

All About Oakridge



A Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument
Former Residence of Barbara Stanwyck and
Jack Oakie and Victoria Horne Oakie

SPECIAL SUMMER FOOD EDITION

During this unusual time of stay at home orders due to COVID-19, many are finding a place of comfort in their kitchens. Friends of Oakridge thought it would be a good time to explore the Oakridge kitchen in more detail and delve into what past residents were cooking and baking. As you sit at your kitchen counters and tables, we hope you will enjoy reading this Summer Newsletter and possibly try some of the recipes included.

A Kitchen Suspended in Time

It is surprising that the Oakridge Estate's 1937 kitchen escaped renovation and remains in what appears to be original condition. When Barbara Stanwyck began designing her dream home, plans undoubtedly called for a state of the art kitchen even though she was not planning on spending any time in it. In a 1967 interview that appeared in *The St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, Barbara commented, "I know very little about the kitchen and don't intend to. I only eat food to survive and then I eat steak, raw meat and potatoes. In fact, I'm really the worst one in the world to talk to about food or cooking".

In the 1930s, Art Deco designers began expanding the common color palette of kitchens to include vibrant colors of paint and patterned tiles. However, Barbara chose to stay with the traditional theme of all-white for her tile counter-tops and painted wood cabinets. The only custom touches appear in an accent band of blue tile on the sink back-splash and a wood scallop detail visible at ceiling height. The square tile counter-tops are still in

excellent condition with only a few minor cracks indicating gentle use. The lower ceilings and utilitarian hardware in this area of the home denote that this space was used by the household staff, whose bed and bathrooms were just a few steps away.

As depicted in the image, the kitchen is connected to the dining room by a butler's pantry. Not visible is a dumb waiter that is conveniently located at the entrance to the bar. This feature made it convenient to send up food and drinks directly into the master suite. Staff would have stored flatware, table settings and serving pieces in these drawers and cabinets. In fact, one lower cabinet is designed with vertical dividers to specifically accommodate serving trays. The wood counter at the sink is sloped for drainage. Both the kitchen and butler's pantry have cork tile flooring which shows only minor wear after over 80 years. Currently there has been a resurgence in using both cork flooring and wood counter tops for their durability and sustainability.



Jack Oakie purchased the Stanwyck residence in 1941 and renamed it Oakridge. He and wife Victoria Horne felt the kitchen dining alcove with its window and built-in table and benches resembled the drawing rooms they always enjoyed on the Southern Pacific Super Chief trains. In her memoir, *Life with Jack Oakie*, Mrs. Oakie reminisces about what happened next: "And many years ago, as we sat in the alcove, my husband said to me, and I quote, 'Mommy dear, look out the window

and see if we're still in Albuquerque.' Our alcove has been called 'Albuquerque' ever since."

After countless hours of research, Oakridge volunteers have still been



unable to uncover any information about the refrigerator and stove which would have been original to the 1937 Marwyck kitchen. We can speculate the refrigerator might have been one of the latest models that no longer had a round "monitor top." This new state of the art appliance would have sold for approximately \$250-\$300 in its day.

What does remain in the kitchen though is an unusual form of cooling. Electric refrigerators of the period weren't spacious, so a cabinet called a California Cooler was commonly installed to add extra refrigeration space. The closed compartment with slotted shelf and motor for air circulation provided a dark, cool, well-ventilated space for bulky items such as potatoes, onions, carrots, fruits and even cheeses. It was a convenient alternative to a root cellar made possible by the temperate climate of the West Coast. The picture above shows the location of the California Cooler in the pantry section of the kitchen.





Unable to discover any concrete information, written or pictures, we can only surmise what type of range would have been purchased for the completed house. It was probably a high-end, state of the art range similar to the electric oven in this Westinghouse 1937 ad. The cost for a new electric range was \$99 to \$319.

