MCA Nora Burnett Abrams

Best Parties ICON 2010

Maine Getaway Great escape

COLORADO expression

As seen in
S
times “Food is simply fuel to feed a busy life. At other times, it is the foundation for the family table where a shared meal allows us to reconnect and renew our relationships bite-by-bite.” This sums up A Well-Seasoned Kitchen, Classic Recipes for Contemporary Living by Denverites Sally Clayton and Lee Clayton Roper, in which “best-loved meals” have been compiled “for all cooks who cherish creating delicious fare to nourish relationships with family and friends.”

Sadly, Sally Clayton passed away before the book’s publication, but daughter Lee made sure the book honors not only her mother’s many culinary capabilities (Sally owned a food processor and microwave well before most of her contemporaries had heard of them), but her role as hostess extraordinaire as well. The book is testimony that Lee learned mom’s lessons well—she held her first dinner party at 16 and today friends and family often turn to her for answers to their cooking questions.

**SHORT AND SWEET**

Let’s not be stuck in the kitchen while everyone else has fun, say the cooks. To that end, they offer recipes that tend to be reasonably short on ingredients and mostly uncomplicated in technique, yet yummy. One of the Clayton’s favorites, in the Seafood and Fish section, is Baked Shrimp with Tomato, Feta Cheese and Capers, because “all the preparation can be done in advance.” In addition, this is a dish that “works equally well for a large crowd or intimate gathering.” So make it ahead, put it in the oven at dinnertime and go have a glass of wine.

A Camembert Sauté, found in Appetizers, might be a lead-in to a main course featuring Dijon Pork Chops with Green Beans, while Jeanne’s Gazpacho
Perfect Sidecar, right in the Appetizers section—but then, so is Lee’s present-day take on her favorite cosmos.

What’s really nice about this cookbook is its overarching attitude of the importance of sharing a good meal in our lives. Sitting around a dinner table with family, having friends over, getting to know new friends—good reasons for all of us to slow down and enjoy.

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Relleno Casserole—this one’s in the Vegetarian chapter, and yes, it can be assembled the day before. Lee likes desserts she can make ahead of time for entertaining, so she “set out to find a method for making peach pie and freezing it so that the fresh flavor of the peaches is preserved yet the crust doesn’t get soggy after baking.” The result: Palisade Peach Pie, a must when our amazing Western Slope peaches come to market this summer.

MEMORIES PLUS

The author shares vignettes about her parents, and tells how growing up in a household where guests were always welcome gave her the perspective she has today on entertaining—not to mention developing the skills to perfect her mostest-hostess role! Relevant cooking tips are included, too, such as high-altitude directions and practical time-savers. And, remember some of those great cocktails from the days before white wine? Yup, the TO BUY

A Well-Seasoned Kitchen, Classic Recipes for Contemporary Living, $34.95, by Sally Clayton and Lee Clayton Roper, with photography by Laurie Smith and food styling by Erica McNeish, is published by MLC Publishing, Denver. It is available from www.seasonedkitchen.com and at Bookies Bookstore, all three Tattered Cover locations, Compleat Gourmet and other various local shops. A portion of proceeds from sales of the cookbook will be donated to the Alzheimer’s Association Colorado Chapter (www.alz.org/co).