



DISHING IT UP WITH DANA

Timeless Classics Include Cocktails & Soup

Potato and Southwestern Steak Soup is an easy, healthy, good meal with a little “zing”

Column and photos by Dana Rady, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association

Recently, my uncle and godfather, Dan Stefferud, visited from California. In one of our conversations, we started talking about timeless classic cocktails, the ones we don’t hear ordered very frequently these days.

A retired pilot for Delta Airlines, Uncle Dan told me that Manhattans were a favorite of his father-in-law, my paternal grandfather, and blackberry brandy was my paternal grandmother’s “go to.” (I had known about the blackberry brandy!)

He also told me about a fellow pilot back in the day whose drink of choice was a vodka gimlet. I had heard of a gimlet before but never tried one.

A simple concoction of vodka (or gin) over ice and a splash of Rose’s Sweetened Lime Juice is the ingredient list, modest, yet also elegant. “And the lime juice has to be Rose’s brand,” my uncle assured.

So, over a couple games of pool that night in my parents’ basement, I had my first vodka gimlet, and my uncle had his first one in years as we laughed and reminisced.

That’s when I shared memories of my dad coming home from working at his dental office and making himself a dirty gin or vodka martini.

I vividly recall stealing the alcohol-soaked olives out of his timeless classic only for him to turn around and “scold” me for taking his beloved garnish. He would replace the olives as I stole them again the moment he wasn’t looking. It was a special game we played.

Fast-forward several decades to when Eric and I got married, and I learned that not only does my father-in-law like martinis with olive juice, but so does his youngest son.

Below: When Dana Rady’s uncle and godfather, Dan Stefferud, visited from California, they laughed and reminisced over a couple games of pool and a vodka gimlet.





Potato and Southwestern Steak Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- ¼ lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, quartered

- 1½ lbs. boneless beef sirloin steak, cut 1-inch thick

- 2 cups loose-pack, frozen, cut green beans

- 1 small onion, sliced

- 1½ cups thick and chunky salsa

- 1 14 oz. can lower-sodium beef broth

- 1 tsp. dried basil, crushed

- 2 cloves garlic, minced

OLIVE JUICE TO TASTE

Now, after a long day of hunting or fishing, I aim to have a martini ready for my other half, just the way he likes it, as soon as he walks in the door—a little ice, a splash of extra dry vermouth (Tribuno brand is our favorite), fill the glass up three-quarters of the way with vodka or gin, and add olive juice to taste.

For Eric, that means six teaspoons of olive juice and, of course, the olive. All this is served in his dad’s special stemless martini glasses that were given to Eric after his father’s passing in April 2021. It just wouldn’t taste the same in anything different.

To this day, when I make Eric (or myself) a martini, I chuckle as I remember the game my dad and I played and smile a bit more when I see little fingers trying to grab the olives at the bottom of our glasses. The irony is that I have never told my kids about my younger self stealing my dad’s martini olives. It seems like the thought process must be inherent.

Above: The Blado family poses for a photo at Mom and Dad’s 50th wedding anniversary party, in December 2018. From left to right are Cären Yang, Leslye Ulman, Carol Blado, Jim Blado, Dana Rady, and Lori Erickson.

Right: The martini (left) and gimlet are made using Great Northern Distillery Potato Vodka.

Recently, I took a trip down memory lane and made both a martini and a gimlet with a special vodka produced using local Wisconsin potatoes. Each turned out exactly as I had hoped.

My dad went to heaven on the morning of October 15, 2024, six years to the day from when he retired after 55 years in dentistry. So, the memories around martinis and gimlets hold even more of a special place in my heart these days.

My dad also appreciated a good meal and never shied away from a little

heat. In fact, with a twinkle in his eye and a smile, he used to thank guests for coming over for dinner so he “could finally get a good meal!”

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This Potato and Southwestern Steak Soup is just that—a good meal! It’s incredibly easy, healthy and offers a little “zing” to wake up your pallet. Just throw everything into a crockpot in the morning and come home to a hearty meal that will fill and warm you up.

So, here’s to all the timeless classics in our glasses and our bowls that help us create beautiful and cherished memories with the ones we love the most. Cheers, Dad! Here’s to your new heavenly address, until we meet again!

DIRECTIONS

In a 4-quart slow cooker, combine potatoes, green beans and onion.

Above: The girls and their spouses are pictured at Mom and Dad’s 50th wedding anniversary party, in 2018. They are, from left to right in the back row, Eric Rady, Ryan Erickson, Jeff Ulman, and Faling Yang, and front row, left to right, Dana Rady, Lori Erickson, Leslye Ulman, and Cären Yang.

Trim fat from meat, cut it into 1-inch pieces and add to cooker.

In a medium bowl, stir together the salsa, broth, basil and garlic.

Pour the mixture over the meat and vegetables in the slow cooker.

Cover and cook on low heat for 8-10 hours or at high heat 4-5 hours.

Stir before serving. **BC^T**

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