If Barbara Stanwyck "ate to live", then Jack Oakie "lived to eat". Food and drink were important to Jack and he made improvements to the kitchen to accommodate his tastes. Jack purchased this 1941 Roper Scientific Range from Sears for a price of \$198.04. It remains in the kitchen to this day. Both ovens are spotless which makes us wonder if the large plastic bag of wishbones Mrs. Oakie saved over the years (on display at Valley Relics Museum) actually came from the purchase of pre-roasted chickens!

Who is Cooking in the Kitchen?

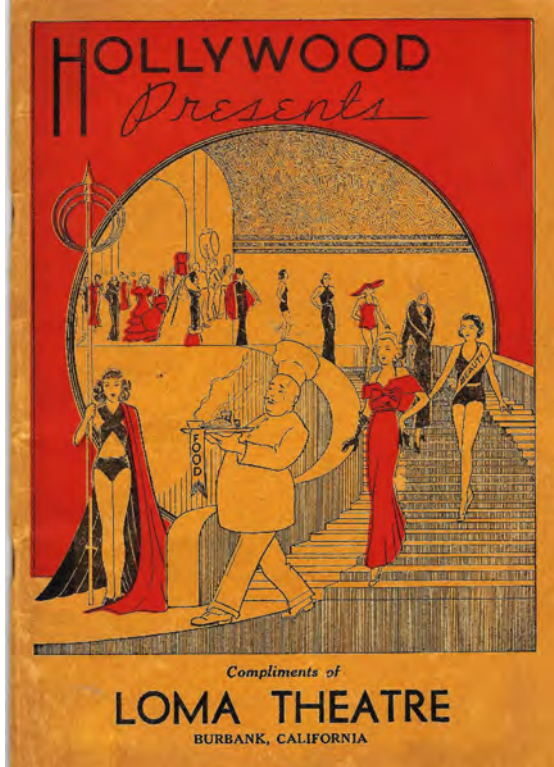
Barbara Stanwyck was as disciplined about her diet as she was about her craft. Fruits and vegetables were eaten strictly for their health benefits. Beef gave her "instant energy" and she was happy to eat it for any meal. Steak tartar was a favorite: "I put the best piece of steak I can find through the grinder with a little chopped green onion and some chopped green pepper. That's marvelous for vitality." She served rare roast beef to guests and was proud of her unique version of twice baked potatoes which she stuffed with Roquefort cheese.

In his book, *Double Takes*, **Jack Oakie** wrote of his love of fish and his wife's refusal to cook it at home because of the strong odor.

That problem was solved when the Howard Johnson's on Reseda Boulevard began offering an "All You Can Eat Fish Fry" on Wednesday evenings. In the early years, though, Oakridge was so isolated that most of the groceries had to be brought in from Hollywood and Beverly Hills. The Oakies enjoyed entertaining and box lunches were often served at Victoria's afternoon backyard picnics along with a screening of one of Jack's old films.

During the Second World War, Jack planted a two-acre orchard near the southeast corner of the property near his barn. It was called a "family" orchard because he did not grow or pick the fruit for commercial use. The orchard was comprised of orange, lemon, grapefruit, lime, fig, plum, peach, apricot and nectarine trees. The trees had to be hand-watered by hose and the process took hours. The bountiful harvest allowed Jack to indulge his hobby of preserving the fruit as jams and butters. He stored the finished products on a labeled shelving unit in the small cellar reached by a door off the foyer.

Hopefully, reading about the Stanwyck/Oakie kitchen has inspired you to get in your own home kitchen and start cooking or baking. During Hollywood's heyday, it was common for the movie star fan magazines to carry articles on celebrity dining habits including the restaurants they frequented, as well as their personal favorite recipes. Below, please find some of the recipes that we have discovered. If you are adventurous and try out any these dishes, we would love to hear how they turned out and a picture would be great. Please email us at: info@theoakridgeestate.org.



