



COW COUNTRY COOKING

Recipes and Tales
from Northern Arizona's
Historic Ranches

By Kathy McCraine
Paintings by Mark Kohler
Photography by Kathy McCraine



Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	8
Introduction	9
1. Beginnings: Light Soups, Salads, and Appetizers	12
2. Meat and Game	32
3. Hearty Soups, Chilis, and Stews	62
4. Pot-Racks, Dutch Ovens and Pit Cooking	84
5. Fish and Fowl	102
6. Vegetables and Side Dishes	122
7. Breads and Breakfast	142
8. Desserts	164
Index to Paintings	188
Index to Recipes	189



Wagon cook Tim Goldsmith cooking up a pot of Beef Stroganoff for lunch at the O RO Ranch bunkhouse during fall shipping at headquarters. Like many wagon cooks, he doesn't use recipes.

“Really, I think these cowboys would be happiest if I just cooked steak, a pot of boiled beans, and some type of bread. They would be pleased as punch to eat that three meals a day.” – Lenny McNab, O RO Ranch Wagon Cook, 2006.

Beef Stroganoff

1½ pounds beef sirloin, cut in thin strips
1 large onion, halved and sliced thin
1 pound mushrooms, sliced
¼ cup olive oil, plus 3 tablespoons
Flour for dusting meat
Paprika
⅔ cup white wine
1 10-ounce can beef broth
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup sour cream

In a 4-quart Dutch oven, sauté onion and mushrooms in ¼ cup olive oil, stirring frequently, until well cooked and browned, about 20 to 30 minutes. While cooking, dust meat with flour and season generously with paprika. Fry meat in about 3 tablespoons oil in a medium skillet, until browned all over, then deglaze pan with the wine and cook several minutes. Add meat mixture to Dutch oven. Stir in broth, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer, covered, about 30 minutes. Stir in sour cream and cook until heated through. Serve over rice or noodles. Serves 4 to 6. – *Kathy McCraine*



A Calming Effect

Drew Timmons is a bit of a conundrum. At first glance you wouldn't think he'd make a hand at all. Quiet to a fault, Drew doesn't have a commanding presence. He doesn't look as if he could ride his horse string or drag Pitchfork cattle from the brushiest hell you could imagine. He doesn't look like he could circle the rough country on the O RO Ranch, high or low. But if you thought all this, you would be damn wrong. I'm not sure if it's his tone or the wire rim glasses, or his size, but Drew has that quiet calming effect on cowboys, horses and artists. I finally met his father, Clay, and I know where it comes from. Drew is a good man and a solid worker, just like his father. – Mark Kohler

Recollections

Margie's Bad Roast Lee Pehl, Arizona Cowboy

I remember one time we were shipping at Rose Wells on the Diamond A's, and Margie Fancher was cooking. She was big and tough and mean. Anyway, between the bosses, their friends, the vets, and the crew, she was feeding about 30 men. That day the company had sent 20 pounds of meat to feed everybody, and it was packed in big sacks. To tell the truth, it looked pretty slimy, but Margie cooked it up.

They had timed it so everybody would eat in shifts so we could keep working, and Brad Mead and I were the first to eat. Margie cut us off two chunks of meat, and we went outside the tent to eat.

One bite and I said, "Goddang, Brad, I think this meat is bad! What are we gonna do? Do you wanna tell her?"

"Hell no, I don't wanna tell her."

"Well maybe, Brad, maybe we just chewed too much tobacco today. There's no way she cooked a bad roast."

So, we just forgot about it and went back to work without telling anybody. I guess nobody said a word until the owners ate last. That night we came in, and I thought Margie was going to kill us.

"Why didn't you sorry sonofabitches tell me my roast was bad?"

Well, we didn't know which was worse. We knew we were going to get chewed out either way.

O'Haco Tacos

Many years ago, northern Arizona cowboy Leroy Reynolds gave Karen O'Haco this recipe that he learned from Mexican vaqueros. For the past 25 years, the entire O'Haco family has enjoyed these tacos. Let everyone cook their own and this quickly becomes a party!

4 pounds top sirloin or sirloin tip roast
24 green chiles, roasted, peeled and seeds removed
1 container squeezable butter
1 jar garlic salt with parsley
24 slices cheddar cheese
24 corn tortillas

Have your butcher slice the roast into thin slices about the thickness of bologna. Spray grill with Pam or olive oil, close lid and let warm on medium heat for a few minutes until hot. Use one side of the grill for the meat and the other side for the tortillas. Place meat on the grill and season with garlic salt. Place tortillas on grill and spread generously with butter to keep them from getting dry. Add a slice of cheese and a green chile to each tortilla and heat until the cheese melts. Sear meat on both sides, and when done, place a slice on each tortilla. Add more garlic salt if desired and eat immediately. Serves 8 with 3 tacos per person.

– Karen O'Haco, Chevelon Butte Ranch

Travis Shipp dragging calves at Jones Tank during the O RO Ranch spring wagon.





