

# WALLACE IS A FAN OF GREAT TASTING HEALTHY FOOD

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She has been cooking as long as she can remember.

Very active in Starkville 4-H programs, Ellen Easley Wallace would bake bread for her main project areas. Wallace has fond memories of cooking foods for judging contests, visual presentations and competitions such as the state fair exhibits. For Wallace, cooking has always been a fun way to spend time with family and friends.

“I have been cooking for as long as I can remember,” Wallace said. “As a young child, my mom would let us into the kitchen to help prepare meals, make bread, and cook whatever she was making.”

Wallace shared some of her passion for cooking fresh healthy meals with visitors at Saturday’s Starkville Community Market. Wallace conducted two cooking demonstrations using vegetables and herbs that could be purchased at the market.

At the first demonstration, Wallace showed Market-goers how she prepares squash and onions, then gave visitors an opportunity to taste the final product. For the second demonstration, Wallace lightly grilled sliced tomatoes.

“This is really good,” said Chrystal Blin after the second cooking demonstration. “I am not a big tomato eater and I could polish off that whole plate.”

“It is delicious,” said Emily Overbey of Starkville after tasting one of Wallace’s grilled tomatoes. “To see someone make something simple and it tastes delicious, it is inspiring.”

Wallace said while she loves fresh vegetables, she loves all types of foods. She said she loves cooking things that are different and hates the feeling of having the same meal over and over again.

“I love nearly anything,” Wallace said. “I am not sure there’s a food I hate. Anything fresh is totally on this list. I’m so glad that summer is here and I can get fresh veggies again. I also love anything decadent – chocolate desserts that are rich. I love well-seasoned foods and believe recipes can taste absolutely delicious while being easy to make and healthy.”

Wallace said her mom was an advocate for nutrition within the family. From a young age the family would make their own bread from scratch, even milling the wheat kernels.

Her mom encouraged Wallace and her sister to experiment in the kitchen by allowing the girls the responsibility of planning and cooking dinner on particular nights of the week.

“Having the freedom to choose what I wanted to cook and then make that dinner was a great way for me to try my wings at many recipes,” Wallace said.

Her mom and both of her grandmothers played a big role in her passion for cooking and creating healthy food that tastes great.

“Growing up, my mom always encouraged us to get in the kitchen and cook and I just grew to love it,” Wallace said.

“Both of my grandmothers are excellent cooks. My dad says he was overly blessed to have a mother, wife, and daughters who knew how to cook.”

She said her dad’s mother can go to a restaurant to eat, taste the food, and then go home and recreate it in her own kitchen. Wallace said she is an inspiration. Her Grandmother Easley has written a cookbook, “Recipes from Home,” that Wallace enjoys “because every recipe is absolutely delicious.”

“I grew to love cooking with a desire to make my food healthier,” Wallace said. “I enjoyed running as a teenager and quickly learned the balance of nutrition and physical activity for best performance. So, when I was trying to decide what to major in at Mississippi State University, I just gravitated to nutrition. I started in nutrition and never looked back. I loved every minute.”

During her senior year at MSU, Wallace had the opportunity to host a healthy cooking segment on WCBI-TV. Each Wednesday morning for about a year she would get up at 3 a.m. to leave the house by 4 a.m. to be on the set at 5:15 a.m.

“My goal with the show was to bring healthy recipes home — to teach people how to make the foods they loved a little better,” Wallace said. “At five in the morning, Aundrea, Bill, and I would be eating chicken, fish, cookies, soup, or whatever creation I made while cooking away.”

In order to share the recipes she made each week, Wallace opened a very simple blog website and began to post her recipes. The website, <http://www.cookingwithellen.com>, was created and Wallace began to post healthy cooking tips and recipes each week.

After finishing her undergraduate degree at MSU, she began a distance learning internship through the University of Northern Colorado to prepare to be a dietitian. The internship allowed Wallace to choose her own rotations and working locations. She worked primarily with Carolyn Bailey from Starkville who went on to be her first boss.

During the internship, Wallace traveled around the Southeast doing rotations in Baton Rouge, La., Tuscaloosa, Ala., Jackson, Port Gibson, and Memphis, Tenn.

When she began the internship, she was no longer available on Wednesday mornings to do the television segment. She decided to keep the website updated through a weekly healthy cooking e-newsletter.

“Every Wednesday morning I send out an email newsletter with recipes, healthy cooking tips, nutrition information, and a little bit about what’s going on in my life,” Wallace said. “Since I began the newsletter, much has happened in my life and it’s fun to keep people updated.”

Her first job was at a nursing home/hospital in Louisville. Now Wallace works for Information and Quality Healthcare teaching the Mississippi Health First diabetes program. Wallace said the grant is funded by Medicare and most of the individuals she works with live in small communities.

“It is so fulfilling to help someone with their diabetes who may never have taken a class for diabetes in their life,” Wallace said.

Last week, Wallace passed the Certified Diabetes Educator Exam, and she is now Ellen Wallace, CDE, RD, LD.

“From the first volunteer position I had at Oktibbeha County Hospital, beginning in 2004, I have studied and learned about diabetes,” Wallace said. “Diabetes is affecting thousands of Mississippians and Americans at epidemic levels. Leading the nation in obesity also puts Mississippi in the conundrum of leading the nation in diabetes. Diabetes affects our whole body – I love helping people learn to manage their diabetes and improve their life.”