Hollywood Celebrity Cookbook



Barbara's Cheese Cake Delight

Barbara's Kipfels

BARBARA STANWYCK

*(Movie Star, Appearing with Clark Gable in
"To Please A Lady")*

KIPFELS

(Hungarian cream-cheese pastries)

1 cup butter
1 pinch salt
Raspberry or apricot jam

1 cup cream cheese
1 tablespoon thick sour cream

Combine ingredients and sift in two cups flour. Mix and knead until quite smooth. Gather up in a ball, wrap in grease-proof paper and chill at least 3 hours in a refrigerator. Roll out very thin. Cut in 3-inch squares. Spread each square with 1 tablespoon raspberry or apricot jam.

Roll squares from corner to corner, shaping into crescents. Lay on greased baking sheet, and bake 20 minutes in brisk oven. Let cool before serving. Makes about 24 pastries.

ies

Barbara's Leg of Lamb with Wine Sauce

1 large can puree of tomatoes
Cover entire mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour
Serves 4.

BARBARA STANWYCK:

LEG OF LAMB—WINE SAUCE

1 leg of lamb, boned and skewered

3 sticks cinnamon

Place inside rolled leg. Place meat in deep container

1 pint white wine

1 pint red wine

Cover lamb with wines. Marinate 1 day. Turn. Marinate 1 day, basting occasionally

1 clove garlic

1 small onion

Rub leg well with onion and garlic

Juice of 1 carrot

Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Juice of 1 bunch celery

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar

Combine. Wash leg of lamb well with the mixture. Roast, allowing 25 minutes to the pound at 325 degrees or until your meat thermometer reads 175 to 182 degrees. Make gravy if desired, using no mint

Serves 6 to 8.

Barbara Stanwyck

Barbara's Chicken Hash Somborn

Barbara's Steak Tartare

Barbara Stanwyck's Chicken Hash Somborn

Eight ounces of diced breast of chicken, covered with four ounces whipping cream, two egg yolks, and seasoning. Serve in casserole, add salt and pepper to taste.

Barbara Stanwyck's Steak Tartare

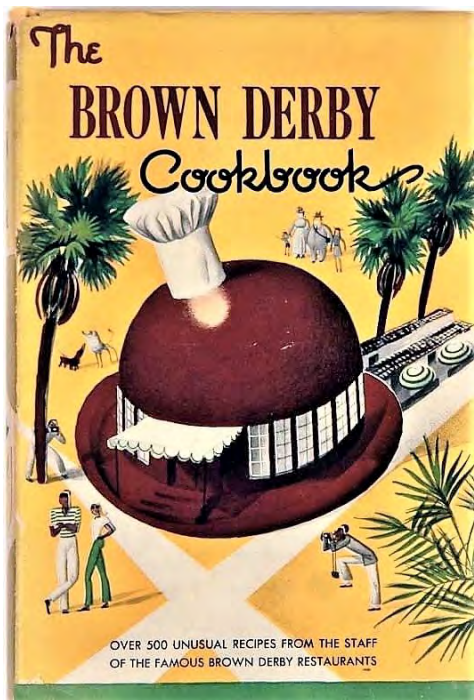
1/2 to 3/4 pound filet mignon
2 tablespoons chopped green pepper
2 tablespoons chopped scallions (white part only)
1/4 teaspoon coarse salt
A few gratings coarsely ground pepper to taste
Egg yolk

Scrape the meat with sharp knife (or put through fine meat grinder). Add green pepper, scallions, salt and pepper.

Shape meat, according to platter, into round or oval 1-inch thick steak. Smooth the surface with a spoon and with the hands. Score the top crosswise and make an indentation in center of the meat.

Break egg carefully, discarding the white. Place the yolk in center of the steak, encircle it with an onion ring. Serve with thick slices of pumpernickel bread lightly spread with sweet butter. Serve as supper or luncheon dish. Serves one.

