



Where Texans Go To Eat

BY SHANNON OELRICH If you grew up in a mid- to large-sized Texas town, chances are your family ate at a Luby's Cafeteria from time to time, if not weekly. I grew up in San Antonio and have fond memories of going through the line, picking what I liked, and sitting in the crowded, comfortable dining room to enjoy my choices. Today, I take my 2-year-old daughter to Luby's and delight in watching her do the same thing. Like myself at her age, no meal is complete without macaroni and cheese and Jell-O (I preferred orange; she likes red).

In celebration of its 60th anniversary, Luby's has published a cookbook, *Luby's: Recipes and Memories* (2006). Although Harry Luby opened his first cafeteria, the New England Dairy Lunch in Springfield, Missouri, in 1911, Luby's Inc. counts its 60-year history from 1947, when Bob Luby (Harry's son) and cousin Charles Johnston opened the first Luby's Cafeteria in downtown San Antonio. The anniversary cookbook is beautifully photographed, with mouth-watering photos of your favorite dishes as well as exuberant portraits of real Luby's customers. Diners' memories are sprinkled throughout the book, adding to the warm, familiar feel.

The cookbook includes a synopsis of Luby's history, but another new book delves into the whole Luby's story. *House of Plenty: The Rise, Fall, and Revival of Luby's Cafeterias* (University of Texas Press, 2006) is a surprisingly intriguing story of death, betrayal and the American dream. No ordinary corporate history, this book was written by Carol Dawson, an Austin writer, and Carol Johnston, the only child of Luby's co-founder Charles Johnston. With Dawson's ability to turn a phrase and Johnston's insider knowledge, they've crafted a thoroughly engaging tale about Luby's and the families who created it.

One thing both these books make clear is that Luby's commitment to its customers, employees and local communities is a big part of its success, but what keeps people coming back again and again is the consistently delicious home-style food. Here are some of my favorite Luby's recipes.

MIXED MELON WITH POPPY SEED DRESSING

POPPY SEED DRESSING

- 2 cups pineapple juice
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 3 drops yellow food coloring
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds

Place pineapple juice and granulated sugar into a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a low boil. In a separate bowl, dissolve cornstarch in water. When pineapple juice and sugar begin to boil, slowly whisk in cornstarch mixture. Return to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer about 5 minutes until thickened. Remove dressing from stove. When cooled to room temperature, whisk in white vinegar, food coloring and poppy seeds. Cool completely in refrigerator.

MIXED MELON

- 1 whole cantaloupe, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 whole honeydew melon, peeled, seeded and diced
- 8 cups watermelon, peeled, seeded and diced

Place melons into a large salad bowl and gently mix with cooled Poppy Seed Dressing. Refrigerate. Serve well-chilled. Serves 8.

Tip: For added variety, try using other types of fruits in season and garnish with fresh berries and mint.

Editor's note: Rather than dicing the melon, use a melon baller to achieve the look in the photo.

BAKED FISH ALMONDINE

- 1 cup coarsely ground bread crumbs
- ¼ cup toasted sliced almonds
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 2 skinless haddock, cod or other fish fillets (6–8 ounces each)
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup mayonnaise

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small bowl, combine crumbs, almonds, salt and butter. Mix well. If necessary, add additional butter, blending well, until crumb mixture begins to hold together. In a sep-

RECIPE ROUNDUP



**MIXED MELON WITH
POPPY SEED DRESSING**



BAKED FISH ALMONDINE



MACARONI AND CHEESE



CHOCOLATE ICE BOX PIE



arate shallow bowl, place flour and coat fish, shaking off excess. Place fillets in a lightly greased medium baking pan. Spread mayonnaise evenly over top surface of fillets and sprinkle with crumb mixture, lightly pressing into each fillet. Carefully pour water around fillets to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch depth. Bake 20 minutes or until fish flakes when tested with a fork. Serves 2.

Tip: Pour the thinnest possible layer of water around the fish so you don't wash away or wet the topping. This helps to ensure that the fish cooks moist and tender.

MACARONI AND CHEESE

- 2 cups (8 ounces) dry elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons nonfat dry milk
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cups boiling water
- 3 cups (12 ounces) shredded American cheese (found at deli counter)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni 1 to 2 minutes longer than package directions so pasta is soft but not mushy.

Drain. In a large mixing bowl, combine dry milk, flour and butter. Whisking constantly, gradually add in boiling water. Add 1 cup of cheese and continue whisking until smooth and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes. Fold in macaroni, 1 more cup of cheese, and salt. Transfer to a lightly greased 11x7-inch casserole dish and cover with foil. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until sauce in center of casserole is thick and creamy. Remove foil and sprinkle remaining 1 cup of shredded cheese evenly over top. Return to oven until cheese melts. Serves 6.

CHOCOLATE ICE BOX PIE

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
- $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 7 tablespoons cornstarch

- 3 extra large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 baked 9-inch pie shell
- Sweetened whipped cream, as needed
- Chocolate curls or shavings, as needed

In a medium saucepan, combine 2 cups of milk, sugar, cocoa and butter. Bring just to a boil over medium heat. In a medium bowl, mix together cornstarch and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk until cornstarch is completely dissolved. Then whisk in egg yolks and vanilla extract until well-blended. Whisking constantly, gradually add egg and milk mixture to saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, about 2 minutes or until mixture is thickened and smooth. Remove from heat. Stir in marshmallows until melted. Pour into pie shell. Press plastic wrap directly onto filling and refrigerate at least 4 hours. To serve, remove plastic wrap, top pie with whipped cream and garnish with chocolate curls.

Tips: Pressing plastic wrap directly onto the top of the hot pie filling prevents the formation of a tough, dry "skin" while the filling cools. To make decorative chocolate curls or shavings from a chocolate candy bar, use a vegetable peeler.