

Baby Blues • Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



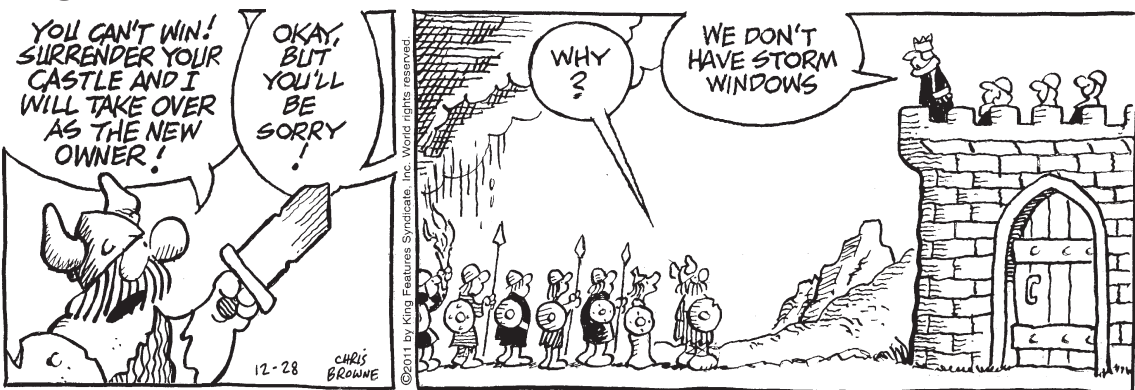
Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



Blondie • Chic Young



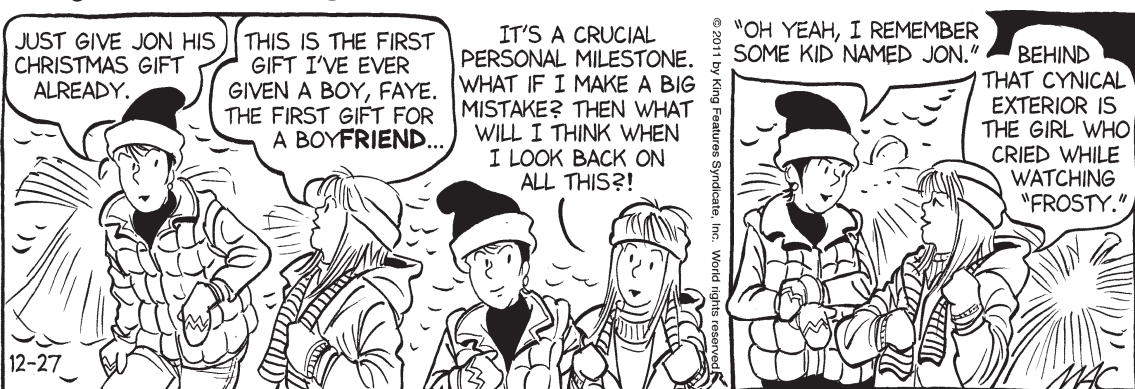
Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne



Mother Goose and Grimm • Mike Peters



Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Todd the Dinosaur • Patrick Roberts



Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



Heloise

• Hints from Heloise

Biscuit mix is as easy as pie

Dear Heloise: One time you printed a recipe for BISCUIT MIX, but I didn't save it. Since I bake quite a bit of quick breads (biscuits and muffins) in the winter, I would appreciate it if you would print it again. — A Reader in Lehigh, Pa.

Happy to oblige! This mix is so easy and can be used to make not only biscuits, but pancakes as well. All you need are the following ingredients:

- 8 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 8 teaspoons sugar (optional)
- 1 cup shortening
- Milk

Mix all the dry ingredients together. Then, using a pastry blender or fork, cut the shortening in with the mixture until it creates a coarse texture. Now you can store this in a tightly sealed container in the pantry (if using soon) or in the refrigerator, where it will last longer.

To make the biscuits, mix 1/3 cup of milk into each 1 cup of dry mix. Then bake at 450 F for 12-15 minutes.

