

Get thee stuffed



I just snuck in under the wire.

As I mentioned last month, I've committed to using each month in 2017 to cook one of my favorite dishes that I've never tried cooking before.

It took me most of February to settle on a dish and when I did, it seemed like a no-brainer...how could I have not thought of this one to start?

Stuffed cabbage has been in my family for, well, generations now. My Grandma made it. My Mom made it. And now, I made it...or did I? Read on...

Nothing in my hopes or even dreams makes me think I could ever recapture the magical concoctions of my Grandma. She brought with her the "Old World" recipes from Jewish life in Russia.

I would even be unrestrainedly pleased with myself if I could reach Mom's culinary magic. Alas, to date, I have not had that fortune.

Which is not to say I haven't prepared and enjoyed many of my own cooking efforts. So I was cautiously optimistic about creating this long-time favorite.

There were some challenges, of course, as with any new recipe.

- I had never bought a cabbage before
- I didn't have a Dutch Oven pan
- I wasn't sure if I should be using tomato paste, tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes (I went for sauce)

Fine, small obstacles at best.



Amazon solved the Dutch Oven issue (arrived on Sunday, no less). The internet and Publix solved the cabbage issue (sort of). The rest was up to me.

Of course, I should have suspected, based on my marathon last month (see the attached link above), the "preparation time" was a joke. 20 minutes. Ha! Try peeling and chopping three onions and see how much of your time you've already eaten up.

Whatever. Part of the problem, as usual, is that the recipe is for a family of 39 and I'm single. Okay, slight exaggeration, but as with the 60 Swedish meatballs (60!), this recipe was supposed to produce 13 or 14 stuffed cabbage.

I eat one per meal.

But wait, didn't I tell you that this has been part of family fare forever? Sure enough, as soon as family members heard what I was going to be cooking, they all staked their claims on (at least) one each. Sheesh.

Anyhoo, I got the sauce sauteing, with raisins, which is the proper way (go away all of you others...philistines!). I mixed the meat, crumbs, rice, onions, etc., etc. I boiled the cabbage.

Uh, okay, that's where I had some issues.

Issue one – some of the cabbage leaves shredded as I tried to remove them (too strong for my own good?)

Issue two – related to issue one, I was pretty sure I was running low on leaves.

So...I started packing the early cabbages on the heavy side. Heavy. What do you know, I was right to do so. I ended up having enough “good” leaves for 12 cabbages.

Let me now say something about Dutch Oven pans. OMG.

This sucker should come with a warning to hit the gym before attempting to lift. And that's before you plop 12 stuffed cabbages and a half-gallon of sauce in it. They say cast iron is best for cooking. They don't say it's best for back injuries, too.

Anyway, as with last time, I'm typing this blog before the dish is finished. I'll put my opinion of the taste right after this sentence when I'm done.



Overall, good first effort. Needed a little more cooking time than recipe suggested (or more heat) and could have been a bit sweeter. But...quite serviceable stuffed cabbage!

But for now, let me continue.

Yesterday was elder nieceling day. We did her taxes, we walked, we visited the grandparents. She was excited about my cooking challenge for the year and told me I should choose a different country each month.

After a moment of reflection, I pointed out to her that I appeared to be doing that anyway. First Sweden and then Eastern Europe.

Considering I enjoy a wide variety of cuisine, I think I can adapt my challenge to accomplish both requests – something I enjoy and something from a different country – each month.

And maybe, just maybe, I'll find one that doesn't take half a day to prepare!