



Mom's Chopped Liver

SERVES 12 AS AN APPETIZER

- 1 lb** chicken livers
- 4** eggs, hard-boiled, room temperature
- 4 Tbs** schmaltz (rendered chicken fat) or clarified butter
- 1** medium onion, diced fine
- 2 Tbs** sherry
- 10** peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1/2 Tbs** salt

Bring salted water in a 4-quart saucepan to a boil. Clean livers, pulling off fatty membranes. Add livers to the boiling water and turn heat down to medium. Cook for 5 minutes; take off heat; and drain.

In a 10-inch skillet, melt schmaltz or butter; add crushed pepper and cook for 1 minute to allow the pepper to bloom. Add onion and lower heat to medium. Cook onion until very soft but not browned. Stir in sherry, then add livers and toss, sautéing for 3 minutes. Take off heat and cool.

In a food processor, add peeled hardboiled eggs, reserving 1 yolk. Pulse eggs two to three times for a few seconds until they are finely chopped but not pureed. Using a rubber spatula, scrape eggs into a deep 3-quart mixing bowl.

Add liver mixture to processor. Pulse for 5-second intervals until the mixture is pureed, about 20 seconds total. Using a rubber spatula, scrape liver out of processor bowl into the mixing bowl containing the chopped egg, and gently fold until completely combined. The liver-and-egg mixture is transformed into a mocha-colored, somewhat coarse pâté.

Spread the mixture onto a 10-inch plate or tart pan. Crumble reserved yolk over the liver for garnish and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Serve a "slice" on a leaf of Romaine, with sweet gherkins, pickled pearl onions, and challah toast points.

JEWISH MOTHERS NEVER SEEM TO USE RECIPES, THEY JUST "KNOW" HOW TO MAKE THINGS. Chopped liver is the classic European Jewish appetizer, often served with challah or lettuce and tomato. It shares a lot with French pâté, but probably wouldn't be caught dead in a bistro, preferring to reside in a deli in Queens.

The combination of the cooked egg and the chopped liver transforms the texture, color, and taste of the dish in unexpected ways, effectively cutting the "liver-y" taste and changing the consistency. Perhaps that's why many people who don't like offal *do* like chopped liver, because it is so far removed from the original texture and shape, and perhaps because it's a perfectly savory snack that brings back warm memories of holidays past.

Of course, my *bubbe* made this recipe in an ancient wooden bowl, chopping the liver and eggs with a *mezzaluna*, the traditional crescent-shaped blade in the picture. With the help of a food processor, the whole dish can be made in a half hour.

My mother claims, with pride, that she never measures anything. She "just knows" when she has added the right amount in any recipe, whether it was this chopped liver or *lokshun kugel* (noodle casserole) or any of the other things she learned to make from *her* mother. However, getting this recipe right required some actual measuring—which was done behind her back.