

FOOD FORUM *

Dorothy Johnson

EASTER HAM A-GO-GO

BEDECKED WITH CLOVES, brown-sugared, and baked, ham has worn the same old coat (occasionally spruced up with cherries or pineapple) for many an Easter Sunday, and has endured the humiliation of hand-me-downs (usually in the form of hash) for uncounted Easter Mondays.

The time has come, it seems to us, to accord the festive Easter Ham its deserved flowery tribute and fresh finery. So we will throw away the ham's tired brown coat (and also its whole, baked image) and dress it in colorful Easter frills.

HAM EN CROUTE

1 fully-cooked ham on the bone (12-15lb), 4 (10 oz.) pkgs. pie crust mix, 1 tbsp. thyme, 2 tsp. powdered rosemary, 1/2 tsp. black pepper, 1 c. ice water, 2 egg yolks, 2 tbsp. milk.

Instead of a large ham cooked on the bone, you might prefer to use a 5 lb. canned ham (be sure to scrape off gelatin and fat). If you do use the smaller ham, you will need only half as much pastry.

Skin ham and remove fat covering the surface. In a large bowl, mix 4 (10 oz.) pkgs. pie crust mix with 1 tbsp. powdered thyme, 2 tsp. powdered rosemary and 1/2 tsp. black pepper. Toss lightly with 1 c. ice water. Gently knead to make a pastry dough. Roll out pastry about 1/4 inch thick on large, well-floured board. Place ham in center and wrap it with pastry. Trim off any excess pastry. Moisten edges of pastry, join them, and seal securely.

Roll out additional pastry and cut into decorative shapes. Moisten and place on pastry covered Ham. In a small bowl, beat 2 egg yolks with 2 tbsp. milk. Brush over the pastry. Bake at 370 degrees for 45 minutes to one hour on a large baking sheet.

SNOW-FROSTED HAM

1 (12-15 lb.) fully cooked ham on the bone, 2 (8 oz.) pkgs. softened cream cheese, 1 pt. sour cream, 2 tbsp. prepared horseradish (drained), 2 tsp. celery salt, 1/2 tsp. black pepper, 1/2 c. whole cranberries, 1 (8 oz.) jar sweet gherkin pickles, 1 tsp. coarse crystal salt (optional).

Remove skin from fully-cooked ham on the bone and trim ham neatly. Remove fat. In a large bowl, blend 2 (8 oz.) pkgs. softened cream cheese with 1 pint sour cream until smooth. Stir in 2 tbsp. drained prepared horseradish, 2 tsp. celery salt, and 1/2 tsp. black pepper. Spread mixture all over ham evenly and smoothly.

To decorate, make a large circle on top of ham with whole cranberries. Drain an 8 oz. jar of sweet gherkin pickles, and pat them dry with paper towel. Cut pickles lengthwise in thin strips. Cut leaf shapes from each strip and place a leaf on either side of each cranberry forming a wreath. If you like, sprinkle ham with 1 teaspoon coarse crystal salt. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.

All of these ideas may be adapted to any type of ready-to-eat ham, and any size from 1 to 15 pounds. If you want to frost your ham, or glaze it with aspic or Chand-froid sauce, allow time for ham to chill before decorating it. But a fine ham, like fine wine, should never be freezing cold, neither should it be blazing hot.

GINGER AND HONEY HAM

1 (10-12 oz.) ham fully cooked, 1/4 c. soy sauce, 1 c. honey, 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, 1 tsp. ginger.

Remove skin from ham. Trim evenly with sharp knife and score surface in diamond pattern. Place on rack in roasting pan. In a small bowl, combine 1 cup honey, 1/4 cup soy sauce, 2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce and 1 teaspoon ginger. Brush ham with little of mixture. Bake at 375 Degrees for 20 minutes. Brush again with glaze. Bake 10 minutes--repeat until ham has baked for a total of 1 hour.

COUNTRY HAMS

(Virginia, Smithfield and Kentucky)

It is the custom in some parts of the U.S. to hang hams after special processing for several years, after which time, of course, they

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develop a heavy exterior mold. To prepare such an old ham, soak it in cold water for 24 to 36 hours. Then scrub it well, using a brush and yellow soap, if necessary, to remove mold. Rinse thoroughly and place in kettle of simmering water, skin side down. Allow 20 minutes to the pound until meat reaches an internal heat of 150 degrees.

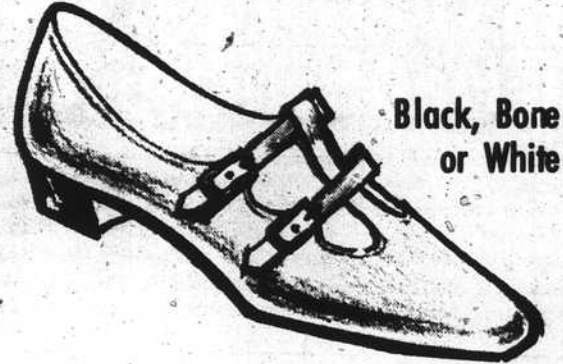
Add to water before last 1/4 hour of cooking time, 1 quart cider and 1/4 cup brown sugar. Drain when cooking time has elapsed. Remove skin while ham is still warm, being careful not to tear the fat. Trim fat partially. Dust ham with mixture of black pepper, cornmeal and brown



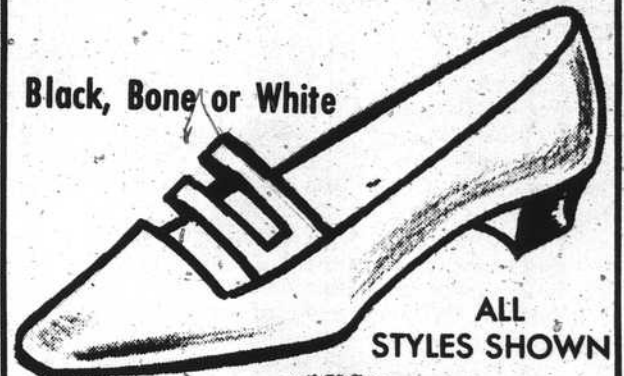
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sugar. Put in a 425 degree oven long enough to glaze it. Serve hot or cold. Be sure to slice very, very thin.

SWEET POTATOES WITH HAM

It was George Washington Carver who really brought attention to the many ways in which this highly nutritious tuber could increase the health of our South. Most common ways to prepare sweet potatoes are mashed, baked, and candied with fruit and marshmallows or with orange juice.

An easy and decorative way to fix them is to mash potatoes with seasonings and place in ice box until cold. Form into balls, and in center of each ball, put a small piece of pineapple or marshmallow. Roll in egg dip, then into rolled cornflakes. Fry in deep fat.