Hearty Soups, Chilis, and Stews

Scooter's Backbone Stew

This is a recipe our dear friend Scooter Robison of Fredericksburg, Texas, used to cook a lot on trips to Arizona, hunting deer and elk at the ranch. Scooter died of cancer in November of 2009, but left behind a legacy of great cooking.

10 thick pork rib chops
Garlic powder, onion powder, red pepper and salt
6 or more tablespoons oil
3 large onions, chopped
1 bell pepper, chopped
½ pod garlic, cloves peeled and minced
3 10-ounce cans chicken broth
2 tablespoons concentrated beef broth

Roux

3 tablespoons flour
3 tablespoons oil

Season the pork chops generously with the garlic powder, onion powder, red pepper and salt. In a 7-quart heavy Dutch oven, brown the meat in oil. Remove the chops from the pan and add the onions, bell pepper and garlic. Cook down until very dark brown, stirring frequently, about 45 minutes. Add water if needed. Add chicken stock, return chops to pot, and simmer 3 hours. In another small pan, make a roux with the flour and oil (See page 47), and add to the pot, along with the concentrated beef broth. Serves 10. – *Scooter Robison*

Recollections

Voodoo Magic at the RO's **Mike McFarland, Former O RO Cow Boss**

We had one real bad cook at the RO's back in the 1960s. One time we were at Mahon fixin' to trail the cattle out of there and move to Francis Creek, and I asked him to bring us dinner on the move. He got so flustered moving camp that for dinner that night we had split pea soup and cobbler made with saltine crackers for a crust and cherry pie filling.

It got so bad that I got up one morning where we were camped at Jolly fixin' to ship, and found a carved doll hanging from the tent with the cook's name carved in it and a knife through its heart. I decided right then to send him down the road before things got any worse, so I got everybody together and said, "If you want me to get rid of him, you'll have to take turns at cooking." We only had about two weeks to go on the wagon, so that's what we did.

(Opposite) It was a cold, windy miserable day on the Cataract Plains when this shot was taken. Babbitt Ranches cowboys were gathering yearlings near Tin House Camp, and a March storm was coming. They had trailered out that morning to the far end of the pasture, so when the calves were gathered, some of them left their horses hobbled, jumped in a pickup and went back to get the trucks and trailers. It wasn't long before the cowboys that were waiting for them to get back jumped in my truck to get out of the cold while I was shooting pictures out the window.



Recollections

New Chaps for Aaron

Rick Ferguson, O RO Wagon Cook

We had a kid at the O RO wagon named Aaron Berry that started out as a “hood,” before Pat Cain (cow boss) let him wrangle horses. He couldn’t ride or handle a horse at first, but he stayed with it, hooding and wrangling horses, worked like a dog too. I made him his first pair of chaps, but I made them out of latigo leather, so stiff you couldn’t bend it. I should have made batwings, but I made shotguns as a joke, and he couldn’t bend his leg at all.

One real cold morning when we were camped at Number Two, he went to get on his horse and he had to lead him up to the water trough to get on with those chaps. It was a little horse called Banjo, and I guess the chaps scared him. When Aaron got on, he broke and ran, and Aaron had never been on a horse that did anything like that. Banjo started bucking with him and threw him off in the fence corner, rolled him right up, and them old chaps just sticking right straight up in the air. My god, it was funny.

Wagon Goulash

3 pounds beef, cubed
2 tablespoons cooking oil
1 teaspoon salt
1 14-ounce can mushroom soup

Brown beef in cooking oil in the open Dutch oven. Add salt and the can of soup. Place lid on oven and cook over low fire one hour, adding water as needed. – *Rick Ferguson, ORO Wagon Cook, 1993*



When the O RO crew is “nooned out” somewhere far from camp, the cook brings lunch out in the “hood wagon.” In 1993, when this photo was taken, it was an old Dodge Powerwagon, probably vintage 1940s. Today’s hood wagon isn’t that old, but it’s still an old beater.

Greasy Texas Fried Steaks

This was a favorite of the crew on the O RO Ranch wagon when Rick Ferguson was cooking in 1993. In his words: “You cut up round steak. soak it in vinegar, flour it and fry it in a bunch of grease, maybe with a little Worcestershire sauce sprinkled in.” – *Rick Ferguson, O RO Wagon Cook*

Guadalupe Chili Pie

2 pounds ground beef
1 medium onion, chopped
1 tablespoon margarine
1 15-ounce can chili beans
½ teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
2 6-ounce packages cornbread mix
2 eggs
⅔ cup milk

Brown beef and onion in margarine in an open Dutch oven. Add beans, chili powder, salt and tomato sauce, cover oven, and cook 15 minutes over fire. Mix the cornbread as directed with the eggs and milk, and add to top of the beef mixture. Place lid on oven, place coals on top and bottom, and cook 20 to 30 minutes, until cornbread is browned. – *Rick Ferguson, O RO Ranch Wagon Cook, 1993*

(Right) Cowboy Rick Ferguson agreed to cook at the O RO wagon in 1993 because it paid better than cowboying. He turned out to be one of the better cooks they had.

