



Grandpa George, Baby Isabel & Grammy Antonia ~ Branford, CT., 1938

Grammy Miller's German Sauerbraten

I don't remember my German grandmother as well as Nonna, but I do remember the smells of her small house in New Haven, Connecticut, always pungent with vinegar. She cleaned windows and floors with it, she put it in her large crock of homemade sauerkraut laced with caraway seeds and made me drink a teaspoon every time I visited, saying it was good for the health. She boiled it and made us breathe the vapors because she believed it warded off TB. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, she was out working by the time she was 12 in the baths of that town, where rich Americans came to soak. A wealthy woman from New Haven liked her cooking, and as a result, that family sponsored and brought her to America. On her own, she later brought over her three sisters. People said that in her youth, Antonia Marquis Miller was a real beauty, in that she exhibited the French side of her Alsace Lorraine genes with deep blue eyes and honey-colored hair. Bright and forceful, she attracted George Miller Sr. and they were married some time before the turn of the last century. Your great grandpa was a famous Yale University character and has an entire half page in that university's history. A barber, with an affable and sweet disposition, possessed of a silver tongue that kibitzed and wisecracked while cutting the hair of his regulars and important city and state people, including then Governor Wilbur Cross. But, Pop Miller had a drinking problem and your Grandpa George remembers going to his favorite watering hole more than just a couple of times, pleading with him to come home because supper was on the table. When he painted Antonia's entry, upstairs hall and stairway a flaming glossy Chinese red, daily for two weeks after, he'd knock on the door, throw in his hat and if it came flying out, he had to spend yet another night in one of his barber chairs on Chapel Street. Antonia and George had four children: Isabel, for whom I am named, and Crystal, fraternal twins. Isabel was over six feet tall, was an accountant and resembled her mother with the honey-colored hair and blue eyes. Crystal was only 5 foot two inches, and took after Pop Miller's side, with a long face struck with long, horsey teeth. The last two were boys, Frank B. Miller, born October 13, 1898, and George Fisk born April 17, 1902. Both the girls died of TB, barely over 30, which was common in those days. For the rest

of his life, your Grandpa George Fisk tested positive for TB and was always frightened that he and his family would come down with it. I remember Grammy as a tall, willowy woman, very strong and dominating in nature, with an acerbic persona and crackling voice. She died in the spring of 1943 standing on her feet, fully dressed. Her kidneys shut down. I picked spring flowers for her hand. I wasn't allowed at the funeral which made me angry, as I thought I was certainly mature enough.

Grammy's Sauerbraten has always been a family favorite. It harkens back to what I remember as a child when Dad cooked it, following his mother's recipes exactly. There was always nutmeg seasoned red cabbage and satin-whipped mashed potatoes. Everything got drowned with the rich gravy from that brisket that had been pickling in spices in the garage for a week. With the happy madness of Christmas Day, or any day full of its own brand of madness, it's an easy thing to just put it on the stove and forget it.

1 large rump roast	About 8 bay leaves hand crushed
1 C red wine vinegar	8 whole allspice
2 C red wine	Sprinklings of cinnamon, cloves
Some water	A bit of salt
3 Tbs. Brown sugar	1 cup very strong coffee - you can use (Instant or save the morning's dregs)
1 C dried prunes, raisins and apricots	
1 large onion (pearl onions added later)	1 T black pepper corns

The gravy and the pearl onions:

3 beef bouillon cubes or 1 heaping Tb of Better than Beef Bouillon
2-3 Tbs Arrowroot whisked into a small amount of strained juice
2 baskets of pearl onions, boiled then skinned

Rump roast is an excellent, economical meat. Place in a large iron kettle with all the spices and make sure the meat is totally immersed. Put in the winter cold garage, or the bottom of the fridge for one week. Christmas Day, or whatever day, simply put it on the stove on WARM for about four and a half hours. Do not overcook as you want it to slice in firm, but tender slabs. Remove meat from the pot and set aside. Put two baskets of pearl onions, with skins, into boiling water for five minutes. You can do this at any time. Cut the tops and bottoms off and squirt them out in a glass bowl for later. Strain all the juices from the sauerbraten into another pan. Pour in ice to freeze fat, then, skim/rake it off. Throw it out with all the rest of the herbs and spices. Remove one cup of the thin gravy and mix this with 2-3 tablespoons of Arrowroot thickening. Arrowroot is a health food herb, and is similar to corn starch, except for its benefits, which I've forgotten. The family always used it in gravies because it makes a satiny, non-fattening product. Heat the gravy, and slowly stir in the Arrowroot combination using a whisk. Add water to increase the amount of gravy if necessary, the beef bouillon cubes, or Better Than Beef moist bouillon. Microwave the onions for four minutes. Cut the meat in thin slices, and place in a glass serving dish. Add the gravy, onions, cover and keep warm until ready to serve the dinner. Can zap in the micro. Place, steaming on a large serving platter. Serve with loads of mashed potatoes and red cabbage. Serves 10 to 12.

RED CABBAGE: core and shred one head of red cabbage. Par boil for 7 minutes. Throw out water. In a frying pan, saute one chopped onion and 3 or 4 slices of bacon. Using a scraper, transfer into a saucepan, include bacon drippings, adding about 2/3 cup vinegar (white or cider) 1 tb sugar, brown sugar, salt and Splenda to taste. Boil and breathe the fumes - it's good for the lungs! Add water if necessary to dilute the vinegar tartness. Pour over the cabbage. Shake in nutmeg and toss. You can make this the day ahead because it needs time to pick up the bacon, vinegar and bacon tastes. It microwaves and freezes well. Mashed potatoes can also be made ahead.

