

APPLE MAIN DISHES

Apple Hill's last weekend was last weekend, so if you haven't been there yet you'll have to wait until next year. I went and got my usual supply of different kinds of apples and some apple cider. I also got a frozen peach and apple pie which I baked up and served with really good vanilla ice cream.

While most apple recipes are for baked goods, there are some delicious apple main dishes as well. Here are a few different ideas of things to do with apples. First is a quick apple, cabbage and sausage skillet dinner. You'll need a pound of sausage—and why not get an apple sausage for this? In a large skillet that you can cover, brown the sausage all over in a little oil and when the sausage is cooked, take it out and put it on a plate.

You'll also need 3 Golden Delicious apples. Peel and coarsely grate two of the apples. You'll also need 6 cups of shredded green cabbage. I like to use Savoy cabbage as I think it has a better flavor than regular head cabbage. You'll also need one small onion, peeled and thinly sliced, 1/4 teaspoon of salt, 1/4 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper, 1 tablespoon of cider vinegar, and 2 tablespoons of water.

In the same skillet you used to brown the sausages, pour out any remaining fat and melt two tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add the 3 peeled and coarsely grated apples, the thinly sliced onion, and the six cups of shredded cabbage. Sauté all this for about five minutes. Stir in the 2 tablespoons of water, the tablespoon of cider vinegar and the salt and pepper. Put the sausages on top of the mixture, cutting them in half if necessary. Cover and cook for about 10 minutes until the cabbage is cooked through. Check it once or twice to make sure it's not getting too dry—you may need to add a little water. While the cabbage is cooking, quarter and core the remaining apple. After the cabbage has cooked tender, add the apple quarters to the skillet and cover again and cook for another couple of minutes. Then serve, putting an apple quarter on each plate. Pass the mustard. This serves four.

I also like the combination of chicken and apples. You'll need six boneless and skinless chicken breast halves, 3 leeks, the white part only, cut in half, rinsed well and cut into quarter-inch slices, 3 medium green apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled, cored and cut into chunks about 1 inch on a side, 2 cups of fresh apple cider, 3 cups of chicken broth, 1/4 cup of apple brandy such as Calvados or Applejack, 2 trimmed and finely minced green onions, 1/2 cup sour cream, 3 tablespoons of unsalted butter, 2 tablespoons of flour, and salt and pepper to taste.

In a large skillet over medium heat, bring the apple juice to the boil. Add the chopped apples and sliced leeks and simmer for about 3-5 minutes, until the apples are soft. Remove to a bowl with a slotted spoon and set aside. Raise the heat to high and boil the remaining juice until reduced to about 1/4 cup. Pour into a small bowl and set aside.

Rinse the chicken breasts, pat dry, and sprinkle all over with salt and freshly ground pepper. Lay the breasts in the skillet in a single layer. Pour in the apple brandy and the chicken broth. Cook, partially covered, over medium-low heat for about 10-14 minutes, until the breasts are cooked through. Remove the chicken breasts to a plate and set aside. Increase the heat to high and boil until the liquid is reduced to about 1 1/2 cups and then pour the reduced broth into the bowl with the reduced apple juice.

Add the butter to the skillet over medium heat and when melted, whisk in the flour for a couple of minutes, until bubbly. Whisk in the reserved liquid and bring to the boil, whisking, for about 3 to 5 minutes, until thickened. Essentially you are making a béchamel sauce with the apple juice and chicken broth instead of milk. Reduce the heat to very low and stir in the sour cream. Add the leek and apple mixture to the sauce, stir, and add the chicken breasts back into the sauce. Cook for a couple of minutes until heated through.

This serves 6 and is delicious served with buttered noodles to soak up the tasty gravy. Enjoying apples this fall, this is Steve Muni for the Hometown Kitchen.