

GRANDPA'S HACKSAW GRAVY ~ from Guy Davis

My grandpa's name was Ed Wallace. He was my mom's dad. Back in the 1930s, after being fired from a job, he took the name of his dead brother, Marshall Wallace, who had just been killed by the mob after not throwing a prize fight. He came back and replaced himself on the job he had just been fired from. He might not have been a law breaker, but he ran with a crowd that bent it pretty far.

Marshall Edward Wallace eventually became a Pullman car waiter and cook on a train that ran back and forth between New York and Cleveland.

He would tell my sisters and me stories about his Pullman runs, and how the kitchen crew had to keep things moving. They'd have to come up with meals sometimes in a hurry, so they would look in the refrigerator and scout around for stuff. Whatever food was left over, trimmed, picked off, cut off, pulled out, boiled down, burned, or otherwise not quite right for a dish, the crew would say, 'Put it in the gravy.' And that, with a little bit of Gravy Master, is what my grandfather did."

The fact is, gravy is probably one of the simplest things he made for dinner. But oh you could taste the love in it, bits and all! The stories he told are what made it great. There was no easy telling exactly what was in it. Sometimes the gravy was thin and easy flowing. Sometimes it was so thick with onions, and corn, and giblets and scrapings that you could hide a hacksaw blade in it, which would you be a good thing if Grandpa ever got locked up and needed a way out.

Every brown gravy recipe is basically a version of a simple pan gravy. The one big difference is, and folks will argue this, when making a brown gravy it is cooked in the pan that the meat was cooked in. The best gravy comes when you gather the beef fat and drippings, it's the beginning. Yes, you can make it with just about any form of fat and a good, canned beef stock, but it just won't be as tasty.

After you cook your roast or other beef, pour all the drippings and fat into a measuring cup or bowl. Be sure to scrape as many browned bits left in the pan as possible with the mix. We're looking for 4 Tablespoons of fat AND 2 cups of juices here. Don't worry if you don't get that much, it's the ideal. You can still get a hearty flavor from as little as a tablespoon of fat and an 1/8 cup of the juices.

- Measure out 4 Tablespoons of beef fat. If you don't have that much, add enough vegetable oil or canola oil to make 4 tablespoons.
- Pour that into a small saucepan over medium heat and cook until it shimmers.
- Add four Tablespoons of flour and stir. The flour will soak up the oil quickly and turn into a paste. This is a good thing.
- Keep stirring until the flour smells nutty and has turned a nice rich brown color.
- Now comes the good part. Grab a whisk and start stirring. Pour in about 1/2 cup of the reserved juices and whisk until smooth. Then pour in the rest and stir to combine.
- Bring your gravy to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 2 minutes. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper in small amounts until it's seasoned enough for you.
- As a final and optional touch, add a Tablespoon of butter just before serving. This gives the gravy a little glow and makes it just a little silkier.

Prep Time: 5 minutes Cook Time: 10 minutes Servings: 8 1/2 cup servings

BONUS RECIPE

Bisquit Gravy

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 cups milk

Directions :

- Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
- Whisk in the flour, salt and pepper until smooth.
- Cook and stir over medium heat until browned, about 10 minutes.
- Gradually stir in milk so that no lumps form, and continue cooking and stirring until thickened.
- If the gravy becomes too thick, you may thin it with a little more milk.

Prep: 5 minutes

Cook: 15 minutes

6 servings