Thoughts: For a more complete repast, mix the tartar tableside. Place the steak in center of a platter, surround with little mounds of chopped scallions, green pepper, pickled beets, mustard or salted gherkins, and garnish with capers, anchovies or shredded horseradish root. Or prepare the beef as a sandwich by spreading the seasoned beef on a slice of dark rye. Garnish with caviar, shrimp or smoked salmon and sieved cooked egg yolk. Serve with good imported beer or ale or chilled aquavit.



Restaurants that Hollywood stars frequented often published cookbooks featuring celebrities' favorite recipes



Barbara sitting in a booth at the famous Brown Derby restaurant reading their latest cookbook





JACK OAKIE
Muffins like mother used to make—and still does make—are in Mr. Oakie's opinion the perfect accompaniment of grapefruit and coffee for a satisfactory breakfast.



BREAKFAST MUFFINS
2 tablespoons sugar
4 level tablespoons butter
1 cup milk
2 eggs
2 cups flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
Few grains salt

Cream butter and sugar, mix with milk and well beaten egg yolks. Add flour sifted with baking powder and salt and last of all the stiffly beaten egg whites. Fill buttered muffin tins $\frac{3}{4}$ full of the mixture and bake in a fairly quick oven until nicely browned. For a change, spread lightly 1 teaspoon cinnamon mixed with 2 teaspoons sugar over the top of the muffins just before baking. Prepare before breakfast and serve piping hot.

Jack's mother's recipe for Breakfast Muffins (above)



MAYBE the government has to get a leg to get around to convincing Jack Oakie just dinner probably will depend on whether the red-head says that's all in terms of his reputation in "The Great Dictator" as his new Warner Brothers assignment in "They Knew" has when and if they do occur but there's no sense waiting this wondering what to do with him. All they need to do is pop Jack—quite into the Conservation Department.

For Jack is the best fish consumer that ever appeared; he can't remember the date when he first tasted a bit of trout, but the great well-balanced taste of greenhead and many types and vegetables has been his hobby for years.

Jack says if you want to eat any fish in good style, "the famous ladies of Bureau coordinate" say. The ladies of his specialty don't well know—but don't make the mistake of thinking it's a gift in the kitchen of the new house in 1919 in the Valley, who when he and his wife, the lovely Yvonne Vandon, first moved, Jack's mother and her own with the same skill which has earned him his sailing license. You'll still sleep tight when she another look—the time in the way of earned time will pass—on in the Oakie possession—over her get put up by Jack according to recipe handed down by his grandmother.

JACK'S apple butter specialty is quite a story in itself—take that it to the fine year day at Niagara.

"Long before anyone ever heard of Jack Oakie," he said, "my paternal grandmother made the most of them." Jack's name is really Lewis Offield, you know! Famous throughout the whole and breadth of Pettis County, Missouri, up through the blue ribbon for apple butter across years and running at the Pettis County Fair.

"Nobody knows my grandmother had she made a will leaving all the worldly goods to my father with the exception of her cookbook and cooking recipes, which she left to my mother. Among these was the formula for apple butter which in years to follow made my mother the well-known apple butter shoppes at

Pair with a good for new—
cooking oven—Jack Oakie
and his wife Yvonne Vandon

Pettis County. Today, though, far from the place of the hills, I intend to carry on the apple butter tradition."

One of Jack's recipes from Grandmother Offield's cookbook are bread and butter pickles, and two dozens made of several food-stuffs called just also, perfect peach pickles.

APPLE BUTTER
4 pats. prepared apples
1 pat. sweet oil
4 pts. sugar
1 tsp. sugar
2 tps. cinnamon
But, some who wish it is followed to full the quantity. Peel, core and slice apples—there should be four gallons after being covered with the sugar. Cook over low heat, stirring frequently to prevent scorching, and when sugar is dissolved, add spices and cook and some time cooking about half a quart of the mixture will remain in a crock any other cooked on a crock. Pour into sterilized Mason jars and seal.

BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES
15 medium-sized cucumbers
4 large salted onions
4 small peeps
10 cups salt
20 cups sugar
10 cups mustard seed
10 lbs. brownie
10 lbs. sweet cloves
10 cups other vinegar

Wash, but do not peel cucumbers and slice very thin. Chop onions, and press and add to cucumbers. Cover with salt and let stand three hours, then drain. Bring vinegar and dry ingredients to a boil, add mustard, spices, and sugar, stirred by but do not boil. Pour into hot sterilized Mason jars and seal.

Sugar in fact
1 tsp. ground nutmeg
1 ground clove
Dissolve sugar and place in crockery or baking-dish. Blend seven cups butter and one-half cup (which sugar is) into the mixture and cook over low heat until dissolved. Add ground nutmeg and peel over mixture. Cover with lid, boil down and take at 100 degrees F. still thick and to done.

GRANDMOTHER PEACH SHORTCAKE
1 beaten egg
1 cup milk
1/2 cup melted butter
1/2 cup salt
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. soda dissolved in 1 cup boiling water
2 tps. sifted flour
1 pt. creamed peaches

Beat egg first in milk, then water, oil, sugar and cinnamon. Add soda dissolved in hot water. Add flour a little at a time. Beat well enough. Bake in two buttered cake tins at 350 degrees F. until done. (It is 10 minutes) spread well-drained cream peaches between layers and on top. Serve plain, or with whipped cream, with still warm.

Would you like to find more about the delightful and persistent art of home cooking? Would you like to take advantage of bargain prices for food, fruits and vegetables that usually by putting them up for winter use? Or why if you will follow the recipes of famous chefs in the book, "The Art of Living in the Kitchen," containing hundreds of cooking plans, recipes, and tips, many, even more and more. This book, which you need to do a well-planned dinner for those occasions in which you possibly will do it, is available at 200 new and beautiful recipes, all for you to use. It is the only book you need for those occasions in which you possibly will do it. Send for your copy of "The Art of Living in the Kitchen" today. Write to: The Art of Living in the Kitchen, 222 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y.

In an August 1941 interview for *Photoplay* magazine, Jack told Ann Hamilton that, "Long before anyone ever heard of Jack Oakie, my paternal grandmother made the name of Offield (Jack's name is really Lewis Offield, you know) famous throughout the width and breadth of Pettis County, Missouri, by copping the blue ribbon for apple butter seven years and running at the Pettis County Fair. Shortly before my grandmother died, she made a will leaving all her worldly goods to my father with the exception of her cookbook and cooking recipes, which she left to my mother. Among these was the formula for apple butter which in years to follow made my mother the unchallenged apple butter

champion of Pettis County. Today, though far from the place of my birth, I intend to carry on the apple butter tradition." We think Jack would be happy to know that his family legacy continues to be shared by the Friends of Oakridge.

Grandmother Offield's original recipes for apple butter and gingerbread peach shortcake are reprinted below:

APPLE BUTTER *(enough to serve a County Fair)*

4 gallons prepared apples
1 gallon sweet cider
4 pints sugar
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Boil sweet cider until it is reduced to half its quantity. Peel, core and slice apples – there should be four gallons after slicing – and add to boiling cider. Cook over low heat, stirring frequently to prevent scorching, until mixture begins to thicken. Add spices and sugar and continue cooking slowly until a spoonful of the mixture will remain in a smooth mass when cooled on a saucer. Pour into sterilized Mason jars and seal.

GINGERBREAD PEACH SHORTCAKE

1 beaten egg
1 cup molasses
½ cup melted butter
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon (baking) soda dissolved in
1 cup boiling water
2 cups sifted flour
1 quart canned peaches

Beat egg, beat in molasses, then butter, salt, ginger and cinnamon. Add soda dissolved in hot water. Add flour a little at a time. Beat until smooth. Bake in two buttered cake tins at 350 degrees F until done (25 to 30 minutes). Spread well-drained canned peaches between layers and on top. Serve plain, or with whipped cream, while still warm.

