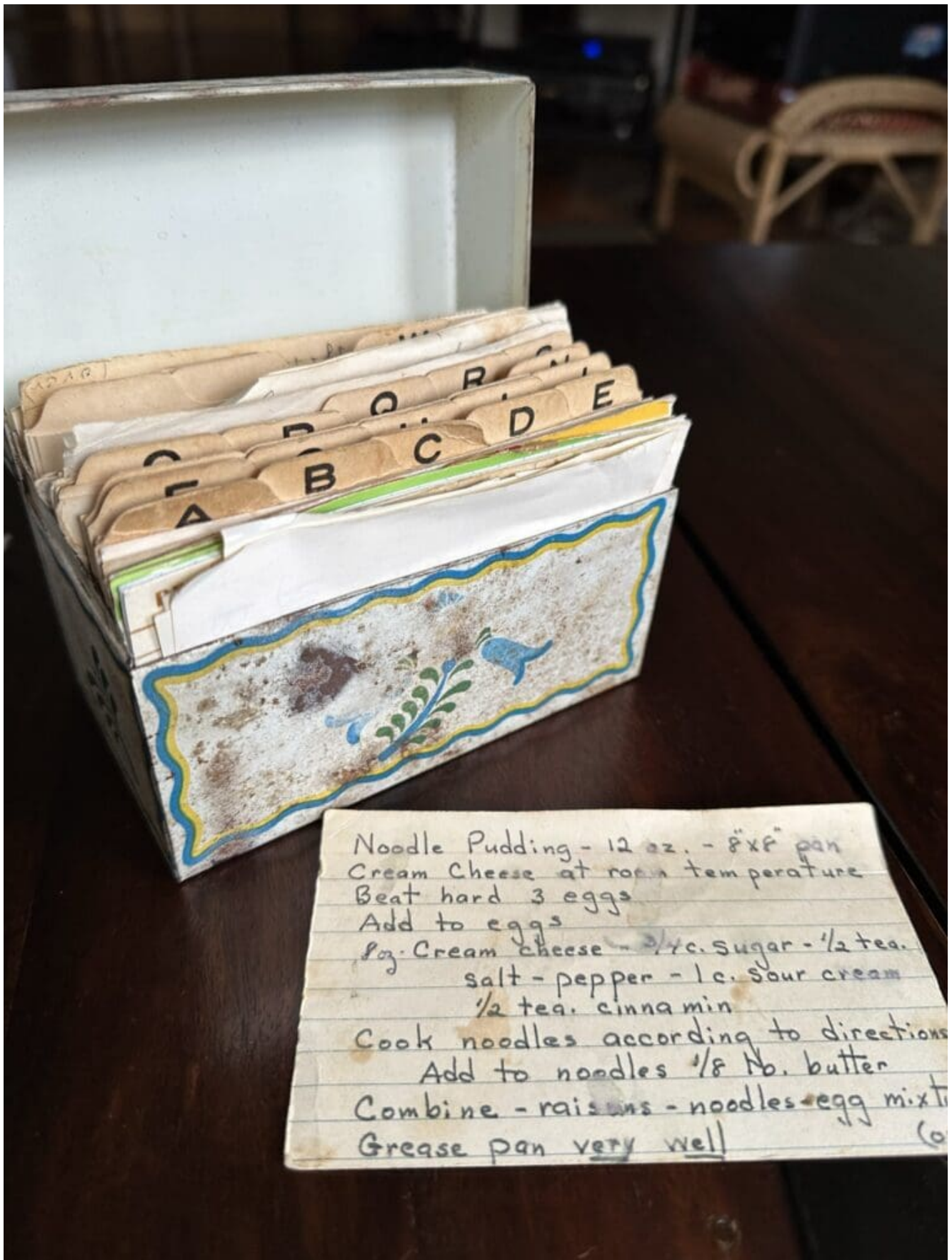
So, to you Barbra, for all the years you've spoken to me, and spoken out for others, it's an honor to be able to give something back just to you, some expression of my feelings. So here goes...

