

November 2015 Newsletter



Tor Hassell is perusing *Powell's Books* bestselling nonfiction at Cedar Hills Crossing in Beaverton – and look who is #6! Know someone who needs a copy of *Good Food, Great Medicine*? We've been told that it makes a great nonfiction hostess gift.

Stuffing with a clear conscience

As the year swerves into the final stretch and heads for the sugary free-for-all we call the holidays, the increase in warnings about saturated fat are a bit irritating. One reason is that when we demonize saturated fat, we take the attention off the *real* problem, which is excess sugar and refined carbohydrates.¹ Another reason is personal – some of us enjoy the crispy skin (yum!) on freshly roasted turkey or chicken. It is gratifying to see the Harvard School of Public Health point out that “most of the fat in chicken skin is healthy, unsaturated fat.”² (Turkeys would like you to notice that only chicken skin is mentioned in that quote.) There’s even a restaurant in Seattle where bowls of crispy skin tossed with chiles and lime are so popular that the chef says he “briefly caused a small shortage of the stuff between here and Portland!” While we may not order a bowl of it ourselves, we are glad to know that it’s legal. By the way, if you don’t like eating the skin – and plenty of people don’t – just add it to the stock pot.³ (Or send it to this address.)

¹ Siri-Tarino, P.W. et al. AJCN 2010;91:535-46

² <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-fats/>

³ Recipe on page 220 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3rd edition

Enjoy it all – but make it yourself

We believe that special occasions are exempt from everyday guidelines, but one recommendation is important enough to take seriously *all* the time: make it yourself. *Anything* you make from scratch at home is almost always going to be better than store-bought. (“From scratch” excludes prepared or packaged products or mixes.) As a general rule, homemade food has less added sugar, better fat, nutrients undamaged by commercial processing, and no added chemicals or starches. Although this time of year tends to be carbohydrate-dense (stuffing, potatoes, rolls, pie, and so on), there can be a corresponding wealth of good food. There is high quality protein (such as turkey or roast beef), traditional vegetables (green beans, sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and so on), and good whole-food fats to help slow the rise of blood sugar – real butter, cheese, cream, homemade salad dressing⁴ ... and turkey skin, of course. The most important thing is that everything is real food with real ingredients. Of course, there may still be thoughtful contributions from dear friends and relatives – the Jello salad with mystery-whip topping, thaw-and-bake crescent rolls, and startlingly innovative stuffing variations. (See the recipe for Mea’s version further on.) However, relationships are too valuable to be sacrificed at the altar of health or tradition, so this is the perfect time to invoke the Special Occasion clause.

Diversity meets mashed potatoes

This is a tricky time of year to mess with tradition, and a special occasion like Thanksgiving dinner is not the time to replace the mashed potatoes with puréed cauliflower. (Actually, we’re not sure if *any* time is right for that.) However, you might consider introducing some mashed potato diversification.

Our tip: Even though the potato is a vegetable, it is also a rapidly metabolized carbohydrate which is a problem if you are struggling with weight or blood sugar control. Our version of the Irish classic called *Colcannon* has all the comforting richness of mashed potatoes but with the nutrition density kicked up significantly by the subtle inclusion of meltingly-soft and buttery cabbage and onion.⁵

⁴ Recipe on page 140 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3rd edition

⁵ Recipe on page 191 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3rd edition

Mea's stuffing recipe

Stuffing is not a dish to be desecrated by calorie counters. (Anyone offended by butter measured by the cup rather than the tablespoon may want to stop reading now.) However, stuffing *can* be satisfyingly traditional yet crammed with invisible vegetables, and here is the way I do it:

(Serves about 10)

12 ounces dried cubed bread (8 cups, small cubes)
2 sticks butter
8 cups ¼-inch diced onion, celery, and mushrooms (about 2 medium onions, 4–6 stalks celery, and ½ pound mushrooms, all in ¼-inch dice)
1½ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
½ cup (¾-ounce package) minced fresh sage leaves
1 cup hot chicken/turkey stock

Place bread in a very large bowl. Sauté vegetables in butter until meltingly soft (about 20 minutes), add salt and pepper and mix well, and then add with the remaining ingredients to bread cubes and toss well. Scrape into a buttered 3-quart oven-to-table dish. (If a day ahead, cover and chill overnight.) To serve, heat 30–40 minutes uncovered in 350-degree oven.

Kick the can!

Have you ever wondered how green beans feel about having to share a casserole dish with canned cream-of-mushroom soup and canned French-fried onion rings? Let's celebrate the self-determination, the *green bean-ness* of green beans instead.

Our tip: Find some skinny green beans, fresh or frozen. Cook until tender-crisp, and then toss with a couple of tablespoons of vinaigrette and a handful of freshly grated Parmesan. This simple little recipe⁶ is delicious at any temperature, and the bright green color (don't overcook!) is a lovely addition.

Marshmallows belong on a stick

Anyone know how marshmallows end up on sweet potatoes? While we're waiting for an answer, why not try a marshmallow-free Thanksgiving? You'll have extra marshmallows to roast over the campfire, which is why they were invented in the first place.

Our tip: Drizzle cooked sliced sweet potatoes/yams with melted butter, sprinkle with dark brown sugar, and bake until topping is bubbling and caramelized.

The bottom line

Holiday meals *can* be a celebration of good food; the trickier bits are all the cookies and candy and gift baskets that bombard us in between, usually when we're hungry and tired. If we forget to plan ahead and pack a snack, our special-occasion license can stretch from now until the New Year. So, let's remember the combination – protein, good fat, and fiber – for every meal and snack. (And maybe a bowl of crispy chicken skin for dessert.)

Next Good Food, Great Medicine classes

The two-part class series targets weight loss, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes, and details steps for preventing or reversing them. The classes are based on the new edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review inter-relationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the “key three” – a whole food Mediterranean diet, daily activity, and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting change in your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical application of whole food choices and menu planning. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal action plans.

Time:	6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates:	2/3/16 (Part 1) and 2/10/16 (Part 2)
Location:	Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost:	\$100 (2-class series)
Registration:	Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a spot

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

11/12/2015 – Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital Grand Rounds: *Graceful Aging: The Lifestyle Prescription*. Hood River, OR.

2/3/2016 and 2/10/2016 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part Lifestyle Change Class Series: Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

Sign up for this free monthly food and lifestyle newsletter at Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

“Giving thanks always for all things...”
Ephesians 5:20 (KJV)

⁶ Recipe on page 191 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3rd edition