**Just like today, advertising agencies used
celebrity endorsements for food products**

**Below is Barbara Stanwyck sharing
the Star-Kist Tuna Chow Mein recipe**

**Jack Oakie and wife Venita Vardon
are joined by a favorite Afghan Hound
as they enjoy a Canada Dry Ginger Ale**

"Star-Kist is
Quality Tuna!"

says
Barbara Stanwyck
starring in
"THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN"
a Hal Wallis-Paramount Production



"And here's my favorite recipe"

"For your family meal or when guests drop in—I think this is one of the best-tasting, best-looking dishes you can possibly serve."



Barbara Stanwyck's
STAR-KIST TUNA CHOW MEIN
(serves 5 for \$1.14)

1. Quarter and separate sections of 1 medium-size white and cook with ½ cup green pepper strips and 1½ cups sliced celery in ½ cup butter for margarine 4 minutes.
2. Add 1 cup hot water, 1 tsp. salt, cover and cook 5 minutes.
3. Add 1 ½ lbs. can Star-Kist Fancy Solid Pack (or Chunk Style) Tuna broken into large pieces, and 1 No. 2 can Chao Bean vegetables, drained. Heat thoroughly, then...
4. Combine and stir into above: 1 tbsp. cold water, 1½ tbsp. cornstarch, 2 tbsp. soy sauce, ½ tsp. ground red pepper.
5. Cook 2 minute longer. Serve over fried noodles or rice.

Buy either Fancy Solid Pack or Chunk Style, both are the same fine Star-Kist quality!

Naturally it's best when you make it with Star-Kist Tuna. For only 10¢ a can, it usually saves you the price of a pack of under this quality label.

Star-Kist "The Tuna of the Stars"

—and you'll like it most! Use it in all your favorite special occasions, every quantity and every way you wish. Always buy Star-Kist, "The Tuna of the Stars!"

"RECIPES OF THE STARS"

Heavily illustrated packet of the favorite menu recipes of Hollywood Stars—Free on request! Write Star-Kist Tuna, Terminal Island, Calif., Department 5L.

Jack Oakie COULD DO THIS
SCENE ALL DAY...



1. JACK OAKIE is an old hand at scene stealing. But here's one even for Stanwyck's usual leading man, Jack Oakie. In the scene opposite the camera attention is taken for Jack's slight touch of the back. He'll be the first and most of her hand for 1,000 years for leading quality!



2. JACK OAKIE'S DOG-STARLING is the average-looking family dog of Central City. Fine, O.K., Oakie leads into the scene with his smiling grin of "It's beautiful of them!"... smiling with his face from the photographing indignation.



3. THE DOG'S "WAG" leading first that is the "wag" of "wag" was proved that the "wag" of "wag" was proved in the photographing! That's the story in Oakie's eye when it's good for you, when it's good for you.

CANADA DRY
GINGER ALE

IT'S INVIGORATING!

Contains No
Alcohol



When you want Canada Dry's Delicious
Best Beer, Cream Soda, and Orange!

Saturday Evening Post

Thank you Oakridge Docent Art Jacobs for providing some of the vintage images used in this article

A Special Message to our Subscribers

Friends of Oakridge appreciates your continuing interest and support for the historic Oakridge Estate. To ensure the health and safety of our visitors during the current public health concerns related to the transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), Friends has suspended all tours and programs at the Estate in alignment with the City of Los Angeles' guidelines. Everyone at Friends of Oakridge looks forward to resuming our event schedule in the future. Please check for updates at our website: www.theoakridgeestate.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

Friends offers several ways for you to share your talents. We are seeking people with skills

in any of the following categories: public speaking, photography, social media, videotaping, public relations, historic research, and event volunteering. The Friends of Oakridge is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization and we are always looking for enthusiastic people to join our team. Visit our website to sign-up.



Visit our
website

As part of our privacy policy, Friends of Oakridge does not share its email subscription lists with other organizations.