MY MAD MEN MENU

For those of a certain age we remember the grand foods of the 60's and 70's which the television series *Mad Men* epitomized. Dishes like these appeared on fancy restaurant menus all around the country. Here is my salute to some of those that have fallen off menus, but I think should be honored and revived. Maybe start the evening with a classic cocktail (but no cigarettes!). Also, a good way to say goodbye to problematical 2020.

- French 75
- Classic Jewish Chopped Liver with Accompaniments
- Dungeness Crab Newburg
- Italian Wedding Soup
- Frisée Salad with Maple Bacon and Poached Egg
- Steak Diane with Wild Mushrooms
- Chocolate Pots de Crème

FRENCH 75

According to Esquire Magazine, French 75 is a cocktail made from gin, Champagne, lemon juice, and sugar. It is also called a 75 Cocktail, or in French simply a *Soixante Quinze* (Seventy-Five).

The drink dates to World War I, and an early form was created in 1915 at the New York Bar in Paris—later Harry's New York Bar—by barman Harry MacElhone. The combination was said to have such a kick that it felt like being shelled with the powerful 75mm field gun used by the French in WW1.

No wonder the cocktail co-opted the name somewhere along the line. Typically, it is served in a Collins glass, but you can also use a champagne flute.

2 ounces London dry gin  
1 teaspoon superfine sugar  
1/2-ounce lemon juice  
5 ounces Brut champagne

Shake gin, sugar, and lemon juice well with cracked ice in a chilled cocktail shaker. Strain into a Collins glass half-full of cracked ice. Top off with champagne.
CLASSIC JEWISH CHOPPED CHICKEN LIVER

Makes about 1 quart

Schmaltz (rendered chicken fat flavored with onions) is by far the best choice of fat in this recipe, but if you don't have the time to make it, you can use a neutral vegetable oil instead.

This recipe uses cooking methods that align with kosher practices but is not guaranteed to comply with all kosher laws; check with an expert if you have any concerns.

1-pound chicken livers
Kosher salt
1/4 cup schmaltz, plus more as needed (see note above)
1 medium (8-ounce) yellow onion, finely minced
3 large hard-boiled eggs, peeled and chopped
1/4 cup gribenes (browned, crispy bits of fat and onion left over from making schmaltz), finely minced
Freshly ground black pepper
Additional minced gribenes and hard-boiled egg, for garnish (optional)
Matzo or other crackers, for serving

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Oil or parchment line a rimmed baking sheet.

Using a paring knife, clean livers well of any fat, green spots, or large veins. Season with kosher salt. Arrange livers on the prepared baking sheet and roast turning a couple of times until exteriors are browned and only the last traces of pink remain in the centers, about 6 minutes. (If you are unsure about whether the livers are done, cut one open to check.) Remove from oven and set aside.

In a medium stainless steel or cast-iron skillet, heat schmaltz or other fat over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring frequently, until onions that are very soft and golden brown, about 8 minutes. (Lower the heat at any point to prevent burning.)

In the bowl of a food processor, combine cooked livers with eggs and pulse, scraping down the sides if needed, until a rough, crumbly paste forms; try not to over-process into a smooth paste.

Scrape minced liver and egg mixture into a mixing bowl. Add cooked onion, along with all the cooking fat. Add minced gribenes. Stir until thoroughly combined, seasoning with salt and pepper as you go. Add as much extra schmaltz as needed, 1 tablespoon at a time, to reach desired consistency. Exactly how much this is will depend on several variables, including your personal preference. Chopped liver should be spreadable and moist, not dry and crumbly.
Refrigerate chopped liver in an airtight container, with plastic pressed directly against its surface to prevent it from discoloring, for up to 5 days. Allow to come to room temperature before serving. Garnish, if desired, with additional minced hard-boiled egg and gribenes, along with matzo or crackers on the side. I find that chopped liver tastes better after an overnight rest refrigerated.

Making Schmaltz and Gribenes

According to Melissa Clark of the New York Times: Schmaltz is rendered poultry fat, in this case made from chicken, while gribenes are its crispy, crackling-like byproduct that comes from bits of chicken skin. The key to this recipe is to go low and slow: You want the fat to cook gently and thoroughly so it renders completely without burning.

Some would argue that the onion is mandatory and not optional, but if you plan to use the schmaltz for very delicate recipes, or sweet recipes (chilled schmaltz works wonderfully as the fat in pastry dough), feel free to leave it out. Your schmaltz won’t have as deep a flavor, but it will be more versatile. Schmaltz will last for at least a week in the refrigerator and up to six months in the freezer. If your butcher won’t sell it to you, the best way to obtain chicken skin and fat is to collect trimmings in the freezer every time you buy a whole bird. Or you can strip the skin and fat from chicken thighs or breasts and save the skinless meat to use in other recipes.

