

# December 2021 & January, 2022 Meeting Notes

# Virtual Cookbook Club



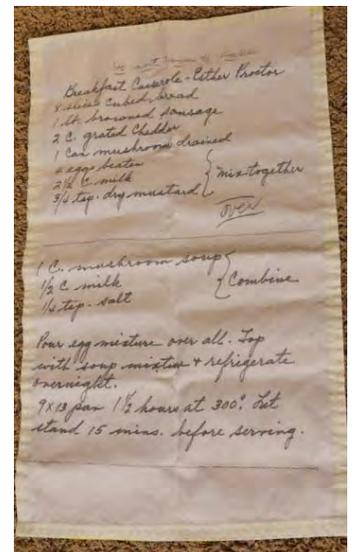
Participants: Gladys, Judy, JoEllen, Joan

**Gladys planned to make a holiday favorite** for Christmas morning breakfast. **Esther's Breakfast Casserole** is a recipe she has known about for 51 years, and got from her mother-in-law, Esther Proctor. It is so beloved, that Gladys' own mother wrote down an abbreviated version of the recipe, and Gladys had that version printed on a kitchen towel (see image at right). Gladys' mother insisted on using Jimmy Dean's



Esther's Breakfast Casserole, Christmas 2021

*hot* sausage. Gladys insists that having sharp, fresh-grated cheese is important; and that the mushrooms should be fresh, sauteéd, and put into a cream sauce, rather than a can of Campbell's Cream of Mushroom soup. She uses a white sauce recipe from Heloise's mother that is non-fat and delicious. Although everyone loves this dish (it's her family's favorite Christmas morning meal), Gladys finds that the preparation is so time-consuming that she just makes it once a year.



The kitchen towel on which Esther's Breakfast Casserole is printed.



Gladys' Spinach Triangles, also Christmas 2021

**For Christmas morning, Gladys also prepared Spinach Triangles** from a recipe she has had for years, probably from Parade Magazine, and has made about 5 or 6 times, which is a lot for Gladys, since she likes to try new things. It is reminiscent of the Greek dish *Spanakopita*, which is a popular savory pie

## Gladys continued

made of flaky phyllo (or filo) dough with a filling of spinach and feta cheese. Gladys uses a package of frozen spinach in this recipe. You have to squeeze out the moisture of the thawed spinach before mixing it with the other ingredients. Gladys commented that you could easily add mushrooms and garlic to this recipe. You brush melted butter on each layer of filo dough, which takes the most time, but which makes the finished dish very flakey. There were no leftovers at Gladys' house. On this occasion her daughter took the rest of the spinach triangles home with her. It can be served warm or cold, which makes it handy to take to potlucks. Although the recipe says this dish takes 30 to 40 minutes to bake, Gladys is uncertain of the amount of time it takes to prepare everything for the oven. "I don't know. I'm retired and I don't have to worry!"

See the back pages for this recipes.

---

**Judy chose a Breakfast Casserole for her Holiday Favorite** dish. Her family does a big breakfast get-together at Thanksgiving. She searched quite a while for a recipe that appealed to her for serving 18 people that day.

**For her All Appetizers dish, Judy made Sausage Stuffed Mushrooms** (see back pages for recipe). This recipe calls for two large Portobello mushrooms. Judy spiced up the recipe by using Jimmy Dean sausages with sage, adding an extra tablespoon of sage, choosing Pepperidge Farm herb stuffing for the bread crumbs, and adding thyme to the recipe. She said it was really easy to make, and really tasted good. Judy improvised by using some ideas from sources like Taste of Home.com and Food Network.com. She also found a version where you



Judy's Breakfast Casserole in its large baking dish covers half her stove top. In the background are two elephant teapots that are part of Judy's elephant collection.

take 20 individual little mushrooms and prepare them the same way. Judy said she thinks anybody would like this recipe.

Elissa remembers making stuffed Portobello Mushrooms (see the notes from our [June 2021 Virtual Cookbook Club meeting](#)) that sounds similar.



