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Cooking Like Mamaw: A Guide to Cooking Biscuits and Gravy, Boston Roast  
with Brown Gravy, and Blackberry Cobbler



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*My mamaw had eleven children. She cooked for her family nearly every day for over 50 years. Once her babies were all grown, my dad bought her a restaurant in LaFollette, Tennessee so that she could keep doing what she loved—cooking. The restaurant was aptly called Momma’s Place and stayed in business for about 10 years. I was lucky enough to learn some of her recipes.*

*Dedicated to Betty ‘Mildred’ Welden (1925-2017)*

We all know the saying “there ain’t nothing like momma’s cooking.” Well, I’m going to be honest, my mom was never really able to cook well. I mean, she could make peanut butter fudge that was to die for but everything else just seemed bland in comparison to my mamaw’s

food. (Lord help me if my mamma ever reads this.) I grew up in LaFollette, a small town in Tennessee with a population of 6,000 people. Everybody knew everybody. I lived within walking distance of my mamaw's house. I would sneak out on Friday nights and walk across the street to *help* my mamaw cook supper. I say *help* because I mainly just followed her around the kitchen, clumsily bumping into her, asking questions like "What's that?" "How much of that are you using?" "Can I do that?" She never got angry with me or told me to leave her alone. I think she was secretly happy that someone had finally taken an interest in learning her recipes. This tradition carried on for years until I eventually moved to Johnson City for college in 2015. Mamaw passed away earlier this year so I decided to keep her spirit alive by sharing a few of her best recipes: biscuits and gravy, roast with brown gravy, and blackberry cobbler.

Before we start, it's important that you know a few things about southern cooking. For one, cast iron skillets are a necessity. If you don't own one, it's time to go out and buy one. Amazon, Walmart, and Target carry quality cast irons for about \$20. Caring for your cast iron takes some knowledge. You'll want to season the skillet before you use it. (Even if it says that it is pre-seasoned, you'll still want to season it for extra protection.) This process creates a barrier and protects the metal from rusting and sticking. To season it, begin by heating it on the stovetop on a high temperature until it begins to smoke. Then, apply oil (vegetable, peanut, or canola) and rub it all over the surface of the pan. Let it cool and you're good to go! Wash it after every use, but never let it soak. Re-season your pan after every wash.

Also, there are a few ingredients in these recipes that are uniquely southern. In the biscuits and gravy recipe, it calls for bacon grease. Almost every southerner in the world has a coffee cup of cold, hardened bacon grease stored away in their fridge for recipes like this one. I suggest collecting your bacon grease in advance. (You can always fry a batch of bacon before

making gravy if you need to.) And mason jars. I can't tell you how many mason jars that I have lying around my kitchen. I use them in the following recipe to roll out and cut biscuit dough. You could just as easily use a rolling pin and a biscuit cutter. And lastly, the Boston Roast with Brown Gravy recipe calls for a cut of Boston Butt Roast. I usually use a 3lb-5lb cut depending on how many people I'm feeding. A good rule of thumb is one pound per person. Boston Butt is fatty which results in a tender, juicier roast. If you can't find this specific cut of meat at your grocery store, you can try substituting a different kind of roast.

\*Disclaimer: Measurements have been changed from southern terms like "bitty" and "heapfuls" into universally known measurements like "tbsp" and "cup." Some authenticity has been lost as a result of conversion.

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## Homemade Biscuits and Gravy

When you think of southern food, biscuits and gravy is sure to come to mind. This simple breakfast dish was one of the first things that I learned how to make. The biscuits are buttery and fluffy. The gravy is salty and savory; you can use chunks of bacon or sausage to give it a little something extra. Gravy can be a little temperamental so it may take a few tries before mastering it, but I can guarantee that it's worth the effort.



### What You'll Need

- Cast iron skillet
- Mason jar with lid
- Whisk
- Mixing bowl
- Basting brush

For the biscuits:

1. Preheat oven to 400° Fahrenheit. Coat cast iron skillet with Crisco™ and place skillet in oven to heat.
2. Place buttermilk, flour, and melted butter in mixing bowl and mix thoroughly with wet hands.
3. Cut cold butter into small cubes and *fold* into mixture.

## INGREDIENTS

Yields 8-10 biscuits

Total time: About 35 minutes

For the biscuits:

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 cups self-rising flour
- ½ cup cold butter
- ¼ melted butter
- salt and pepper
- butter flavored Crisco™

For the gravy:

- 8 tbsp of bacon grease
- ¼ cup of all-purpose flour
- salt and pepper
- crumbled bacon or sausage  
(optional but highly recommended)

4. Roll mixture out on a flat, floured surface using the sides of your mason jar. Sprinkle with flour to keep from sticking.