3/4-pound chicken skin and fat, diced (use scissors, or freeze then dice with a knife)
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 medium onion, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch slices (optional)

In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, toss chicken skin and fat with salt and 1 tablespoon water and press out into one layer. Cook over medium heat for about 15 minutes, until fat starts to render, and skin begins to turn golden at the edges.

Add onions and cook 45 to 60 minutes longer, tossing occasionally, until chicken skin and onions are crispy and richly browned, but not burned.

Strain through a sieve. Reserve the schmaltz. If you want the gribenes to be crispier, return to the skillet and cook over moderately high heat until done to taste. Drain gribenes on a paper-towel-lined plate.

CRAB NEWBURG

Serves 4
This is one of the classic egg yolk thickened sauces that is rarely seen anymore. It can be made with lobster, shrimp or anything else you like. It’s traditionally served on toast points but can also be spooned into little puff or choux pastry shells or in crepes. I’ve suggested using a shellfish flavored butter and have included that recipe below. It adds a big wallop of flavor, but you don’t have to.

3 tablespoons shrimp, lobster, crayfish, or plain unsalted butter
1-pound fresh cooked crab meat, preferably Dungeness, picked over
2 tablespoons medium-dry Sherry such as amontillado
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
Cayenne and sea salt to taste
4 large egg yolks, beaten well in a medium bowl
Drops of lemon juice
Brioche toast points
1 tablespoon chopped chives

In a heavy saucepan, heat the butter over medium heat. Add the crab and sherry and cook stirring for 2 minutes or until heated through.

Transfer the crab meat with a slotted spoon to a bowl. Add the cream to the sherry mixture remaining in the pan and boil until it is reduced to about 1 cup. Reduce the heat to low and stir in nutmeg, cayenne, and salt to taste. Slowly whisk the hot cream mixture into the yolks. Return mixture to the pan over moderate heat. Stirring constantly, cook the mixture until it thickens nicely being careful not to scramble the eggs. This will take just a couple of minutes. Stir in the crab meat and finish with drops of lemon juice to taste. Serve over the toast points and top with chopped chives.

Shrimp or Lobster Butter
Makes about 1/4 cup

Shells from 1 pound of shrimp, crayfish, or lobster
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter

Spread shells on a baking sheet and toss with a little olive oil. Toast them in a preheated 300-degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes. Break them up as finely as you can using a mallet or mortar and pestle or a rolling pin. Melt the butter in a double boiler over gently simmering water, add the shells and cook for 10 minutes. Set aside for at least 20 minutes to let flavors infuse. Pour into a fine mesh strainer set over a bowl and press gently but firmly with a rubber spatula to strain out all the butter. Refrigerate and discard any liquid after the butter has solidified.
ITALIAN WEDDING SOUP

Serves 4 - 6

A classic soup preparation. If you don’t have the cheese rind you can substitute 1/4 cup grated cheese. Lore says that Italian wedding soup began as a dish traditionally served to the bride and groom at wedding receptions to help them, with strength and vigor, through the wedding night but historians disagree. The former is apparently not true. It gained its name from the harmony of its ingredients. In English “wedding soup” actually means “married soup” (minestra maritata) in Italian. This has led to the misunderstanding of how the dish came by its name. Darn!

For the meatballs:
Makes about 12

10 ounces ground dark meat turkey or chicken
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1/3 cup finely chopped green onion
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh mint
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill, plus sprigs for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
For the soup:
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion (1-1/2 cups) finely chopped
1/2 cup diced carrots
1/2 cup thinly sliced celery including leaves
1/2 teaspoon crushed fennel seed
5 cups chicken stock
1/2 cup dry white vermouth or wine
1/2- inch piece parmesan or pecorino rind
1/3 cup small soup pasta such as stellini or stars
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
3 cups loosely packed chopped young kale
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
Freshly grated parmesan

For the meatballs, mix all ingredients together until just combined. Form mixture into 1 tablespoon sized balls and set aside.

For the soup, heat the olive oil over medium heat in a large heavy-bottomed soup pot. Add the onion, carrots, celery, fennel seed and rind and sauté and stir until vegetables are softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken stock and wine and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 – 8 minutes. Add the pasta to the simmering broth and cook until the pasta is almost tender, about 5 minutes. Add the reserved meatballs and simmer for another 5 minutes or so. Add the fresh dill and kale to the soup and simmer for a minute or two. Season to your taste with salt and pepper. Remove rind if desired and save for another soup or eat! Ladle soup into warm bowls and sprinkle each serving with grated Parmesan.
FRISÉE SALAD WITH POACHED EGGS AND MAPLE ROASTED BACON

Serves 4

A variation on the classic French bistro salad *Frisée aux Lardons*. Bacon can be done ahead as well as the eggs. To do eggs ahead, when eggs are just set, simply place in ice water and reheat in simmering water for a few seconds at serving time.

8 strips thick sliced bacon  
1/2 cup maple syrup  
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar  
4 large eggs  
1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice or to taste  
2 teaspoons grainy Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon sugar or to taste  
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
6 gently packed cups of frisée greens, torn into medium-size pieces  
1 small bunch upland cress, roots discarded
Separate bacon and blot dry with paper towels. Coat both sides of bacon liberally with maple syrup. Lay bacon in a single layer on a sheet pan with parchment or a silicon baking mat.

Cook bacon in a preheated 400° oven, turning once, until browned and lacquered, about 12 minutes. Cut slices into thirds and set aside.

Prepare eggs for poaching: Bring a 4-quart skillet of water to a boil; add vinegar; reduce heat to medium-low. Crack each egg into its own ramekin and set aside. (Don't cook the eggs yet.)

In a medium bowl, whisk together shallots, lemon juice, mustard, sugar, and olive oil. Season to your taste with salt and pepper. In a large bowl, toss frisée and cress with vinaigrette to your taste. Divide greens and bacon between 4 plates.

Slide the eggs into the water and cook until just firm, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon to drain the eggs, top the salads with an egg and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately. Note: Eggs can be poached ahead and stored refrigerated in ice water. To serve: place the eggs in barely simmering water for 30 seconds before topping the salad.
STEAK DIANE

Serves 2
This is one of those “war horses” that I think is still delicious. It’s been retired from the culinary scene for such a long time that most folks probably haven’t heard of it. It was a classic served when couples went out for a special dinner. All things old become new again! I’ve recommended beef tenderloin here, but you could use your favorite tender cut.

2 six-ounce beef tenderloin steaks  
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 tablespoon butter  
1/4 cup finely chopped shallots or green onions  
1/3 cup canned beef stock or consommé  
3 tablespoons brandy or cognac  
1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
2/3 cup heavy cream  
1 tablespoon finely chopped chives and/or parsley  
6 ounces wild mushrooms such as Trumpet or Maitake, sautéed in butter  

Season the steak liberally with salt and pepper. In a heavy bottomed sauté pan, add the olive oil and heat over medium high heat. Add steaks and cook until well seared and done to your liking, about 4 minutes per side for medium rare. Set steaks aside and keep warm. Remember they will continue to cook a little.

Pour off most of the fat from the pan and add the butter and shallots and, over moderate heat, cook the shallots till softened, about 2 minutes. Add the stock and brandy and raise heat and bring to a boil. Scrape up any of the delicious browned bits from the bottom of the pan.

Reduce by half and then stir in Worcestershire and cream and reduce to a light sauce consistency. Add any juices from the steak and season to your taste with salt and pepper. Stir in chives and pour sauce over steaks and serve immediately with the mushrooms.
CHOCOLATE POTS DE CREME

Six 4-ounce servings

The custards are best enjoyed warm or at room temperature. They can be served on their own, or with a dollop of whipped cream and some chocolate shavings.

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
1-3/4 cups heavy cream
3/4 cup milk
2 tablespoons dark rum
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
6 large egg yolks
2 1/2 tablespoons sugar

Preheat the oven to 325ºF.

Put the chocolate in a medium bowl. Heat the cream, milk, rum, and salt in a small saucepan. When it begins to simmer, remove it from the heat and pour it over the chocolate. Whisk until smooth.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, then whisk in the sugar. Gradually add the melted chocolate mixture while whisking until well-blended. Strain the mixture into a large measuring cup or pitcher, or another bowl.
Place 6 ramekins or custard cups in a roasting pan or baking dish. Divide the custard mixture among the ramekins. Add hot water to the pan until it reaches halfway up the outside of the ramekins.

Cover snugly with foil and carefully place the pan in the oven. Bake until the custards are set around the edges but still slightly soft and jiggly when you nudge them, about 30 minutes, but check them before as ovens can vary. Remove the pan of custards from the oven and lift off the foil.

As soon as the custards are cool enough to handle, remove them from the hot water bath and place them on a cooling rack.

Serve garnished with whipped cream and chocolate shavings

Storage: The baked custards will keep in the refrigerator for 2-3 days. They can be rewarmed either in a microwave oven or by putting them in a tray of hot water and gently rewarmed them in the oven, covered or uncovered.

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