

Let's Schmooze

Other issues of *Let's Schmooze* can be found on the web at www.heirling.com

Eggplants to the Rescue

Who would have ever thought that firing up the grill outside to cook that sizzling steak would be linked to global warming? By the way, it's not the heat from the grill that is under fire, so-to-speak. It's that mouth-watering steak that you're getting ready to put over those impatient red-hot coals.

It appears that methane emissions from agricultural and livestock processes greatly contribute to global warming ~ and ~ raising beef seems to be the greatest culprit. Compared to other types of food production, beef takes 28 times more land, 11 times more water, 6 times more nitrogen, and releases 5 times more unwanted gases into our atmosphere. That steak might taste good, but it's not only the grill that's getting hot. Our climate is getting hot, too ~ with all that agriculture business going on.

Of course, eating a lot of red meat has also been linked to cardiovascular diseases, and those diseases have given many of us a lot of grief, and crippled and shortened our lives in the process. So, now we have two reasons to reject red meat consumption. Right?

But, wait! It tastes so good! Are we sure that we're really willing to walk away from that tantalizing ~ mouth-watering ~ steak?

Fortunately, there's a sweet spot we can embrace in the middle of this unspeakable tension. We can gradually cut back on the amount of red meat we consume. We don't necessarily have to become an overnight teetotaler. There are many alternatives to red meat that can be used in endless recipes. As we gradually reeducate our tastebuds to these alternatives, we will find ourselves willy-nilly embracing a diet richer in vegetables, and stingier in meats. That's happens to be a healthy diet change for all of us!

A favorite red meat substitute is the wonderful eggplant. It has great, satisfying texture, and can be prepared in many different ways. It can be introduced into many different recipes. Using eggplants in human diets is not a new thing; we as humans have been doing it for thousands of years. Have you ever tried the beloved Eggplant Parmesan? And that's only one of many tasty dishes that eggplants can grace.

Let's start thinking of meats as a garnish, and not as a main entree. As we re-conceptualize meat as a garnish, we'll be doing ourselves a huge favor, and we'll be doing our climate a huge favor too.

By the way, just as an aside, while drafting this article, we prepped some lentil soup for dinner ~ so good! Start by putting a diced bulb of garlic into the pot, along with a diced onion and potato, together with minced celery and shredded carrots. Cover the whole mess generously with water, and as the water starts warming, throw in that bag of lentils. Season to taste with salt, black pepper, all-purpose seasoning, and a tablespoon of olive oil. Lastly, throw in about a half to a full pound of well-browned, very lean ground beef. When the pot starts coming to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer, and then let all that goodness wallow in its own juices for hours until it tastes just right. When you serve it up in your eager dinner bowl, don't forget to put a generous pat of butter in the middle ~ as it slowly melts it will finish dressing your dinner. It was great, and we only used a small amount of lean ground beef to garnish a huge pot of lentil soup! Kind of reminded us of that delicious bowl of lentil soup that we enjoyed so much many, many years ago at a seaside café in old downtown San Diego in California.

By the way, lentils have been around for thousands of years, just like our beloved eggplants. Did you know that?

For more on eggplants and meat substitutes, just jump on the Web and search the keywords *eggplant recipes* and *red meat substitutes*. You'll be amazed at all the stuff that will pop up.

~ 'til we meet again ~