Thank you for sharing your talent with us all and thank you for inspiring a young girl to follow her dreams and to hold on tight to her beliefs, because as we all know, "people are their principles."

(This article first appeared in the book, "Barbra Memories: 50th Anniversary Gift for Barbra Streisand," compiled by the late Alison Waldman.)

NANA'S NOODLE PUDDING

My nana always made THE best noodle pudding. Some people call it kugel, but in our family, it was always Nana's Noodle Pudding. When she passed, I got to keep her recipe box with all of her classics jotted down on 3 x 5 stained and faded cards. It's been over thirty years since she passed, and yet I never made this dish on my own.



Noodle Pudding - 12 oz. - 8x8" pan
Cream Cheese at room temperature
Beat hard 3 eggs
Add to eggs
1/2 lb. Cream cheese - 3/4 c. Sugar - 1/2 tea.
salt - pepper - 1 c. Sour cream
1/2 tea. cinna min
Cook noodles according to directions
Add to noodles 1/8 No. butter
Combine - raisins - noodles - egg mixt
Grease pan very well (6)

Determined, I went through her box and did find the recipe. But as I read through it, it called for sour cream and cream cheese—two ingredients that I don't remember being in her dish. My brother confirmed that they were not, so where did

this mysterious recipe come from and did she ever make it?

I went on the hunt through my Jewish cookbooks as well as the internet. Of course, there are hundreds from which to choose, but through a bit of cross-referencing, I think I came up with something closest to her original. I can't take credit for its originality—it's more of a sleuthed recipe.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups milk

2 tablespoons butter, plus a tablespoon more for greasing pan

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

12 oz. bag of extra wide egg noodles

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of apples, cored, skinned and cut into small cubes

2 eggs, beaten

1 tablespoon raw sugar

PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.

Cook egg noodles as per bag instructions. Drain and set aside.

In a medium sized saucepan, combine the milk, butter, white sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Cook over low heat, whisking until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and allow to cool for fifteen minutes.

Butter a 10" round by 3" deep baking dish. Add the noodles,

raisins and apples and mix lightly to combine.

Beat eggs in a medium sized bowl. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the milk mixture to the eggs and whisk. This allows the eggs to warm up from the milk mixture without scrambling them. Pour the egg mixture back into the milk mixture and whisk to combine.

Pour the combined milk mixture over the noodles as evenly as possible. Sprinkle raw sugar on top.

Bake for 45 minutes. Allow to cool for thirty minutes before serving.

NOTE: If there's any left, refrigerate it. It's great served cold for breakfast.

KASHUKA

One of my favorite middle-eastern dishes is Shakshuka. It's basically a tomato-base of stewed vegetables with the eggs cooked right in the sauce. I absolutely adore it but it wreaks havoc on my digestive system due to the acidity in the tomatoes. So, never one to give up anything I love, I came up with this non-tomato concoction and changed the name to make it my own. It's not quite as stewy as traditional Shakshuka—it's a bit firmer—but it's equally delicious.

KASHUKA (serves one)

INGREDIENTS

1 Idaho potato, rinsed, peeled and grated (large grate)

1 vadalia onion, peeled and grated (large grate)

2 cloves minced garlic

1 cup fresh spinach, washed

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup parmesan cheese grated, (fine grate)

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon paprika

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cumin

Salt & pepper to taste

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

6 tablespoons canola oil

1 egg

1 sliced avocado

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, combine the grated potato and onion. Using a cheesecloth or clean linen dishcloth, squeeze as much of the liquid out as you can and discard. Add the garlic, spinach, parmesan, paprika, cumin, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes to the potato/onion mixture.

Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium heat and add 4 tablespoons of oil making sure to coat the entire pan. Just as the oil begins to smoke, add the potato mixture to the pan and flatten it so that the entire bottom of pan is covered. Cook untouched for about four to five minutes until the bottom begins to brown. Shake the pan to loosen the potato cake. If it is sticking, gently use a spatula to loosen it from pan.

