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THE RUBBER BAND DOOR KNOB

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Customized
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INDUSTRY NEWS



American Culinary Federation
Windy City Professional
Culinarians, Inc.

ACF Windy City Professional Culinarians, founded in Chicago in 2003, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for more information.

A Home-cooked Meal

Holy Crap! I have reached the stage in my life where I need glasses to read everything and, I have to remind myself to bring them with me everywhere. When I went to dinner the other night, I played it cool in front of the family and said, "I always order, so why doesn't someone else order for the table tonight?" In reality, I couldn't see a damn thing on the menu and didn't know what I was ordering anyway. My eldest son, who is soon leaving for college, picked up the menu and ordered for us. His choices were exactly what I would have ordered. He chose some dishes we could share and seasonal flavors, which were imaginative and appropriate for us. I was really proud that he knew a lot about food and that his scope of knowledge wasn't limited to nationally recognized fast food chains or the freezer aisle at the local grocery store.

After his first couple of days of school, I asked him what the meals were like and the words that stuck in my head were "We had chicken pieces that I don't know what part of the animal they came from!" I wanted to say to him, I bet you are ready for a home-cooked meal. It was then I just wanted to kick myself in the shins. What a "stereotypical" pathetic answer! What does that really mean? I can see mom in the apron making a roast beef, glasses of milk around the table and dad and his longneck brew by his side. How far from reality is that image?

Dinner in the modern world is now more a function than an experience. From drive-thrus, to delivery, to frozen and shelf stable foods and a million other ways to put food on the table because the rest of our lives are in the way of sitting around the table. The thought of a home-cooked meal is more of a memory than a reality. Reportedly, Kraft Foods did a survey of home cooks about what "homemade" really means. The surveys resulted that adding water to a packet mix or the combining of two packets is considered "homemade." Is this what we have become?

As a chef, this is pretty hard to swallow. I have always prided myself in that fact that we set the table every night of the week and eat together as a family. Even if we order takeout, we still sit at the table and eat off plates. We are not the norm because cooking a different meal every night



Recipes, reviews and resources for everything food and dining in the Chicago area. [Check out](#) what's happening this week.



Check out this great magazine, [Four](#).



Eater is the source for people who care about dining and drinking in the nation's most important food cities, like Chicago. A favorite of industry pros and amateurs alike, Eater has an uncanny knack for finding out what's opening where, who's serving what, and how it's all going down. Find out [what's new](#) in Chicago.

was something I did, not a master plan. When I wanted to work on a recipe, what I cooked is what they ate for dinner. They have seen everything from pig heads and squab feet to kidneys. In doing so, I was creating a series of memories of what sitting around a table with your family meant. What a "home-cooked" meal really means. It is not what you eat; it is why you put food on the table. Yes it maybe macaroni and cheese out of the "blue box" but, having it together and sharing the conversation without the distractions of our lives is a special time of the day. The effort you put into a meal is the most important part, don't dial it in and think the food will sell itself. Taking an extra few minutes to take it out of the carton and present it on nice china goes a long way. It is making it a special moment that is "homemade" with love and passion.

Wanting to ask my son if he's ready for a "home-cooked meal" wasn't about the hours spent cooking a particular dish. It was about the experience of serving food to people who I want to be with, what it means to be part of a family and to have friends that you truly care about.

For those of you who have sent your kids off to school and for those who haven't yet, each of you will have that lump in the stomach and a tear in the eye the day you drop them off. That will all go away the day they come home and they sit at your table and say, "I am so happy to be home and to have a home-cooked meal."

By the way, one of our favorite special meals is:

- Roast Beef
- Yorkshire Pudding
- Roasted Potatoes
- Brussels Sprouts
- Mashed "Swede"
- Carrots
- Minted Peas
- Gravy

Pretty British but something that ties us together as a family.

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

ADD-ONS

If you ever find this in a gourmet store, it will give you the taste of a typical English dinner.



The Chicago Beer Society was founded in 1977 as a nonprofit educational association dedicated to the appreciation of beer. They are one of the country's oldest, largest and respected beer organizations. Learn more at chibeer.org.



Everyday this was served with dessert in my boarding school and was the reason I wanted to have a meal at home that didn't taste like starch



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