

FAMILY RECIPES

My family's family recipes tend toward the white trash side of the palate. Our potato salad leads the list (secret ingredients: mustard, onion flakes, and—depending on who's making it—Miracle Whip). Then there's our ice tea (secret ingredient: frozen lemonade mix). There's our "recipe" for Thanksgiving turkey—which is no more complex than slapping a pound of bacon on top of the turkey and then picking the bacon off and eating it at about 4PM, just when you begin to get really hungry on Thanksgiving. And finally War Cake, which no one has made since Anastasia passed away. I guess mom's refrigerator rolls have become a family recipe, too—gooey white rolls that seem perfectly designed as a vehicle for leftover turkey gravy (of course, the gravy always has a slight bacon flavor).

Then there are the recipes I'm famous for: peach, apple, or rhubarb pie, sourdough pancakes (though mr. emptywheel is now in charge of the pancakes), bread pudding. They may or may not be white trash recipes, but they're damned good (if I do say so myself).

As I think about it, there are a whole slew of things my family might consider family recipes.

But none of them qualify mr. emptywheel to be President. Not least because one of the perks of being President is a full time White House cook—it's not like I'd be baking my rhubarb pie for the Pope when he came didn't come to dinner.

Which is why I'm fascinated by recipe-gate—the news that someone in the McCain campaign had borrowed a bunch of recipes from the Food Network and posted them as "McCain Family Recipes." Yeah, I think it telling that the McCain campaign has been circulating a bunch of recipes and pretending they're Cindy McCain's—yeah, that's dishonest. Gotcha!

I'm more fascinated by the larger practice of collecting a bunch of recipes and submitting

them as if they somehow make the potential first lady authentic and, by association, the presidential candidate as well. The McCain campaign is now claiming that an intern is to blame, some guy who surfed the web and then submitted these recipes to the campaign site as well as to the NY Sun. The campaign is apparently hard at work finding different recipes to post on the site, and has announced that Cindy "likes to cook beef stew."

By the end of the day, Mr. Bounds said that the McCain campaign was busy revising the recipe section of the Web site, and that Mrs. McCain liked to cook lemon chicken and beef stew.

The campaign apparently has no embarrassment about their efforts to construct this image of Cindy as a housewife in the first place.

The whole thing makes me kind of sad-sad that if they campaign felt it necessary, Cindy didn't have a beef stew recipe ready at hand (secret ingredient, whatever vegetables are in the fridge). Sad about the possibility that Cindy is being made out to be this great housewife when that's not who she is at all (are people as rich as Cindy is ever really housewives?) Sad that, after prior flaps over Hillary's cookie recipes, and in the same year that Hillary is now a strong candidate for President, we're still inventing these domestic fictions for the wives of presidential candidates.

Has anyone asked Bill if he's got a good cookie recipe?

Yeah, I think it relevant that the Straight Talk Express campaign got caught plagiarizing Cindy McCain's image as a domestic goddess.

But for me, it's an opportunity for the whole presidential myth-making industry to take a step back and consider the stupidity of the myths they're spinning. There are much more important issues to cover than whether Cindy can make passion fruit mousse or whether Obama can bowl.

The fact that we're getting the mousse and the
bowling, still, is the real story.