For pancakes, add enough milk to get that pancake batter consistency you want. — Heloise

SEND A GREAT HINT TO:

Heloise
P.O. Box 795000
San Antonio, TX 78279-5000

BLOOMING CHOCOLATE

Dear Readers: Have you ever gone to eat some chocolate and found that it looks white? Do you know what causes this? Is it still safe to eat? Yes, it is! The term for the white discoloration is "chocolate bloom," which happens when the cocoa butter comes to the surface. Typically, this occurs when there is a drastic temperature change, which is why chocolate should be stored in a cool, dry place. It may look unappealing, but it does not affect the taste in any way!

And an interesting fact is that dark chocolate is like some red wine: It can actually get better with age if stored at around 60-65 degrees! So be sure to enjoy each bite! — Heloise

BAY LEAF

Dear Heloise: I know you can purchase bay leaves dried, but are they ever available as a fresh spice? — Elaine S., Fort Wayne, Ind.

Yes, you can purchase them fresh — however, they are not easy to find! Most of us purchase the dry, handpicked varieties, which are either Turkish or Californian.

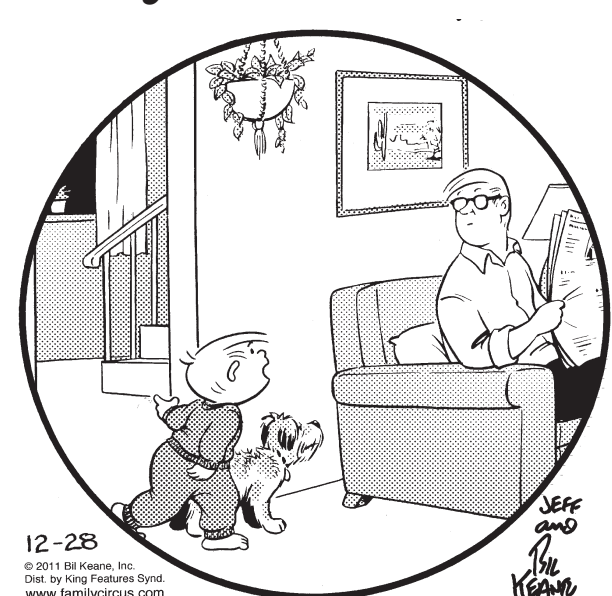
One to two whole bay leaves are added at the start of cooking to allow their flavor to release over time. These are great in slow-cooker recipes. Remove the whole leaf before serving. — Heloise

PLASTIC CONTAINERS

Dear Heloise: In response to a hint recently, I use plastic containers to freeze my husband's meatballs-with-sauce recipe, but I first spray the container with a cooking spray. They wash easily and do not stain. — Betty C., Springfield, Ohio

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Family Circus • Bil Keane



12-28

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"I'm gonna say my prayers, Daddy. Do you have any requests?"

Conceptis Sudoku • Dave Green

		4	6						
	8		3						
6				7					9
5	2	8			1	6	3		
		3							2
		1							8
		9	4	1	3	2	6	5	
		5		8		4		7	
		6		5		8		3	

Difficulty Level ★★★

12/28

This is a logic-based number placement puzzle. The goal is to enter a number, 1-9, in each cell in which each row, column and 3x3 region must contain only one instance of each numeral. The solution to the last Sudoku puzzle is at right.

7	8	1	3	6	4	2	9	5
6	4	9	2	1	5	7	8	3
2	5	3	8	7	9	6	1	4
5	7	4	9	8	1	3	2	6
1	3	8	6	5	2	9	4	7
9	6	2	4	3	7	1	5	8
8	2	6	1	4	3	5	7	9
4	1	5	7	9	6	8	3	2
3	9	7	5	2	8	4	6	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Cryptoquip

NBCJOF NSOQOCN KCM
KHSRF YBRSSK KFO QOFX
HGOOFZDY JDXN. B'M NKX
SGOX'FO FKXN RZ NDCNGBCO.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A FELLOW ISN'T MAKING HIS HOME CLEAN AND TIDY, I WOULD SAY HE NEEDS TO PICK UP THE PLACE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals R