5. Cut biscuits using the lid of your mason jar.

6. Remove skillet from oven. Place dough on skillet, leaving space between each biscuit. Brush with melted butter.

7. Bake for about 20 minutes or until golden brown. Brush with remaining melted butter before serving.

For the gravy:

1. Place skillet with bacon grease on stove-top on medium to high heat.

2. Gradually add in flour and mix with whisk. Continue mixing until mixture turns a warm brown.

3. Gradually add in milk until you achieve desired consistency then remove from heat.

4. Salt and pepper to taste. Stir in bacon crumbles (optional).

5. Serve over warm biscuits.

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## Boston Butt Roast with Brown Gravy

This next recipe is my all-time favorite. My mamaw would call me every time she made roast and brown gravy. I would run up to her house as soon as we got off the phone, and she would have a plate ready for me. She would serve it with “kilt” lettuce (a uniquely southern dish consisting of wilted lettuce and onions)

and mashed potatoes—it was heavenly. This entrée takes minimal effort. Pass on the store bought gravy (mamaw would be rolling in her grave at the idea) and follow the simple recipe below. This recipe is perfect for date night or supper with the ‘rents.

### What You’ll Need

Whisk

Sauce pan

Dark baking pan (17inx12in)

Aluminum foil

Knife

### INGREDIENTS

Total time: 4-6 hours

Serves: 3-5 people

For the roast:

bulb of garlic

salt and pepper

olive oil

3lb-5lb Boston Butt roast

For the gravy:

2 cups of roast drippings

3 tbsp of cornstarch (or as needed)

2 tbsp of margarine

salt and pepper



For the roast:

1. Preheat oven to 300° Fahrenheit.
2. Cut 6-8 slits into roast. Push whole, peeled garlic cloves in each slit. Rub roast with olive oil. Salt and pepper to taste.
3. Line pan with aluminum foil. (Don't use a super shallow pan.) Place roast into pan and cover tightly with aluminum foil.
4. Cook for 4-6 hours turning roast half way through.

5. Remove from oven. Drain drippings and set aside. Let rest.

For the brown gravy:

1. Place sauce pan on stove top on medium-high heat.
2. Add roast drippings, beef broth, and margarine to sauce pan and bring to boil.
3. Whisk in cornstarch until desired consistency is achieved. (I like my gravy a little on the runny side.)
4. Salt and pepper to taste.
5. Serve over roast.

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## Blackberry Cobbler

Last, but certainly not least, is my mamaw's recipe for homemade blackberry cobbler. I'm a strong believer that no meal is complete without dessert. My family lived on about 80 acres of farm land until I was 12 years old. We had wild blackberry bushes scattered throughout several fields. During the summer, my mamaw would send us (my five siblings and me), out to pick bushels upon bushels of blackberries so that she could make jam and cobbler. Many people don't know this— blackberry bushes are excellent hiding spots for snakes. My momma used to get so mad when we went on these adventures, but she loved mamaw's blackberry cobbler so she would let us go anyway! If you can't get your hands on fresh blackberries, store bought are fine. Serve this by itself or with a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream. Enjoy!

### What You'll Need

Dark baking pan (9"x13")

Mixing bowl

Sauce pan

Large spoon

## INGREDIENTS

Total time: 45 minutes

Serves 8-10 people

For filling:

3 cups blackberries (not frozen)

½ cup melted butter

1 cup sugar

1 tbsp cornstarch

For crust:

1½ cups all-purpose flour

½ cup cold butter, cubed

1 tbsp baking powder

2 tbsp vanilla extract

1 cup milk

½ cup sugar



For the filling:

1. Place blackberries, melted butter, sugar, and cornstarch in sauce pan.
2. Turn heat to medium-high. Bring to a boil.
3. Continue stirring until mixture thickens then remove from heat.

For the crust:

1. Preheat oven to 375° Fahrenheit. Spray pan with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Mix together flour, sugar, and baking powder.
3. Gradually pour in milk and vanilla extract while mixing.
4. Fold cubed butter into mixture.
5. Divide dough into two part and flatten with hands on floured surface.
6. Place one half of dough onto baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes.
7. Remove from over. Pour in blackberry mixture and cover with remaining dough.
8. Brush with butter and bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown.