



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## BACK BURNER

### "Fusion" Cooking

Sunday, September 04, 2005

**Cinda Williams Chima**

Perhaps you've heard of fusion cooking. In our house, it's more like confusion cooking, especially on weeknights, when a hungry mob seizes control of the kitchen and anything that takes more than a half-hour to prepare is off the menu.

I've learned to be creative with missing and mismatched ingredients. I inherited that talent from my grandmother, who could feed a family of 12 with a live chicken, a bushel of potatoes and an hour's notice. She could add sugar to anything and make a pie, then make cinnamon rolls from scraps of the dough.

Keeping staples on hand isn't easy when teenagers roam the house at all hours. I can't tell you how many times I've chopped the green onion and zested the orange, only to discover the smoked Gouda has been nibbled down to the rind (they always leave the rind, as if they think it will magically replenish itself in the dairy drawer). Chef's tip: Don't substitute mozzarella for the missing Gouda in your cheese sauce; you'll end up with something akin to rubber bands stewed in milk.

In our household, recipes metamorphose to fit the materials on hand. That means mealtime can be something of a cultural collision. Yet, some of my best dishes have emerged from a cacophony of cuisines.

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#### Hummus Guac "

OK, so you bought the five avocados for the guacamole, but only one is ripe when the day comes. Or someone made nachos the night before and used four of them. Or you couldn't stand to pay that avocado price times five. Or you've decided to adopt that low-fat, high-fiber lifestyle. Try this quick variation, and use in the same way you would traditional guacamole.

1 ripe avocado, peeled and mashed

2 cups your favorite hummus

1 green onion, chopped

1 sm. tomato, chopped

1 Tbsp. chili salsa (hot, medium or mild)

1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped, plus a few leaves for garnish

Mash avocado in medium-size bowl. Add hummus and blend thoroughly. Gently stir in remaining ingredients. Garnish with extra cilantro just before serving.

Yield: About 3 cups.

" Indicates a staff favorite.

#### BBQ Chicken Pizza Burritos "

My sons love BBQ Chicken Pizza, but the 30-minute weekday window I have to prepare dinner won't accommodate anything as ambitious as homemade pizza dough. This version will also work if you happen to discover that someone used your store-bought pizza shells to make a giant peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich the night before.

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

2 Tbsps. olive oil

1/2 cup barbecue sauce (K.C. Masterpiece

Original preferred)

4 oz. mozzarella, shredded

1/2 cup smoked Gouda, shredded (assuming you have any; if you don't, use more mozzarella)

1/2 sm. sweet red onion, sliced

1/2 cup chopped cilantro

8 soft tortillas

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees.

2. Saute chicken breasts in olive oil over medium heat until cooked through, about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool; slice.

3. Return meat to skillet and stir in barbecue sauce. Wrap tortillas in foil and heat in oven for 10 minutes. (Or, wrap in wax paper for 1 minute.)

4. Allow each diner to assemble his or her own tortilla using chicken, Gouda, red onion, cilantro and mozzarella.

Yield: 4 servings.

" Indicates a staff favorite.

#### Feta Or Forget It

This recipe came about during the last desperate hour before a potluck supper, when I realized I had no Parmesan cheese. Feta gives this familiar appetizer a touch of Middle Eastern intrigue. It takes only 10 minutes, plus baking time.

2 10-oz. cans artichoke hearts, rinsed and chopped (do not use the marinated kind)

1 cup low-fat mayonnaise (Hellmann's preferred)

1/2 cup shredded Asiago cheese

1/2 cup low-fat feta cheese

Crackers, Melba toast (for serving)

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine all ingredients in small oven-safe casserole. Bake for 20 minutes, or until bubbly. Serve with crackers or Melba toast.

Yield: About 6 appetizer servings.

Ready For More "Fusion" Cooking?

You'll find Cinda Williams Chima's recipe for Asian-Cajun Spicy Shrimp Stir-Fry on our Web site, [www.cleveland.com/backburner](http://www.cleveland.com/backburner).

Recipes featured in The Back Burner have been tested.

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