

APPLE MAIN DISHES

When we think of cooking with apples, we tend to think about desserts, like apple pie and apple brown betty. But apples go wonderfully well in main dishes as well. For a delicious, albeit Western-style chicken curry, take a couple of boneless chicken breast halves and slice them into strips. Peel, core and cut a Granny Smith apple into pieces about the size of the first joint on your middle finger. Peel and chop a medium onion.

Heat a skillet over medium heat, and when hot, add a couple of tablespoons of unsalted butter. When the butter is melted and hot, add the sliced chicken breasts, sprinkle with a pinch of salt, and sauté for about 3-4 minutes, until lightly browned. Remove with a slotted spoon and set the breasts aside. Add a little more butter to the pan if needed, and then add the chopped onion and the chopped apple, and sauté for 5 minutes or so, until the onion and apples start to soften.

Sprinkle about a tablespoon of curry powder and a couple of tablespoons of flour over the onions and apples and continue cooking for another few minutes. Add 1 ½ cups of chicken stock, ½ cup of heavy cream, and a couple more pinches of salt. Keep stirring until the sauce thickens and the flour is incorporated in the sauce. Then add the chicken strips back to the sauce and cover, turn the heat down, and simmer for about 10 minutes or so until the chicken is fully cooked and the sauce is thick. This serves three generously.

This is delicious served with some coconut rice. Put a cup of washed long-grain rice in a saucepan with 1 ½ cups of chicken stock. Bring to the boil and add ¼ cup of raisins and ¼ cup dried, shredded coconut. Bring back to the boil, cover, turn the heat down and simmer exactly 17 minutes. Turn the heat off, uncover, and fluff the rice, stirring a couple of tablespoons of butter into the rice as you do.

Lamb and apples are good too. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. In a Dutch oven or other flame-proof covered casserole, heat about 3 tablespoons of bacon fat over medium-high heat and brown about 3 pounds of lamb shoulder, cut into bite-size pieces. Season the meat with some salt and pepper and when browned, remove it from the pot and put it on some paper towels to drain.

Discard all but 3 tablespoons of the fat, and then add 4 onions, peeled and chopped. Cook the onions, stirring often, until translucent. Add 2 tablespoons of flour, ½ teaspoon of celery seed, ½ teaspoon dried marjoram, and ½ teaspoon dried thyme. Return the lamb to the pot and add 2 cups of apple juice. Cover the casserole and put it in the preheated 350 degree oven for an hour.

Meanwhile, peel, core and quarter 6 firm, ripe tart apples, like Granny Smiths. After the lamb has baked for an hour, take it out of the oven and add the apple pieces, stirring well. Cover and return to the oven for another ½ hour of baking. This serves 6.

Or you can make an English pork and apple pie. In a buttered covered casserole, alternate layers of pork, (I like to use boneless pork chops), chopped onions, and peeled apple slices. Sprinkle each layer with a little salt and pepper, some dried oregano, chopped rosemary, and some dried sage. Add about ½ cup of chicken broth, cover, and bake in a preheated 325 degree oven for about 1 ½ hours, until the pork is tender. You may need to add a little more chicken broth during the cooking. Then remove the casserole from the oven, top with mashed potatoes, and brown the casserole under the broiler, watching constantly, until the mashed potatoes start to brown. Don't let them burn. Serve immediately.

Or brown some pork chops in a couple of tablespoons of canola oil in a hot skillet and remove to a plate. Add some peeled apple slices to the skillet and cook, stirring often, until the slices are browned as well. Remove and put them on the plate with the chops. Add some chopped onions to the fat in the skillet and sauté until they start to soften, then add some chicken broth and a couple of tablespoons of ketchup. Stir well, season with salt and pepper, return the chops and apples to the pan, and cook over medium-low heat, covered, for about 10 minutes, until the chops are cooked and the apples are tender. Serve, with some of the sauce poured over. This is Steve Muni for the Hometown Kitchen.