Judy's Sausage Stuffed Mushrooms

Judy remarked that she has had a lot of fun and has learned a lot from these sessions because she was always so busy she never had time to experiment with recipes. She used to throw together meals. Gladys agreed that when she and her husband were raising their daughters and working in their full-time careers, she never had time to delve deeply into cooking.

**For Christmas Eve Elissa made a Pecan Crusted Tilapia and Skillet Brussels Sprouts.**

They started having these dishes because Elissa's son-in-law is Polish and he likes to prepare traditional dishes for Christmas Eve. Elissa started pitching in when her grandson was born, and her son-in-law no longer had the time to make all the dishes for dinner. This time, Elissa used flour to dredge the fish in before dipping it in egg and dredging it in a mixture of pecans, bread crumbs and spices. She then the fish in a little butter and olive oil and served it with lemon wedges on the side. The Brussels sprouts are a family favorite. Fresh Brussels sprouts sautéed in bacon grease: "How could you go wrong?" Elissa asked. She added chicken stock, minced garlic, balsamic vinegar, and butter.

**For her All Appetizers dish, Elissa prepared Crab Dip,**

using a family favorite recipe she has been making for many years. She got the recipe from allrecipes.com. Over the years she has tweaked things to suit her family's tastes. For instance, the recipe calls for 2 cans of crab meat. She likes to use 3 cans of crab meat. They also like to make generous use of scallions, rather than using the small onion that the recipe calls for. Although the recipe calls for baking the mixture for 20 minutes, Elissa does not feel this is necessary. She simply refrigerates the mixture so the flavors blend. She also does not bother using a bread bowl, preferring to serve the Crab Dip



Elissa's Crab Dip Ingredients

with a baguette or toasted French bread.



Elissa's Crab Dip

Elissa and her family have this dish sparingly during the year. Lately, Elissa has been preparing it for the family to have along with other appetizers for dinner at her daughter's home on Halloween. Judy and Gladys suggested alternative proteins they could substitute for crab, such as chicken or baby shrimp. Elissa cautioned that there is quite a price difference between "lump" crab meat and "white" crab meat, with lump crab meat being \$3 or \$4 more expensive.

The group discussed the February topic of Bread. After Elissa said she had never baked bread, Gladys told her she will share with the group a great recipe for beginners, No-Knead Bread, that Elissa might like to try. A tip for helping the dough rise in rooms that are not at the optimal 76° that Gladys has learned is to put the bread in the oven with only the oven light turned on. Gladys warned that it takes about 30 hours to make this bread due to the length of time it needs to rise. That reminded Judy of her ill-fated attempt to make bread from frozen bread dough. She set it in pans in front of the fire in the fireplace, and when she came back to it, “it was so hard, even the dogs couldn’t eat it!”



Gladys shared with the group a loaf of No-Knead Bread she had just baked that day. She had hoped Steve, her husband, would have tried it out for supper that day, but “he got into some leftovers.” So she said she would probably use some to make a sandwich for her own supper that night. Joan shared how when she and her husband used to eat bread, they made it at home. When the loaves came out of the oven, it was not long before half of the still-warm bread was eaten. Gladys agreed that the trick is to figure out how not to eat home baked bread all at once.

The group also discussed the *sous vide* method of cooking. Gladys explained it involves cooking ingredients in a water bath, and that *Sous vide* means “with vacuum”. The directions will tell you what temperature to get the water bath to. It usually involves cooking a protein. You put the protein to be cooked inside two ziplock bags with the air pushed out or use one of those vacuum bag sealers. Gladys has tried cooking chicken thighs, pork tenderloin, and frozen lobster tails with this method. This cooking process cooked them perfectly. If you want the meat to be browned, you brown it in seconds after the cooking. It’s not boiling the food. For instance, the lobster tails needed to be cooked in water that was 140° for 45 minutes.



Gladys said chefs in France have been using this technique for cooking for 20 or 30 years. Joan said she and her husband get a half-steer from a local farmer, and some of the cuts, like chuck roasts, are not very tender. She cooks these with the *sous vide* method at 146° for 36 hours, and the meat comes out very tender.

