

Heritage Recipes

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Ethel's Jack Mackerel Cakes

From Sonja

This is my mother-in-law's recipe and was taught to me by my husband shortly after we were wed. My mother-in-law was forever searching for ways to stretch a food dollar to feed a family of nine hungry sons (and four daughters). She could not afford canned salmon, which can also be used interchangeably with mackerel in this recipe. My mother-in-law always described herself as a "plain, ordinary country woman, nothing fancy about me." She was, in fact, extraordinary, wonderful, mischievous, fun, and a soft shoulder to cry on in times of trouble. She was a treasury of old-tyme Tennessee country recipes and a very fine cook. Her daughters, sons, and daughter-in-laws learned a lot from her.

Ethel's Jack Mackerel Cakes

1 15-ounce can jack mackerel (pink or red canned salmon may be substituted)
1 egg
1/2 tsp. salt
stoneground cornmeal, about 3/4 to 1 cup
oil for frying

Heat about 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch cooking oil in heavy cast-iron skillet. Turn jack mackerel and the broth in which it is packed into mixing bowl. Split open pieces to remove the heavy spinal column (if preferred, these bones may be left in, but I never did like the uncomfortable crunch they make when they collide with the diner's teeth). Crumble mackerel into its canning broth. Add salt and egg and mix thoroughly. Add enough cornmeal to make a stiff dough, stirring until all is well-mixed. If mixture is too soupy to hold together, add a little more cornmeal to thicken. Use hands to pat out dough into 7 or 8 individual-sized cakes and turn carefully into hot oil. Fry, turning once, until crisp and golden brown on both sides. Remove to paper-towel-lined serving dish. These cakes go well with pinto beans and creamed potatoes. Some people like them with a side dip of ketchup or barbecue sauce.

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