

Simply Southern

Make these Southern dishes without the wait

BY GREG MORAGO
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You don't need to be from the South to know that Southern cooking can be time-consuming. All that stewing, simmering and baking can't be rushed for palates that appreciate authentic down-home flavors and techniques. Even the movie "My Cousin Vinny" features a memorable scene about grits: "No self-respecting Southerner uses instant grits." Southern cuisine isn't hurried.

Still, not all Southern flavors are accomplished by long turns at the stove.

Rebecca Lang, contributing editor for Southern Living, knows that it's entirely possible to make mouth-watering Southern meals that don't require hours in the kitchen.

That's the thrust of her cookbook, "Quick-Fix Southern, Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less" (Andrews McMeel, \$16.99), which promises jiffy great-tasting, from-scratch meals without sacrificing flavor.

"I am the mother of two young children, a wife, a working woman, a daughter, a friend, a sister, a volunteer and it seems any other role that needs filling. Needless to say, I know the necessity of a busy weeknight supper," Lang writes.

"Between bath times, deadlines, homework, sports and supper, putting a meal on the table you can be proud of is an art all in itself."

All of Lang's time-saving tips and recipes are in her cookbook. As someone who enjoys cooking, Lang also is aware that cooks need to get a good meal out so they can "attend to all the other 8,000 things" they need to do. Sound familiar?

SWEET-POTATO BISCUITS

1/2 cup buttermilk
2 (6-ounce) jars sweet potato baby food
4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the counter and your hands
2 tablespoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.

Stir together the buttermilk and baby food in a small bowl and set aside.

Combine the flour, baking powder, salt and butter in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the

metal blade.

Pulse 7 times or until the butter is cut into very small pieces.

Add the buttermilk mixture and process until the dough comes together, about 15 seconds.

Sprinkle some flour on the countertop.

Turn the dough out onto the floured counter.

Flour your hands well and pat the dough to about 3/4-inch thick.

Cut the biscuits with a floured 3-inch round cutter.

Flour the cutter again before cutting each biscuit.

Place the biscuits, about 1 inch apart, on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 16 to 18 minutes, or until slightly browned.

Makes 13-15 biscuits

CHICKEN AND WILD RICE CASSEROLE

1 rotisserie chicken
3 cups cooked long-grain and wild rice or 2 (8.8 ounce) packs ready-to-serve long-grain and wild rice, cooked according to package directions

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
3/4 cup diced red onion
1/4 cup diced celery
1 (8.5 ounce) can quartered artichoke hearts, drained
1 cup sour cream
1/2 cup chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 1/2 teaspoon curry powder

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray 7-inch-by-11-inch baking dish.

Remove the skin from the chicken and pull the meat off the bone.

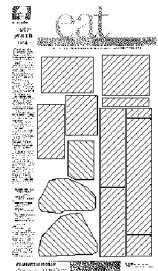
Use your fingertips to shred the meat by pulling it apart in strips.

Place the meat in a large mixing bowl.

Add rice.

Heat the butter over medium heat in a small frying pan.

Add the red onion and celery



and cook for 5 minutes, stirring often.

Stir the onion and celery, artichoke hearts, sour cream, chicken broth, salt, pepper and curry powder into the chicken.

Spoon into the prepared baking dish.

Bake for 30 minutes. (Can be topped with grated cheese before going into oven.)