An example of a sous vide cooking unit that hangs on the inside of a large pot or vessel of water for cooking.



**The March Meeting is on Monday, March 7.**

**The April Meeting is on Monday, April 4.**

The theme for the April meeting is Wisconsin Favorites. For this meeting, we will try to think of one or two COOKING FLOPS we have had and share them with the group, just for laughs!

# Esther Proctor's Breakfast Casserole

Gladys always uses Sharp cheddar cheese she grates fresh..

The dry mustard gives it a tangy taste.

Gladys' mom would say you have to use Jimmy Dean brand hot sausage.

*Do not cover to bake*  
 Breakfast Casserole - Esther Proctor  
 8 slices cubed bread  
 1 lb. browned sausage  
 2 C. grated Cheddar  
 1 can mushrooms, drained  
 4 eggs beaten  
 2 1/2 C. milk  
 3/4 tsp. dry mustard } *mix together*  
*over*

1 C. mushroom soup }  
 1/2 C. milk } *Combine*  
 1/4 tsp. salt }

Pour egg mixture over all. Top with soup mixture + refrigerate overnight.

9x13 pan 1 1/2 hours at 300°. Let stand 15 mins. before serving.

**TYPE: Spinach Triangles**

**Spinach Triangles**  
 8 ounces frozen Fillo dough  
 1/2 cup butter, melted  
 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed  
 1 yellow medium-size onion  
 3 tablespoons olive oil  
 8 ounces Feta cheese, crumbled  
 1 tablespoon dried oregano  
 Salt and pepper to taste

*add garlic & mushrooms*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Thaw Fillo dough according to package instructions. Brush a layer of melted butter in a 9-by-13-inch pan. Alternate layers of Fillo dough sheets (dough sheets should slightly overlap to completely cover the bottom of the pan) and melted butter until half of the dough and butter are used. Sauté onion in olive oil. Squeeze excess liquid from spinach and stir in with onions. Combine Feta cheese, oregano, salt and pepper into the spinach mixture. Spread mixture evenly over the prepared Fillo dough sheets. Layer remaining dough and butter over spinach mixture. Bake for 40 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool slightly and cut into triangles. Serves 8 to 10 as an appetizer.

**Tips From Our Test Kitchens:**  
 Carefully adhere to the Fillo dough package instructions. Working with this papery dough takes a bit of practice. Don't fret if your finished product looks a bit messy. It still tastes delicious.

Gladys' Spinach Triangles Recipe (NOT from JoEllen!)

## Crab Dip from allrecipes.com

By Laurie O'Grady

### Ingredients

11 ounces cream cheese, softened

1 small onion, finely chopped [Elissa uses scallions instead of onion]

5 tablespoons mayonnaise

2 (6 ounce) cans crabmeat, drained and flaked [Elissa used 3 cans]

½ teaspoon garlic powder

salt and pepper to taste

1 (1 pound) loaf round, crusty Italian bread [Elissa skips the bread bowl and just serves the dip with French baguette or toasted Italian bread]

### Directions

Step 1

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Step 2

In a medium bowl, combine the cream cheese, onion, mayonnaise, crabmeat, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Spread mixture into a 1 quart baking dish.

Step 3 [Elissa skips baking the dip since the crabmeat is already cooked.]

Bake for 20 minutes in the preheated oven. While the dip is baking, cut a circle in the top of the bread, and scoop out the inside to create a bread bowl. Tear the removed bread into pieces for dipping.

Step 4

Remove baked crab dip from the oven, and stir well. Spoon the mixture into the hollowed out loaf. Place bread bowl and chunks of bread on a medium baking sheet, and bake for an additional 10 minutes. Serve hot.

