

# commentary

from other pens...

## Ex-Presidents see Iraq different from Bush

President Bush isn't getting much support for his Iraq policy these days from Democrats who used to live in the White House.

In times of international peril, there normally is a rallying around a president from opposition party predecessors.

But this tendency has not been evident in the Iraq situation, despite Bush's warnings of grave danger.

Bush has the support of fellow Republican Gerald Ford, but Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton see Iraq differently from Bush, as does Al Gore, Clinton's vice president and Bush's 2000 opponent.

Carter, reacting to his Nobel Peace Prize, said Friday he opposed a congressional resolution that authorized Bush to use military force against Iraq.

Carter announced his position just hours after the Senate, following the House's lead, voted to support the resolution.

Clinton has not spoken out on the resolution but, in an appearance in Britain on Oct. 2, he suggested that talk of war against Iraq is premature.

"If the inspections go forward, perhaps we can avoid a conflict. ... Until they fail we don't have to cross bridges we would prefer not to cross," Clinton said.

In September, Clinton made the case for pursuing al-Qaida and not Saddam.

"Saddam Hussein didn't kill 3,100 people on Sept. 11. Osama bin Laden did," Clinton said.

Gore said the administration's focus on Iraq could distract from the war on terror.

"The president's strategy confuses the threat posed by Iraq, which is serious indeed, and the threat posed by Osama, which is both serious and imminent," Gore said through a spokesman, voicing opposition to the Bush-backed congressional resolution.

Ford's office said the former president supports Bush's policy of emphasizing peace based on "full compliance by Saddam Hussein in permitting total inspections of weapon potential."

"If Saddam Hussein denies U.N. rules for weapons inspections, then President Bush should take military options," Ford said.

Ford's GOP colleagues have been supportive of Bush's policy, although often with caveats. The most outspoken critic has been Brent Scowcroft, who served as the first President Bush's national security adviser.

Like Gore and many other Democrats, Scowcroft believes the overall war on terror deserves highest priority.

"Any campaign against Iraq ... is certain to divert us from our war on terrorism," Scowcroft wrote in August. "Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time."

Bush generally does better with Democrats in Congress than with out-of-office party leaders.

Many Democratic congressional leaders backed Bush on the Iraq resolution. Overall, 29 Senate and 81 House Democrats supported it.

Norman Ornstein, of the American Enterprise Institute, says, "If you're up for election, you don't want to be out there explaining to voters you're against Bush at a time of war against terror."

He said many believe the Iraq situation has not reached crisis proportions yet, which leaves room for Democratic leaders such as Clinton and Gore to stray from the president's policy without leaving their patriotic credentials open to challenge.

Clinton seems to have moderated his views, at least compared with 1998 when, sounding much as Bush does today, he talked about the consequences if Saddam is allowed to flout U.N. resolutions.

"Well, he will conclude that the international community's lost its will," Clinton said. "He will then conclude that he can go right on doing more to build an arsenal of devastating destruction."

"If we fail to respond today, Saddam and all those who would follow in his footsteps will be emboldened tomorrow. The stakes could not be higher. Some way, some way, I guarantee you he'll use the arsenal."

EDITOR'S NOTE — George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.



## Too busy to live



joan ryan

• commentary

Now that I'm opening and closing the drawers of the refrigerator, I can see I don't have nearly enough of the proper elements with which to create the critical mass of dinner. There's mustard and pesto, eggs and raspberries, potato bread and low-fat milk and two small grilled lamb chops from Friday's dinner sealed in a Ziploc bag.

"What are we having?" my son asks. He's standing at the top of the stairs.

"I haven't decided," I say, by which I mean, "I have no idea yet again."

It's not that I didn't go grocery shopping. It's that I did it between signing refinance papers and carpooling to baseball practice. Like my fellow shoppers, I flew down the aisles like a contestant grabbing as much loot as she can before the buzzer goes off.

So now, standing in front of the incomplete offerings of my fridge, I get the nervous, twitchy feeling that has become familiar to 21st-century citizens: the feeling that you can't ever possibly, no matter how hard you work, keep up.

Every task requires a follow-up. Every e-mail demands a response. Every phone message, a reply. Every appointment, a confirmation. Every lamb chop, a side dish.

So we ricochet from task to task only to face, at the end of the day, an "overwhelming incompleteness," as Adam Gopnik recently put it in a New Yorker article. The busier we are, the more loose

ends we unleash, and the busier still we become. Gopnik illustrates the point with the story of his 3-year-old daughter's imaginary friend, a character she calls Charlie Ravioli. Charlie Ravioli is always too busy to play. Eventually, the 3-year-old invents Laurie, an assistant to Ravioli, who passes along Ravioli's regrets. Ravioli apparently is too busy even to say he is too busy.

"Busyness is our art form, our civic ritual, our way of being us," Gopnik writes.