Using a plate that can cover the skillet, flip the potato cake onto the plate. Add two more tablespoons of oil into the skillet allowing it to come up to temperature. Slide the cake back in the skillet with the uncooked side down. Don't forget to use potholders. If it has come apart a bit, just use the spatula to try to bring it back together. *(If you can flip an omelet over like a pro, then you should be able to flip the*

potato cake too. But be careful. You don't want half your dinner on the floor.)

Using a soup ladle, make a dent in the center of the potato cake. Crack open an egg and gently place the raw egg in the dent. Cook for four to five more minutes until the egg is cooked to your liking.

To serve, carefully use a spatula to loosen the potato cake. Slide it onto a plate trying not to break the egg. Place the sliced avocado around the cake.

DON'T FEED THE BABOONS

You can't go all the way to Cape Town without heading south to the Cape of Good Hope, the most southwestern point of the African continent, at least according to the sign. There are lots of signs as you make your way there, but most of them are about NOT feeding the baboons:

DO NOT FEED THE BABOONS!

BABOONS ARE DANGEROUS AND ATTRACTED BY FOOD!

DO NOT OPEN FOOD NEAR BABOONS!

DID YOU READ THE SIGNS? DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT FEEDING THE BABOONS, YOU IDIOT!

Clearly baboons have caused some problems. I did some digging and some unfortunate tourists have had their arms nearly bitten off not to mention other extremities, just trying to share their snacks. One brazen baboon actually jumped into the passenger seat of a car and stole a woman's purse complete with her passport and wallet. Maybe she had an open KitKat bar

that lured him.

As we got closer and closer to our destination, we did see quite a few baboons just hanging out next to the road. Three of them were perched up on a rock looking fairly harmless to me. Nevertheless, we closed our windows, sealed up our potato chip bag and tried not to make eye contact. After all, with potato chips, we all know you can't eat just one. I have a feeling the baboons know that too.

CLEAN OUT THE FRIDGE CASSEROLE

I hate wasting food, but eating the same thing a few nights in a row can get boring. If I make a roast chicken, I'm always looking for different ways in which to use the leftovers. And if I've got some veggies in the fridge that are a tad past their prime, but not quite ready for the compost bin, then there's a meal to be made. Feel free to sub-out chicken for leftover turkey, pork, burgers or any meat you have, and use whatever vegetables that still have some life in them. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

Olive oil

10 small potatoes, cut in half, skins on

10 brussels sprouts, cut in half

$\frac{1}{2}$ head of cauliflower, stems cut and florets separated

2 leeks, white parts only, thinly sliced

10 cremini mushrooms, sliced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 pound cooked chicken cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ " cubes

1 can Campbell's Chunky Creamy Chicken & Dumplings soup

1 cup gruyere cheese, grated (large grate)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko

salt and pepper

1 scallion, thinly sliced for garnish

PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees.

Place cut potatoes, brussels sprouts and cauliflower in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Pour 2 tablespoons of olive oil onto the vegetables and mix with a large spoon. Pour vegetables out into a large roasting pan or onto a large baking sheet, separating the vegetables into one layer. Place in oven for 20 minutes.

Remove from oven, turn the vegetables over and roast for another 20 minutes or until the vegetables start to brown.

While those vegetables are roasting, heat a medium-sized skillet with 2 tablespoons of olive oil on medium heat. Add leeks and sauté for about 7 minutes until they begin to brown. Set aside. Add 2 more tablespoons of olive oil into the pan and add mushrooms. Sauté for 4 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and sauté for one more minute. Set aside.

When the roasted vegetables are ready, place them in a large bowl along with the leeks and mushroom mixture. Add the chicken cubes and canned soup. Mix until combined. Re-season to taste with salt and pepper, then mix.

Grease a medium-sized casserole dish with one tablespoon olive oil. Pour the entire vegetable/chicken mixture into the casserole dish, smoothing it down into an even layer. Sprinkle the gruyere on top, then the panko.

Bake for 25 minutes or until the cheese has melted and the panko begins to brown.

Remove from oven. Garnish with chopped scallions.