

Cooking With Medicine

C H A D M C C R A C K E N

Easy at the start: crushed aspirin,
 a pill or two, stirred in with butter
 and tarragon, a little bitter
 edge to the chicken, nothing much, tart
 and chalky, not unpleasant. Maybe
 a few questions for the eager guests:
 allergies, interactions—not so
 different from using chocolate,
 or coconut. Odd how small changes
 mattered: Anacin was full and broad,
 a nice sprinkle for steak, venison,
 any sort of game; Tylenol was
 timid, a shy-sour touch for sole.
 As word spread, chefs began to branch: Tums,
 Mylanta, Robitussin (poor man's
 Campari, so-called)—who can forget
 his first bowl of Maalox chowder? Not
 this writer: awful, like clams swimming
 in soapy bathwater. Still, some raved—
 soon enough it was Downy or Whisk
 in the white sauce, pork loin glazed with plums
 and Pine-Sol—what was next, kerosene?
 (I did see a beef stock recipe
 back then calling for one “glug” of lamp
 oil—the neo-Amish style, perhaps?)
 The “laundry school” at last ebbed out—
 “There is a God!” my column declared—
 an erratic period rolled in:
 batter-fried books—I recall a crisp,
 garlicky Catullus, cool radish
 custard as a dip; tobacco-wrapped
 cheese—gruyère or wensleydale; DayQuil

trifle with blackberries; something called
Xanax paella, on which I passed.
A time of chaos before the boom.
The advent of peroxide whipped cream—
like wildfire everywhere at once, Saint
Louis, Boston, Miami, L.A.,
one couldn't avoid it—seemed a happy

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