There's a part of us, I think, that loves hurtling through the day at a million miles an hour. We feel relevant, as if we're going places. Being busy is a way of creating a stage-set of success — the cell phone, the laptop, the fax machine, the Palm Pilot. But the obvious question is always just below the cluttered surface, trying to push its way through: What are we hurtling toward?

This is the question, I think, that has made "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" a runaway hit. Maybe it would have been a hit in any year. But I wonder if, with the fallout of Sept. 11 and the slumping

economy, we're in one of those spasms, which we go through with some regularity, when we're dissatisfied with the hamster-wheel "good life," when we try to recapture lost simplicity and values.

The specter of war against Iraq runs as an undercurrent through this latest spasm, forcing our heads out of the endless reminders and appointments in our DayRunners to reconsider what is truly worth worrying about.

"Greek Wedding" found a huge audience, because it so bluntly and unabashedly embraces the notion that nearly everything of real value is already right in front of you: family, tradition, loyalty, love. (So what if you have to put up with a barbecue on the front lawn in front of all the neighbors now and then?)

The movie is about, in part, knowing that completeness is a matter of perspective. You can never catch up, so contentment means making do with what you have instead of always reaching for, and feeling anxious about, what's missing.

I pull out the bread, milk and an egg and close the refrigerator door. We have French toast for dinner and watch Monday Night Football, pushing aside the bills, the phone messages and the informative articles I really ought to read. They'll be there tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfchronicle.com.

## Celtic folklore and recipes



pat schiefen

• postscript

"Celtic Folklore Cooking" by Joanne Asala has an interesting mix of folktales and recipes. It was amazing the things of Celt origin that have been incorporated into our customs. There are recipes for cockles, figgy pudding, shepherd's pie, and Irish stew.

Hot cross buns, round cinnamon and fruit buns, are traditionally eaten on Good Friday in Celtic countries. Each bun is decorated with a cross with equal length arms. Christians say it represents the crucifix of Christ. These buns may be descendants of spicy cakes offered to Saxon Goddess Eostre decorated with horns that formed a cross shape and represented the four quarters of the lunar cycle.

Some people still believe buns baked on Good Friday will never get moldy, and can be used to combat illness. One bun is kept and hung in the kitchen and allowed to dry out thoroughly and then powdered and mixed in glass of water, milk or ale to be given to an ill person. Today most people buy their buns from a bakery and are baked the day before thereby losing their ability to combat illness.

### Hot Cross Buns

- 1 1/2 cups plus 2-3 cups of flour
- 2 packages dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs
- 2/3 cup currants
- 1 egg white, slightly beaten
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- dash salt

In a large mixing bowl, combine 1 1/2 cups flour with yeast and cinnamon. Heat milk, oil, sugar and salt in a pan until warm, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and beat for three minutes at high speed with electric mixer. Add all at once the flour mixture with the eggs. Beat at low speed with mixer for one minute, scraping sides of bowl constantly. Beat three more minutes at high speed. Stir in currants and as much of the remaining flour as possible. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead in enough of the remaining flour to make a moderately soft dough that is smooth and elastic. shape into a ball. Place in a lightly greased bowl, turning one to coat surface. Cover and place in a warm spot. Let rise until double, about 1 1/2 hours. Punch dough down and turn out onto lightly floured surface. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes. Divide dough into 18 pieces and form each into a smooth ball. Place on a greased baking sheet 1 1/2 inches apart. Cover, let rise until nearly double (30 to 45 minutes). With a sharp knife, cut a cross in each and brush tops of each bun with some of the slightly beaten egg white (reserve remaining). Bake at 375 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden. Cool slightly. Combine powdered sugar, vanilla, dash of salt and reserved egg white. Add more mild if necessary to give it piping consistency. Pipe crosses on top of buns with a pastry

decorator. Makes 18.

Bees are not native to North America and were carefully shipped here. Native Americans called them "white men's flies." Before sugar was widely available honey was used for sweetening and preservation. Bees were not sold for money but given in lieu of future honeycomb and honey. They were so valuable it was a capital offense in many regions to steal a beehive. Important nectar producing plants are fruit trees, clover, dandelion, charlock, and mustard. Other plant species that attract bees are anise, basil, bee balm, borage, calendula, cat-mint, chamomile, chicory, coriander, crocus, fennel, flax, forget-me-not, goldenrod, horehound, hyssop, jacob's ladder, lavender, lemon balm, marjoram, melilot, mint, muskmellow, poppies, Queen Anne's Lace, rosemary, safflower, sage, savory, smallage, sunflower, thyme, valerian, verbena, viper's bugloss, woad, yarrow.

### Basic Herbed Honey

2 cups honey  
1/4 cup of the fresh herb of your choice  
Heat the honey gently over a low flame. Place herbs in a clean jar and pour the warm honey over them. Seal and allow to age for at least a month before using. Or heat the honey gently over a low flame. Add herbs. Remove from heat and let cool. Strain and pour into sterilized jars.

## berry's world



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