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Apple Strudel

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“Appel Strudel”
Foodways

Informant: Logan is my older brother. He is 29 and lives in Logan with his wife and 18-month old son. Logan was always the angel child growing up and was the one who actively involved the younger kids in family traditions and playtime, regardless of his age. He loves to work with his hands and is a talented woodworker, often taking small side jobs building cabinets or entertainment centers. He also is a talented cook, spending a lot of time in the kitchen preparing meals for his friends and family. He has a funny and sarcastic personality, always the one in the family to crack the first joke. He currently works at a small business that manufactures industrial floor cleaners and likes to ride his motorcycle and snowboard on the side.

Context: I was able to interview Logan while he was in the midst of making the strudel while in his apartment in Logan, Utah. It was my dad’s 58th birthday and we always try to celebrate together, since we both live in Logan. My dad passed away 8 years before this and we try to celebrate in some memorable way to remind us of him. Logan is one of the best chefs when it comes to making strudel. He said this was at least his tenth time making it in the last couple years and it seems to get better and better each time. The recipe originates in my dad’s family, my grandma being the expert. My grandma got the recipe from her aunts who got it from their mother. She learned it from them because her mother passed away when she was 8 and hadn’t paid enough attention to the cooking until she was much older. She passed the recipe down to my mom, who passed it to Logan. The strudel originally was made during special occasions in Yugoslavia mainly around Christmas time. Surprisingly the ingredients are quite simple, thus why they were able to make it while living in Yugoslavia but the process is so complex that it was saved for more special occasions. The recipe is very popular in our family, especially my dad before he passed away, and its recipe is claimed to be a family secret. Logan got the recipe on a fresh, clean recipe card as a part of a wedding gift from us sisters. Grandma always said that “knowing how to make our apple strudel is like Italians knowing how make spaghetti.”

Text:

Apple Strudel – TOP SECRET!! – Grandma Kathy DeBry

3 cups flour **Logan would use a little less

1 egg

¾ cup lukewarm water **Logan would use a little more

Sprinkle of salt

1 tsp vinegar
2 ½ tbs oil

Mix ingredients together and knead for 10-15 minutes.

Put in barely warm oven covered with lid for 15 minutes.

Then stretch on floured tablecloth until paper thin.

Cut of thick edges - Peel and slice 11-12 apples. Spread on dough.

Sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon, and melted butter.

Then roll gently (jelly roll fashion).

Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes, continually baste with melted butter.

**these were extra pointers from Logan that are not included on the recipe card

(Left: shows thinness of dough. Top right: Logan’s new recipe card. Bottom right: finished strudel)

**Texture:** Though the recipe gives detailed instructions, there are certain unwritten details that only Logan seems to know because of his experience. The specialty of the strudel is not only
found in the flavor but also in the skill required. The task of stretching the dough to be “paper thin” is not an overstatement or exaggeration, it is mandatory for the strudel to turn out just right. Traditionally the dough is made without a mixer, piled on the counter in a volcano look-a-like with the wet ingredients at the center and then mixed by hand. In recording the folklore and being able to watch Logan knead and stretch the dough was the climax of the whole experience. He had to be especially careful in stretching the dough because if it is torn then the middle doesn’t cook right, since air escapes and the juices can leak, causing the flavor to not be quite as good. (the picture shows the thinness by putting the recipe underneath and you can still read the recipe through the dough). Another important part of the process is rolling it all together, making sure it layers just right. This is done by spreading the dough on a special, cotton kitchen towel, putting the toppings on, and taking a side and lifting so the dough starts rolling onto itself. The strudel is finished when it is all rolled up in one long tube with the sides curved in and placed on a cookie sheet, looking like a lumpy horseshoe. All of the details were freely and excitedly given by Logan as I watched him make it. I could tell he takes pride in his strudel skills and was over-detailed in his instructions, often repeating to make sure that I understood. When stretching it he continued to say, “You’ve got to stretch it. Oh man, look at how thin that is!” over and over again. I could easily tell that he enjoyed making it, especially on his own since the moment anyone would try to help he would kindly take over whatever they were doing. He said this strudel didn’t work quite as well as he had hoped, wanting more caramelized butter on the pan, and didn’t seem as happy at the end as he did throughout it.

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