At Saturday's Starkville Community Market, Wallace said side dishes were one of the main problems diabetic clients have in meal preparation. The dishes Wallace prepared at the Market Saturday meet the requirements for a diabetic diet.

For more information about Wallace or to sign up for her weekly newsletter, go to <http://www.cookingwithellen.com>.

#### Cucumber Salad

This is a recipe I've made a few times lately. I adapted it from a similar salad I had from a friend. It is absolutely delicious, packed with nutrients, and just about the only fat is heart healthy olives and olive oil! This recipe would be delicious made with ingredients straight from your summer garden.

6 medium-sized cucumbers, cut into 1-inch chunks

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, rinsed and drained (or 3-4 whole tomatoes, diced)

1/3 cup sliced black olives

4 ounces fat-free feta cheese

4 artichoke hearts, finely chopped

1/4 cup olive oil

1/2 teaspoon each oregano, basil, thyme, garlic powder

1/4 teaspoon each salt and black pepper

u In a bowl, mix together cucumbers, tomatoes, black olives, feta, and artichoke hearts. Separately, mix together olive oil and seasonings. Toss vegetables with oil mixture. Serve cold.

#### Grilled Squash and Onions

2 medium squash, sliced

1 small onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, crushed

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper

1/4 teaspoon seasoned salt

u In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, garlic, lemon pepper, and seasoned salt. Place squash and onions on a grill over medium heat (use grill basket or George Forman). Brush with olive oil mixture. Grill 5-10 minutes or until done. Serve hot.

#### Grilled Tomatoes

3 medium tomatoes

1 tablespoon fresh oregano

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon parmesan cheese

Dash of salt

Dash of pepper

u Mix together olive oil, oregano, rosemary, garlic, salt, pepper, and parmesan cheese. Brush over tomatoes. Grill (in George Forman or grill basket) over medium heat until hot through. Can also make using a toaster oven or broiler.

### Black & Blue Salad

Since the spring is upon us, Ryan and I are beginning to get a little garden planted out back at our apartment complex. In our garden we are going to try to have a few of these ingredients planted as well. I recently went to a local restaurant and had a similar salad and it was absolutely delicious! Enjoy!

Romaine or green leafy lettuce

Bell peppers

Tomatoes

Sliced black olives

Beef tenderloin, cut into 1-2 inch cubes

Italian dressing for marinating

Blue cheese crumbles

Light blue cheese salad dressing

u Marinate beef tenderloin in Italian dressing for a few hours or overnight (this recipe works great with leftover beef).

Cook beef in a skillet over medium heat until done.

u Layer vegetables in a salad bowl, top with cooked beef tenderloin, blue cheese crumbles, and light dressing.

### Artisan Bread

I have recently started making a new bread recipe that is quickly becoming a favorite around my house and I wanted to share. For Christmas, my mom got me a book – “Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day.” Now, if you would like to get into making this bread, I would highly recommend getting the book because it is impossible for me to include in such a short newsletter all the good information contained in the book to make your bread a complete success. But, consider this a primer and if you enjoy then look into getting the book.

The premise of the bread is to make a high moisture dough which will keep for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator. As the dough sits in the refrigerator it will begin to “age” and taste more soured – it reminds me a lot of sour dough bread, just without a starter! So, you make up the dough recipe below, place it into a plastic container, and leave it in the refrigerator. Whenever you want to make bread, simply scoop out the amount of dough you want and cook as directed – this means I can make only 2 rolls for dinner, 1 tiny loaf of bread for the two of us, or one large loaf of bread for potluck or company. Someone says they’re coming to visit? I can have freshly made homemade bread in less than an hour’s time.

3 cups warm water (about 100 degrees)

1 1/2 tablespoons granulated yeast (2 packets)

1 1/2 tablespoons salt (kosher or coarse salt is recommended)

6 1/2 cups unsifted, unbleached, all-purpose white flour, measured by scooping into measuring cup (not packed!)

Cornmeal

u Mix together water, yeast, and salt in a resealable, lidded (not airtight) plastic food container or food-grade bucket. Mix in all the flour at once – kneading is unnecessary (I know you don’t believe me, but it’s not!). Mix together with a wooden spoon or mixer until mixture is uniform. Once the dough is uniform with no dry patches, cover dough with lid that fits well (not airtight) – i.e. don’t use mason jars with screw-on lids as you could explode the jars when the bread rises!

u Allow mixture to rise at room temperature for approximately two to five hours or until it begins to flatten on the top and/or collapse.

u At this time, you can use a portion of the dough to cook. Or, refrigerate the covered dough until ready to use.

u When you are ready to fix your bread, simply sprinkle some cornmeal on a flat pan, then sprinkle some cornmeal

over the dough and dip out the amount of dough you would like. A simple round loaf of bread is easy to make. Without kneading the dough, quickly make a round loaf by slightly pulling the outer layer of the dough around to make a smooth loaf.

u Place the loaf on the pan and allow to rise about 40 minutes. About 20 minutes into the rising time, turn the oven on 450 degrees and place a stone baking dish into the oven as well as an empty metal baking pan or broiler tray.

u Dust the bread with flour, slash it with a knife in a cross pattern, and slide from flat pan onto ceramic baking pan in oven. Pour approximately 1 cup of water into the broiler pan and immediately close the oven to trap in the steam.

u Bake at 450 degrees for about 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the size of the loaf.