**This is the recipe Elissa used, with her modifications noted in brackets .**

## Gladys' No Knead Bread recipe link

<https://joyfoodsunshine.com/easy-no-knead-bread/>

Easy Dutch Oven No Knead Bread recipe is made with only 4 ingredients and takes 5 minutes of prep time! If you want to make delicious homemade bread that looks & tastes like it came from a fancy bakery but actually takes very little effort, this dutch oven bread recipe is for you!

I cannot think of a time when I would turn down a slice (or two) of warm homemade bread fresh from the oven (like this homemade french bread - yum). However, I know that some people are intimidated by the idea of making their own bread. Well, you're in luck because this Easy No Knead Bread is the perfect recipe if you want to bake some homemade bread but aren't fully confident in your bread making skills! It's a no knead dutch oven bread that tastes like you slaved for hours - when you really only spent 5 minutes preparing it! This dutch oven bread is incredibly moist and tastes like a less sour, sourdough bread! It is both dense and fluffy at the same time, and is the perfect companion to any meal (like this tortellini soup, vegetable soup, or this kale sweet potato soup)! I seriously make it all the time, because I love that it's prepped the day before and just popped in the oven right before company comes over!

### How to make no knead bread

#### Step 1. Mix together dry ingredients

The first step in making this no knead bread is to mix together the dry ingredients, flour, sea salt and yeast.

#### Step 2. Add Warm Water

Next, add warm water and stir. Be sure the water is around 105 degrees F, anything warmer could kill the yeast and prevent the dutch oven bread from rising.

#### Step 3. Stir

Stir the dough until a sticky ball forms. As you can see in the photo on the right, the dough should hold a ball shape but it will be sticky to the touch, and not very smooth.

#### Step 4. Cover & Let Set overnight

First cover the bowl with greased plastic wrap and wrap the bowl tightly. Then place a damp tea towel over the plastic wrap. Set it in a secure, warm place in your kitchen to rest for at least 18 hours, preferably 24.

#### Form Dough Ball

After 24 hours, the no knead bread should look like the left photo below. The dough will rise in the bowl and have holes in it. Flour your hands and press the dough down. Then use a little extra flour to make the dough into a ball, and cover it to let it rest.

Important note: The dough ball will be loose and "floppy." It will be a little difficult to transfer to the baking pan. That is how it should be as this is a very moist bread which is what makes it so irresistible. So you will not have a firm ball, it will look a little flat (as pictured below).

#### Preheat Dutch Oven & Bake

Right before you pull the dough out of the bowl, place the dutch oven into the oven and preheat it to 450 degrees F. Placing the artisan bread dough into the warm dutch oven results in a golden-brown crispy crust. When the oven is preheated, carefully remove the heated dutch oven from the oven, spray with cooking spray and put the dough inside.

Use a dish with a lid (a Dutch Oven).

This Easy No Knead Bread needs to be baked for 30 minutes covered and 15 minutes uncovered, so a lidded baking dish is critical. I use this Le Creuset 2.75 qt. dutch oven to bake mine, but most round baking dishes with a lid will work.

Cool & Serve.

Once the no knead bread is done baking, remove it from the dutch oven and place it on a wire rack to cool slightly before serving.

**FAQs about dutch oven bread** Here are some frequently asked questions about making this no knead bread recipe!

#### What is the best size Dutch oven for baking bread?

I recommend using a 2 ¾ quart (2.4L) dutch oven to make this bread!

#### How long can you let no knead bread rise?

Let it rise for up to 24 hours overnight at room temperature, or up to 3 days in the refrigerator.

#### Can I use a large dutch oven (5-6 qts)

Yes, many readers (including myself) have had success baking this recipe in a larger dutch oven.

#### Can I double this recipe?

Yes, you can double the ingredients and bake it in a 5-6 quart dutch oven according to the recipe.

Other websites Gladys recommends for no knead bread recipes:

<https://jessicainthekitchen.com/no-knead-bread-dutch-oven-bread/> She says: Did not try this one, but will because it takes a lot less time to rise. The difference is the yeast.

<https://www.bowlfulofdelicious.com/dutch-oven-bread/> Gladys says: Another recipe similar to the first one.