Crossword • Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Molecule component
 - 5 Part of H.R.H., sometimes
 - 8 Taj Mahal city
 - 12 Building block name
 - 13 Hearty brew
 - 14 Colorado ski resort
 - 15 Military post
 - 17 Killer whale
 - 18 Neighborhoods
 - 19 Chicken choices
 - 21 Urban pall
 - 24 Big bother
 - 25 Garb
 - 28 Go by
 - 30 Evergreen type
 - 33 Historic period
 - 34 Brooks of country
 - 35 Southeast Asian
- DOWN**
- 1 Plankton part
 - 2 Wardrobe mal-function
 - 3 Shrek, e.g.
 - 4 Quagmire
 - 5 Owns R&B record
 - 6 UN workers' agcy.
 - 7 Transmitted
 - 8 Dodge
 - 9 Grotesque carving
 - 10 Affluent mate
 - 11 "Sad to say ..."
 - 16 Tenet
 - 20 Corned-beef recipe
 - 22 Milky stone
 - 23 She wanted to be alone
 - 25 Ball-bearing item
 - 26 Raw rock
 - 27 Chickpea
 - 29 Classic R&B
 - 31 Listener
 - 32 Court
 - 34 Intl. commerce org.
 - 38 Consecrate with oil
 - 40 Bad lighting?
 - 42 Sprite
 - 43 Buy things
 - 44 Rid of rind
 - 45 A long time
 - 47 Antelope's playmate
 - 48 Merriment
 - 49 Vortex
 - 52 Rd.
 - 53 Reed or Harrison

Solution time: 27 mins.

S	P	A	B	S	C	H	A	L	V	E
H	E	W	B	A	H	A	B	E	A	M
E	R	A	Q	A	T	R	A	I	N	S
A	I	R	S	C	R	O	D			
F	L	E	A	E	O	N	S	O	P	H
I	D	E	A	L	G	A	R	Y	O	N
I	D	E	A	L	V	I	E	W	S	
S	U	R	V	E	Y	W	A	D		
M	O	R	E	E	P	A	E	M	I	T
Q	U	E	S	T	I	O	N	S	T	I
B	L	A	K	E	P	U	P	S	I	T
S	T	R	I	P	S	T	Y	T	R	Y

Yesterday's answer 12-28

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12				13				14			
15				16				17			
18						19	20				
				21	22	23		24			
25	26	27			28		29		30	31	32
33					34					35	
36					37					38	
					39	40					
43	44				45		46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53				
54					55				56		
57					58				59		

Bridge • Steve Becker

South dealer. Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH

- ♠ 7 3
- ♥ 6 5
- ♦ A Q J 8 4 2
- ♣ A J 5

EAST

- ♠ Q 8 5 2
- ♥ A 7 4 2
- ♦ 9 5 3
- ♣ 8 6

SOUTH

- ♠ K 9 4
- ♥ K 9 3
- ♦ K 7 6
- ♣ K Q 10 3

The bidding:
South 1♣ West 1♦ North 3NT East 1NT
Opening lead — queen of hearts.

A Perfect Bull's-Eye

Assume you're East, defending against three notrump. Your partner leads the queen of hearts, and before you do anything, you stop to assess the situation. You know declarer has the king of hearts, and the question is whether you should duck your ace, take the ace and return a heart, or take the ace and discontinue the suit.

It should not take you very long to conclude that if you allow declarer to gain the lead with the king of hearts at either trick one or trick two, you will almost surely hand him the contract. Dummy's abundance of tricks — at least seven are in plain view — should convince you that your only hope of defeating the contract lies in spades, and that if South is not vulnerable in that suit, you can't stop him. Having reached this conclusion, you take partner's queen of hearts with the ace, and the only remaining question is which spade to lead at trick two.

Ordinarily, with the Q-8-5-2 of spades, you would lead your fourth-best card, the two. But in the present case, where your only chance to beat the contract is to garner four spade tricks at once, you should lead the queen!

As it happens, the queen play is spectacularly successful. You find your partner with the A-J-10-6, and South goes down one before he can even say "good play." Observe that if you return the two of spades instead of the queen, declarer makes the contract by playing the four or the nine from his hand.

Of course, you must be lucky for the queen play to work out so perfectly, but that is a commodity one must learn to rely on to at least some extent. It certainly offers more hope than allowing declarer to win the first heart, or taking the ace and mechanically returning a heart at trick two, which is tantamount to conceding the contract.

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