

# Dining by Design

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You might be wondering, what does Humanities Texas have to do with food? Well, not much—except that we all love to gather around a table to eat. But as I planned the luncheon, I realized how much the process mirrored the very essence of the humanities. I carefully crafted the menu to fit within a set budget—just as Humanities Texas strives to maximize its resources for the greatest impact. Timing was crucial, just as it is when executing a successful grant program. And of course, presentation and quality mattered—our goal was to provide a meal that was both satisfying and memorable. In many ways, the luncheon embodied the same thoughtful planning and purpose that guide our work at Humanities Texas.



**This past February**, I had the honor of hosting Humanities Texas as they presented a Grants Workshop at the Amarillo Area Foundation. As many of you

know, Humanities Texas holds a special place in my heart. I have served on the board since 2013 and had the privilege of chairing it in 2022 and 2023. During that time, I was fortunate to be deeply involved in celebrating our 50th anniversary—a milestone that underscored the vital role the humanities play in our communities.

So, when our executive director, Eric, mentioned the idea of hosting a Grants Workshop in Amarillo, I was immediately on board. Naturally, I insisted on following the workshop with a small luncheon. It turned out to be the perfect setting to introduce our new initiative, Rural Grants, in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.







◀ Humanities Texas Executive Director, Eric Lupfer with Becky McKinley

## What is Humanities Texas?

For those who may not be familiar with our mission, here's a little background: For five decades, Humanities Texas has advanced education in Texas through programs that improve the quality of classroom teaching, support libraries and museums, and create opportunities for lifelong learning.

Founded in 1973 as the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Humanities Texas is one of fifty-six state and jurisdictional humanities councils in the U.S. We are a private nonprofit organization supported by federal and state appropriations, as well as by foundations, corporations, and individuals.

## Supporting the Humanities in Our Community

One of my greatest joys is seeing firsthand the impact of Humanities Texas in our region. Over the past seven years, we have awarded numerous grants throughout our district, each supporting projects that enrich our communities and preserve our shared history. I can't help but feel a swell of pride every time I see our logo on a local initiative, whether it is at the Adair Hospital Museum in Clarendon or the Lonesome Dove Humanities Traveling Exhibit in Claude. These projects are a testament to the power of the humanities to educate, inspire, and connect us.



## A Recipe for Stretching Your Food Dollar

To close on a delicious note, I'm excited to share some simple and budget-friendly meal ideas in this article. One of my all-time favorites? The \$5.00 rotisserie chicken from Sam's Club. It's the perfect base for a variety of meals—proof that with a little creativity, you can serve something truly satisfying without breaking the bank.

I hope you enjoy learning more about Humanities Texas, and I especially hope you find inspiration in the recipes I've included. After all, whether it's a well-planned meal or a well-planned grant, success is all about making the most of what you have!





## CHICKEN POT PIE

This is an adapted version of Barefoot Contessa's pot pie recipe. The individual crust made the most beautiful presentation.

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|---|--|
| 6 C. breast meat from Rotisserie Chicken, cubed. I prefer the rotisserie chicken from Sam's. It is great and only \$5.00. | ¼ C. heavy cream   |
| Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper   | 2 C. medium-diced carrots (4 carrots), blanched for 2 minutes                              |
| 5 C. chicken stock, preferably homemade   | 1 (10-ounce) package frozen peas (2 C.) (not defrosted)                                    |
| 2 chicken bouillon cubes  | ½ C. minced fresh parsley  |
| 12 T. (1½ sticks) unsalted butter   | 1 sheet pastry, homemade or Pillsbury prepared crust (A homemade pastry crust is the best) |
| 2 C. chopped yellow onions (2 onions)   | 1 egg mixed with 1 T. water, for egg wash  |
| ¾ C. all-purpose flour  |  |

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Dice the rotisserie chicken into ¾ inch cubes. You will need 6 C. of diced chicken.

In a small saucepan, heat the chicken stock and dissolve the bouillon cubes in the stock. (The bouillon cubes intensify the flavor) set this to the side.

In a separate large pot or Dutch oven, melt the butter and sauté the onions over medium-low heat for 10 to 15 minutes, until translucent. Stir on occasion so it does not burn.

Add the flour to the onion mixture and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.

Whisk in the hot chicken stock mixture and simmer over low heat for one minute or more, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add tsp. salt, ½ tsp. pepper, and the cream. Stir well.

Fold in the chicken, carrots, peas, and parsley.

Spoon into a 10 x 13 x 2-inch PAM sprayed baking dish and place the dish on a sheet pan lined with aluminum foil.

Unfold the pastry sheet on top of the chicken and vegetable mixture and cut the pastry to fit the dish. Cut slits in the pastry to allow steam to escape.

Brush the pastry with the egg wash, sprinkle with salt and pepper and bake for 30 to 40 minutes, until the pastry is browned and the stew is bubbly and hot. Serve hot.

For the luncheon, I baked my filling and individually baked my crust. I brushed the crust with egg wash and sprinkled with salt and pepper before baking. As you can see from the picture, I cut a hole in the center of the crust. It made a lovely presentation.

## CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD

### For the Asian salad dressing:

- 1/3 C. rice vinegar (Found with Asian ingredients in the store)
- ¼ C. hoisin sauce (Found with Asian ingredients in the store)
- 2 T. vegetable oil
- 2 T. soy sauce
- 1 T. fresh ginger, grated, do not use powdered ginger. You can also find it in a jar in the produce section
- 1 tsp. sesame oil

### For the salad:

- 4 C. cooked chicken shredded or diced (Rotisserie breast meat)
- 5 C. Napa cabbage cored and finely shredded
- 2 C. red cabbage cored and finely shredded
- 1 C. shredded carrots
- 1 bunch green onions, thinly sliced
- ¼ C. fresh cilantro minced
- 1 C. chow mein noodles or fried wonton strips
- 2 T. black sesame seeds for garnish, optional

**To make the dressing:** In a small bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, hoisin sauce, soy sauce, ginger, and sesame oil. Allow flavors to blend at room temperature while preparing the rest of the salad.

This can be made ahead of time.

In a large bowl, add chicken, green and red cabbage, carrots, scallions, and cilantro. Drizzle with salad dressing and toss to combine. Sprinkle it with chow mein noodles or wonton strips and sesame seeds.

## THAI CHICKEN SALAD

¼ C. creamy peanut butter  
3 T. rice vinegar  
2 T. soy sauce  
2 T. honey  
2 T. fresh lime juice  
1 T. minced fresh ginger  
- fresh not powdered  
1 tsp. sesame oil  
2 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
¼ tsp. red chili flakes  
Salt and freshly ground  
black pepper  
6 C. rotisserie chicken shredded  
or diced

**Salad:**  
2 heads butter lettuce cut  
or torn into 1-inch pieces  
(You can substitute romaine  
lettuce, Napa cabbage or  
regular cabbage  
1 C. bean sprouts  
1 red bell pepper cut into  
strips, about 1 C.  
¼ C. fresh cilantro leaves  
¼ C. fresh mint leaves  
¼ C. chopped peanuts  
2 thai bird chiles sliced,  
optional

**To make the dressing:** In a small bowl, whisk together peanut butter, rice vinegar, soy sauce, honey, lime juice, ginger, sesame oil, garlic, and red pepper flakes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If the dressing is too thick, thin with warm water, 1 tsp. at a time.

**To assemble the salad:** In a large bowl, add lettuce, drizzle with half of the dressing, and toss until evenly coated. Divide the lettuce between bowls or arrange on a large platter.

Top with chopped or shredded chicken, red bell pepper, bean sprouts, cilantro, mint, and Thai bird chilies (if using). Garnish with chopped peanuts and drizzle with the remaining dressing.

## ROTISSERIE CHICKEN FRIED RICE

1 T. olive oil  
½ C. finely diced yellow onion  
1 C. carrots finely diced  
1 red, yellow or orange bell  
pepper, finely diced  
½ tsp. minced garlic  
2 large eggs  
3 C. rotisserie chicken, diced

1 C. frozen peas  
1 diced fresh tomato  
4 C. cooked rice  
6 T. regular or low-sodium  
soy sauce  
Sesame seeds for garnish  
(optional)

Cook and cool the rice at room temperature or prepare rice a day or two ahead and store it in the refrigerator.

Peel and dice the carrots into small pieces. Chop the bell pepper and onion into small pieces.

In a large skillet, heat olive oil on medium-high heat. Add the carrots, pepper, and onion, and cook for 2-4 minutes; turn the heat down to medium.

In a small bowl, whisk the eggs. Add whisked eggs to

the vegetables and cook until scrambled, stirring while cooking.

Add the rotisserie chicken, tomatoes, minced garlic and stir. Add the rice, peas, soy sauce and stir.

Use a spatula to mix and continue to cook until the rice turns light brown and crispy.

Garnish with sesame seeds.

## CHICKEN STROGANOFF WITH EGG NOODLES

12 ounces egg noodles  
4 T. butter, divided  
1 C. diced onion  
8 ounces white mushrooms,  
sliced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 T. all-purpose flour  
1 T. Worcestershire sauce  
1 T. tomato paste

½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more  
to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper,  
to taste  
1-½ C. chicken stock  
½ C. sour cream  
3 heaping C. shredded rotisserie  
chicken (I use only white meat)  
Fresh parsley, garnish

**Cook the noodles:** Cook the egg noodles in salted water according to the package directions. Once the noodles are cooked, drain and return them to the pot with two T. of butter, and toss to coat.

**Meanwhile, cook the onions and mushrooms:** Melt the remaining two T. butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and mushrooms and cook for 6 to 8 minutes until the vegetables have softened and are browned in spots.

Add the garlic and cook for a final 30 seconds, until the garlic is fragrant. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper.

**Make the sauce:** Add the flour to the skillet and use a spatula to work the flour into the vegetables, forming a paste-like coating on the vegetables. Cook for a minute and then add the Worcestershire sauce, tomato paste, salt, and some freshly ground black pepper.

Slowly add the chicken stock in ½ C. increments, stirring constantly to prevent lumps.

Once your chicken stock has been added, let the sauce thicken for a few minutes and then stir in the shredded chicken. Remove the pot from the heat and add the sour cream and stir to combine. Taste the sauce and season it with salt and pepper, to taste.

I like my stroganoff served over rice but the traditional way is with noodles. *AW*



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